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DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

30 - JUNE - 2022

FOREWORD

We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" would help students, especially beginners save time and streamline their preparations with regard to Current Affairs. A content page and an Appendix has been added segregating and mapping the content to the syllabus.

It is an appreciable efforts by Vedhik IAS Academy helping aspirants of UPSC Civil Services Examinations. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Babu Sebastian, former VC - MG University in extending all support to this endeavour. Finally I also extend my thanks to thank Ms. Shilpa Sasidharan and Mr. Shahul Hameed for their assistance in the preparing the compilations.

We welcome your valuable comments so that further improvement may be made in the forthcoming material. We look forward to feedback, comments and suggestions on how to improve and add value for students. Every care has been taken to avoid typing errors and if any reader comes across any such error, the authors shall feel obliged if they are informed at their Email ID.

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The Indian challenge in Afghanistan

Intra-Afghan tensions rather than any hostility towards India could impede implementation of projects



TARA KARTHA

India's record as a 'first responder' is improving by the day. Just 24 hours after a massive earthquake hit Afghanistan, the Indian Air Force moved in with tonnes of relief. That is impressive. It is also badly needed, given that the worst earthquake in 20 years hit a region that has been at war for decades. Desperate people are always open to adopting any means to survive. Apart from India, other countries will soon weigh in with aid. This might be the time to either make friends or renew hostility with old enemies.

The quake

The massive earthquake was centred around Khost along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and measured 5.9 on the Richter Scale. Clearly, the Pakistan side would have suffered as well, though there has been no reportage on this in the Pakistani media. Like other news from the tribal areas, this one also appears to have been damped down. The proximity to the affected area also meant that Pakistan was able to send relief aid quickly. Trucks decked with banners entered Afghanistan declaring that the aid was from "the people of Pakistan". Iran also sent relief material by air. Both these efforts and the Pakistan Foreign Ministry's statement expressing condolences were reported by *Xinhua*. There was nothing about India's effort. There was also nothing on Qatar, which is in negotiations to manage Kabul, Kandahar and Herat airports.

Stressing "historical and civilizational relationship ties" with the Afghan people, Delhi announced the arrival of a technical team to "closely monitor and coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders" for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. This followed the arrival of a delegation led by a senior official to Afghanistan. Afghan officials welcomed not only aid, but called for the restarting of small projects across the country. Prior to this, there were reports that Indian aid was being



Afghan men search for survivors in Gayan, Afghanistan, following the earthquake. ■ REUTERS

hoarded and diverted back to Pakistan. This meant that only a fraction of some 50,000 MT of wheat and medicines was actually reaching the country. Delhi seems to have asked for aid to flow through the Iranian route, instead of across Pakistan, so that it would reach Afghanistan. Iran is on board, as was evident during Foreign Minister Dr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian's recent visit to Delhi, where issues discussed included provision of aid to Afghanistan.

Providing relief

Meanwhile, countries are responding to the United Nations' appeal for aid. That includes Taiwan, which has offered \$1 million despite not being a member of the world body due to Beijing's objections. Japan, South Korea, and the UAE have also responded to the UN's appeal. The U.S. and its primary agency, the United States Agency for International Development, made brief and similar statements without making any specific commitment. U.S. aid stands at \$512,208,314 in the current financial year, after the U.S. Treasury Department broadened the types of activities authorised under U.S. licences, and the UN Security Council allowed sanctions exemption for delivery of humanitarian aid. However, the U.S.'s response indicates the difficul-

ties involved given the broken Afghan banking and financial systems and lack of infrastructure. A range of institutions is involved in actual aid delivery, and U.S. instructions are that all aid should be in cash, since no banks will do business or accept letters of credit to the Afghan central bank (DAB). UN organisations also provide cash, and aid agencies have long had to use reliable local hawala networks for transfers. The main benefit to this is that money is spent within the country, rather than in physical aid sourced from the neighbourhood. The trouble is that a notoriously strait-jacketed Finance Ministry will never agree to large-scale Indian aid being spent in this manner. Cash transfers to the DAB are possible, but its own reach to the furthest parts of the country is doubtful.

While 'buy local' may work with food and immediate aid, the requirements for reconstruction, particularly in the present case, will have to be sourced from Pakistan. Pakistan cement companies such as Lucky Cement made their fortunes out of U.S. construction in Afghanistan, of everything from airfields to culverts, when operations were ongoing. A 2004 study reported not just the huge amounts of money being made by all those concerned, but also revealed that Afghan companies were

being sidelined in favour of Turkish or Chinese ones in the country.

Also, most UN activity for Afghanistan is slotted through Pakistan. U.S. listings show that major UN agencies and the International Organization for Migration are present in Pakistan, where they are funded to source supplies. This includes smaller NGOs such as Red Crescent or the hundreds of others operating on the ground. Any Indian attempt at reconstruction has to take this reality on board. India also needs to encourage Afghan cement plants and related industries, and ensure optimal use of coal, which is now being exported to Pakistan at cheap prices.

The security issue

Then there exists the ever-present issue of security, which was apparent from the recent attack on a gurdwara in Kabul, apparently by the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K). The IS-K is a group of many parts, with a presence in the north, along the Pakistan border, and in Kabul. In the north, the Russians accuse the Americans of assisting the group, while in Kabul, the IS-K's worst attack was against withdrawing U.S. troops in August 2021. In recent times, IS-K has become strongly anti-India, along with al-Qaeda, which put out a video where chief Ayman Al Zawahiri was seen praising a Karnataka girl for defending the hijab. Even more vicious language was used in the threat made against Nupur Sharma, former BJP spokesperson, for her controversial remarks against the Prophet. A recent UN report notes that both groups are operational, and may see increased recruitment of young men with no alternatives.

India has around 400 projects in all the 34 provinces of Afghanistan. With the Taliban offering protection to foreign embassies, and acting quickly in the recent gurdwara bombing, it is possible that the Indian effort will continue unimpeded. It is also important to remember that the Taliban have never actively been anti-India. Difficulties in implementation are more likely to arise from intra-Afghan tensions rather than any hostility to India.

Tara Kartha is former officer from the National Security Council Secretariat, where she served for nearly 20 years, working largely on Pakistan and Afghanistan

‘UN comment on arrest of Setalvad unwarranted’

Interference in judiciary, says MEA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said the remarks of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) regarding the arrest of activist Teesta Setalvad were “unacceptable”.

MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi defended the arrest of Ms. Setalvad, and said the matter was being conducted in “accordance” with law.

The government, however, did not respond to a criticism that came from the office of the Secretary General of the UN following the arrest of journalist and fact checker Mohammad Zubair.

“We have seen a comment by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding legal action against Teesta Setalvad and two other persons. The remarks by the OHCHR are completely unwarranted and constitute an interference in India’s independent judicial system,” said Mr. Bagchi.

Earlier the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said, “We are very concerned by the arrest and detention of Teesta Setalvad and two ex-police officers and call for their immediate release. They must not be persecuted for their activism and solidarity of the victims of the 2002 Gujarat riots.”

“Authorities in India act against violations of law strictly in accordance with established judicial processes. Labelling such legal actions as persecution for activism is misleading and unacceptable,” said Mr. Bagchi in response.

Earlier, Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson of the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, had made critical observations following the arrest of Mr. Zubair by the Delhi Police for a 2018 social media post.

“Journalists should not be jailed for what they write, what they tweet and what they say,” said Mr. Dujarric. The Ministry of External Affairs did not respond to that comment.

‘G-20 summit expected to be in Delhi’

Reports citing Srinagar as venue had sparked surprise, given security concerns

SUHASINI HAIDAR
PEERZADA ASHIQ
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

India is expected to host the G-20 summit in Delhi, while a number of States, including Jammu and Kashmir and north-eastern States, have been asked to suggest venues for about 100 “preparatory” meetings expected to be held between December 2022 and November 2023 during India’s G-20 presidency, officials belonging to a number of nodal Ministries said.

While a formal notification is yet to be issued about the “summit venue”, the government is likely to hold the G-20 summit, where leaders of the U.S., Russia, China, France, Germany, the U.K., the European Union and other top global economies

are expected, at New Delhi’s Pragati Maidan complex. Construction for conference halls, and new hotels to house the 20 heads of state and thousands of officials and delegates is already under way, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a nearly ₹1,000-crore Integrated Transit Corridor Project this month to connect the Pragati Maidan headquarters to other key locations, the officials said. However, the officials declined to issue a formal statement, saying it was “too early to discuss the calendar of events and venue” ahead of the summit.

Pakistan’s protest

The clarifications came in response to questions being raised over reports in the

media about the possibility of holding the summit itself in Jammu and Kashmir. On Wednesday, Pakistan, which had issued a strong protest last week, sent formal demarches to Foreign Ministries in G-20 member-states, asking them not to attend such meetings in what Islamabad described as a “internationally recognised disputed territory”.

While the officials involved in the planning of the G-20 confirmed that they had contacted a number of State governments to enquire about the feasibility of holding the pre-summit meetings in their capitals and prominent tourism locations, no locations have been finalised thus far.

“The idea is to hold preparatory meetings of the G-20

on a pan-India basis... and we are involving the State governments in the consultative process,” a senior official told *The Hindu* last week, adding that venues would be decided depending on the availability of accommodation and connectivity, as well as other parameters, in each of the locations identified by them.

Letters went out from the Ministry of External Affairs dated June 4 after a meeting convened by Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal attended by Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra, G-20 Chief Coordinator Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy and officials of various ministries, and the tourism industry discussed logistics planning for the G-20.

In a first, NATO lays out ‘challenges’ from China

‘Russia most significant threat to allies’

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

NATO on Wednesday, for the first time in its guiding blueprint, said China’s might challenges the alliance and Beijing’s closer ties to Moscow went against Western interests.

“The People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values,” NATO’s strategic concept published at a summit in Madrid said.

NATO accused China of targeting NATO members with its “malicious hybrid and cyber operations and its

confrontational rhetoric”.

NATO’s guiding document – updated for the first time since 2010 – said Russia was the “most significant and direct threat to allies’ security” after its invasion of Ukraine.

Ahead of the unveiling of NATO’s new strategy, Beijing already pushed back against the alliance for increasing its attention on Asia. “In recent years, NATO has been pushing for expanding its area and field, advocating group confrontation,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said.

India-Australia defence talks in Dehradun

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Armies of India and Australia held the ninth Army to Army Staff Talks in Dehradun on Wednesday which were focused on joint military exercises, training cooperation and preparing a roadmap for enhanced defence cooperation, the Army said in a statement.

Talks were held at the Indian Military Academy (IMA) and both sides reviewed the road map for activities promoting defence cooperation like training courses between both the Armies, cadet exchange programmes between pre-commission training academies, bilateral exchange programmes, subject matter expert exchange in niche domains, functional and high level visits, interaction between think tanks, virtual interactions in field of medical and doctrinal exchanges, the Army said.

The Australian delegation is on a visit to India from June 25 to July 1.

The Australian delegation also visited Infantry Division based at Dehradun, Bengal Engineer Group Centre Roorkee, Wargame Research and Development Centre, Delhi and Centre for Land Warfare Studies.

The two countries are set to commence the General Rawat Young Officer Exchange Programme in the latter half of 2022.

Uddhav resigns after SC denies stay on floor test

The decision in favour of allowing the floor test came after the Governor and the dissident MLAs held that delaying the trust vote would be the “anti-thesis of democracy” and “give more time for horse-trading in Maharashtra”.

The Thackeray camp argued that the trust vote cannot be held when the disqualification proceedings against 16 rebel MLAs, including Mr. Shinde, were pending and being examined by the Supreme Court. They said the dissidents were an “artificial majority”.

Mr. Koshiyari in his letter to the government said the “floor test for proving the majority of the Chief Minister is imperative to ensure that the government continues to function with the confidence of the house”.

With Mr. Thackeray’s resignation, the unique three-party experiment of the MVA, in which the Shiv Sena tied up with the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has come to an end. The BJP, which is the single largest party in the Assembly with 106 MLAs, is likely to stake claim to form the government.

Several BJP legislators and senior leaders gathered at the residence of former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in Mumbai and congratulated each other over the collapse of the MVA government. Former Minister and BJP leader Chandrashekhar Bawankule said that “the truth prevailed, finally”.

Mr. Thackeray, in his address, said, “Those who were promoted by Sena founder Balasaheb Thacke-

ray are trying to pull down his son from the CM post. I asked them to come and sit in front of me to discuss. They said they have numbers and if that’s the democracy for them, then I am not interested in a democracy that believes in head count.”

Mr. Thackeray appealed to party workers to not obstruct the MLAs coming to Mumbai. “I don’t want to see your blood on streets,” he said.

One of the rebel Shiv Sena MLAs, Bharat Gogawale, on Wednesday night said they will hold meetings at a hotel in Goa where they are staying for the night and discuss their next steps. “It is not like we are very happy with the decision of Uddhav Thackeray stepping down as the CM... We will discuss the issue and decide our next steps. He [Thackeray] tried to convince us,” Mr. Gogawale said.

He thanked the Congress and the NCP for supporting him.

In what could possibly be termed as the last Cabinet meeting of the MVA government, Mr Thackeray attended the meeting at Mantralaya on Wednesday evening. Even though he did not talk about resigning in the meeting, he thanked his administration for the cooperation in last two and half years. “Despite being of different ideologies, you supported me throughout but I was backstabbed by my own partymen,” said Mr Thackeray, addressing his Cabinet colleagues, according to NCP State president Jayant Patil. Mr Patil said the CM also told the officials that pending issues will be held in next Cabinet meeting.

'Floor test will prevent horse-trading'

SC agreed with Governor, dissident MLAs that delaying it would further damage democracy

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dashed the hopes of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government to retain power in Maharashtra by refusing to stay a floor test called by Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari on Thursday on a request made by Leader of the Opposition and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis.

This is the second consecutive body blow the Supreme Court has dealt the beleaguered Sena-led government in two days.

On June 27, a Vacation Bench of Justices Surya Kant and J.B. Pardiwala virtually froze Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal's power to proceed with the disqualification of Shiv Sena dissident MLAs led by Eknath Shinde for defection. The dissidents were given extra time till July 12 to respond to the charges.

Wednesday saw the court agree with Governor Koshiyari and the dissident MLAs that delaying the floor test would further damage democracy. Holding a floor test



Shiv Sena MP Anil Desai with advocate Mahesh Jethmalani after the Supreme Court passed the order on Wednesday. •PTI

in Maharashtra was the sure remedy against horse-trading. Delay of trust vote was the very antithesis of democracy.

"We are not staying the floor test," Justice Kant briefly conveyed the Bench's final order to the warring Shiv Sena factions at 9 p.m. after a four-hour marathon hearing.

During the hearing, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Governor Koshiyari, said the "who is

the majority in the House is not determined in Raj Bhavan but on the floor of the Assembly where everybody can see".

The court session began with senior advocate Abhisek Manu Singhvi, for the Thackeray camp, urging the court to either stay the floor test or unshackle the Deputy Speaker so that he could go ahead with the disqualification proceedings against 16 of a total 39 dissident MLAs.

Mr. Singhvi then said Governor Koshiyari showed "undue haste" by calling a floor test when the question of disqualification was pending in the court.

"Floor test was called on June 28 at supersonic speed... Holding a floor test before determining the question of disqualification of the rebels is like plunging into a pool without determining the size of the pool. It is like putting the cart before the horse. The first thing to do in this whole political crisis is to determine who has committed the constitutional sin of defection... The Governor cannot short-circuit the Supreme Court's proceedings or the Deputy Speaker's authority to adjudicate disqualification proceedings... The floor test cannot make these proceedings infructuous," Mr. Singhvi submitted.

'Extraordinary situation' Justice Kant, speaking for the Bench, observed that the court had intervened on June 27 because it was an "extraordinary situation" in which the Speaker himself

was facing action for removal from office.

Mr. Singhvi said the rebel MLAs, facing action for defection, "no longer represent the will of the people".

They should not be allowed to vote.

But Justice Kant asked whether a government, knowing it has lost its majority, could be allowed to use the Speaker to issue disqualification notices "*en masse*".

"When the Speaker himself is under a cloud, should we go ahead and presume that the MLAs are already deemed to have been disqualified," the judge asked.

Senior advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul, for the Shinde camp, declared "we are the Shiv Sena". They said they have 39 Sena MLAs out of a total 55. "The Thackeray faction is a hopeless minority within the party itself," Mr. Kaul submitted.

He said a pending petition in the Supreme Court questioning the disqualification proceedings cannot stay the authority and discretion of the Governor to call for a floor test.

Uddhav resigns after SC denies stay on floor test

Rebel MLAs leave Guwahati for Mumbai via Goa

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI/DELHI

Embattled Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced his resignation from the post on Wednesday, moments after the Supreme Court refused to stay Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's direction to the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government to take a floor test in the Assembly on Thursday.

The rebel Sena MLAs who were stationed in Guwahati since June 22 were taken to Goa on Wednesday evening and from there, they were scheduled to be brought to Mumbai.

Prior to leaving, all the MLAs were taken to the Kamakhya temple. "We will be in Mumbai on Thursday to vote in the floor test," rebel leader Eknath Shinde said.

In a virtual address to the public, Mr. Thackeray said, "I am not the one who will stick to power. From today [Wednesday] morning, my workers are being sent notices by police. Central forces are here. Army might be called. Those who should have been at China borders will be here. I don't want to see blood of my workers spilling on the roads of Mumbai. Today, I resign from the post of Chief Minister."

He said he was quitting as



Uddhav Thackeray leaving the Raj Bhavan in Mumbai late on Wednesday after submitting his resignation. ■ EMMANUAL YOGINI

a Member of the Legislative Council and would now only concentrate on party work. "I never said I will return. I never wanted to be here at this place, but I came. From now on, I will be fully with you," he told Sena workers.

Setback in SC

In a setback to his faction, the Supreme Court had refused to stay the floor test. "We are not staying the floor test," a Vacation Bench of Justices Surya Kant and J.B. Pardiwala briefly informed the warring Shiv Sena factions after taking half-an-hour recess to deliberate in their chambers following a marathon hearing that spanned four hours, starting at 5 p.m.

The court, however said it would hear on merit the writ

petition filed by Thackeray loyalist Sunil Prabhu challenging the process leading to the call for the floor test on July 11 along with petitions filed by Sena dissidents led by Eknath Shinde, who has questioned the disqualification proceedings initiated against them. "Tomorrow's proceedings [floor test] will be subject to the final outcome of these petitions in court," the Bench addressed the lawyers.

The court had urgently heard the challenge to the floor test amid the frenzy of political churning in Maharashtra. "The urgency that has been created requires us to hear the matter today itself," Justice Kant submitted.

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New norms to revise electoral rolls in J&K, Gujarat, Himachal

Qualifying date is October 1, entries to be linked to Aadhaar

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) this week kicked off a drive to update the electoral rolls in Jammu & Kashmir, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, where elections are expected later this year, for the first time allowing those turning 18 as of October 1 instead of January 1 to enrol, and for the collection of Aadhaar numbers of the applicants.

On Wednesday, the EC wrote to the J&K Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), instructing that the ongoing electoral roll revision exercise should be conducted in accordance with the new rules allowing four qualifying dates a year. For J&K, the EC

has said the draft electoral roll should be published on September 1, and the final electoral roll on October 31.

The EC wrote to the Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh CEOs on Monday, giving the programme for the revision of rolls to be followed. The EC informed the CEOs to carry out the special revision in accordance with the rules framed under the Election Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021, which increased the qualifying dates from January 1 every year to January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1, and allowed for Aadhaar-linking with voter ID, that were notified on June 17.

The pre-revision activities would be carried out from Monday till August 10 and

the draft electoral roll would be published by August 12, the EC said. The electoral roll would be finalised by October 10, according to the programme.

The two State Assembly elections would also be the first ones where new electors would have Aadhaar-linked voter IDs, but it would not be mandatory.

“The applicant had to furnish Aadhaar Number in Form-6 and Form-8, if he/she is having Aadhaar number, however, no application for inclusion of name in electoral roll shall be denied and no entries in electoral roll shall be deleted for inability of an individual to furnish or intimate Aadhaar Number,” the letter said.

The anti-defection law — political facts, legal fiction

The crisis in Maharashtra and even earlier instances are grim reminders of what the Tenth Schedule can and cannot do



MAYURI GUPTA &
RITWIKA SHARMA

In the din of India's electoral politics, floor crossing by legislators rarely goes out of public discourse. The practice of legislators from changing political parties during their term continues unabated in Indian legislatures despite the Tenth Schedule having been inserted into the Constitution in 1985. Commonly known as the 'anti-defection law', it was meant to arrest the practice of legislators from changing political affiliations during their term in office. The political crisis in Maharashtra, and many others before it, are grim reminders of what the Tenth Schedule can and cannot do.

Law on defections, 'mergers'

Instances of floor crossing have long gone unchecked and unpunished. In part, this can be attributed to the exemption given to mergers between political parties which facilitate bulk defections. In 2019, MLAs in the Goa Legislative Assembly from the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), crossed over to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Speaker of the Assembly as well as the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court dismissed the pleas seeking disqualification of these MLAs. Both these authorities held that be-

cause the MLAs formed two-thirds of their respective legislature parties, disqualification under the Tenth Schedule was not possible. In other words, there was a "deemed merger" of the INC and the MGP with the BJP.

The second paragraph of the Tenth Schedule allows for disqualification of an elected member of a House if such member belonging to any political party has voluntarily given up membership of their party, or if they vote in the House against such party's whip. Paragraph 4 creates an exception for mergers between political parties by introducing three crucial concepts — that of the "original political party", the "legislature party", and "deemed merger". A "legislature party" means the group consisting of all elected members of a House for the time being belonging to one political party, whereas an "original political party" means the political party to which a member belongs (this can refer to the party generally, outside of the House). Interestingly, Paragraph 4 does not clarify whether the original political party refers to the party at the national level or the regional level, despite the fact that that is how the Election Commission of India recognises political parties.

How does Paragraph 4 then approach mergers? Paragraph 4 is spread across two sub-paragraphs, a conjoint reading of which suggests that a merger can take place only when an original party merges with another political party, and at least two-thirds of the members of the legislature party have agreed to this merger. It is only when these two condi-



tions are satisfied that a group of elected members can claim exemption from disqualification on grounds of merger.

The reality

Paragraph 4, however, is drafted in such a convoluted way that it renders itself open to multiple interpretations. The second sub-paragraph (of Paragraph 4) says that a party shall be "deemed" to have merged with another party if, and only if, not less than two-thirds of the members of the legislature party concerned have agreed to such merger. Given that in most cases there is no factual merger of original political parties at the national (or even regional) level, Paragraph 4 seems to be creating a "legal fiction" so as to indicate that a merger of two-third members of a legislature party can be deemed to be a merger of political parties, even if there is no actual merger of the original political party with another party. At least that is how High Courts in India are interpreting the merger exception.

In statutory interpretation, "deemed" has an established understanding. The word "deemed" may be used in a law to create a le-

gal fiction, and give an artificial construction to a word or a phrase used in a statute. In other cases, it may be used to include what is obvious or what is uncertain. In either of these cases, the intention of the legislature in creating a deeming provision is paramount.

What could Parliament's intention have been in creating a legal fiction under Paragraph 4? The merger exception was created to save instances of the principled coming together of political groups from disqualification under the anti-defection law, and to strike a compromise between the right of dissent and party discipline. In the absence of mergers of original political parties, the deeming fiction could, presumably, be used as a means to allow mergers of legislature parties. However, reading Paragraph 4 in this manner would empower legislature parties to solely merge with another party, and thus, practically ease defection. Defection gets easier in smaller legislative assemblies, where even a sole member can account for two-thirds of the legislature party's strength to cross the floor without attracting disqualification.

On the other hand, what happens if both sub-paragraphs of Paragraph 4 are read conjunctively? For a valid merger then, an original political party has to first merge with another political party, and then two-thirds of the legislature party must support that merger. Practically speaking though, this would yield potentially absurd results. Given the politics of current times, stark differences in parties' respective ideologies, and deep-seated historical rival-

ries, it is unimaginable how a merger between major national or regional parties would materialise.

Neither of these two interpretations complement the 'mischief' that the Tenth Schedule was expected to remedy — that of curbing unprincipled defections which endanger the foundations of our democracy. Presently, while individual Members of Legislative Assemblies remain vulnerable to disqualification for crossing the floor, group defections remain exempt. The criticisms levelled against the exemption given to splits in political parties — that it facilitated defection by groups — applies equally to mergers.

Revisit, if not delete

In a situation where either reading of Paragraph 4 in its current form yields undesirable results, its deletion from the Tenth Schedule is a possible way forward. This thought is hardly novel, for the Law Commission in 1999 and the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution ((NCRWC) in 2002 made similar recommendations. Till that happens, an academic revisiting of the Tenth Schedule by the Supreme Court, so as to guide future use of the anti-defection law, is timely and should happen soon. That would do a world of good for democracy in India.

Mayuri Gupta is the Milon K. Banerji Fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and works with Charkha, Vidhi's Constitutional Law Centre. Ritwika Sharma is a Senior Resident Fellow at Vidhi and leads Charkha. The views expressed are personal

‘GST hike for pumpsets will affect farm sector’

‘Pumpsets already facing a slowdown’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

COIMBATORE

The increase in GST rates for pumpsets to 18% from 12%, as recommended by the GST Council, will hit the agriculture sector, said K.V. Karthik, president of Southern India Engineering Manufacturers’ Association.

The average minimum cost of an agriculture pumpset is ₹40,000, excluding GST. With the increase in GST from 12% to 18%, a farmer, who is the customer of the pumpset, would have to pay ₹2,400 more only towards GST.

With this increase, the difference in cost between a branded pumpset and a locally-assembled one would widen and farmers would prefer to go for alternatives



that would cost lower, he said. The assembled pumpsets would not have energy efficiency rating and increase in use of such pumpsets would indirectly result in electricity losses.

The steep ‘hike’ in the cost of pumpsets would hit agriculture. The sector had been facing a slowdown for the last six months and the GST rate increase would be another blow to the industry, Mr. Karthik added.

Govt. hikes GST for household items

Council hikes tax on over two dozen goods and services from July 18

VIKAS DHOOT
CHANDIGARH

From July 18, tax hikes will kick in for over two dozen goods and services, ranging from unbranded food items, curd and buttermilk to low-cost hotels, cheques and maps, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council decided after a two-day meet that concluded on Wednesday.

Tax rates will be lowered for about half-a-dozen goods and services, including ropeways and truck rentals where fuel costs are includ-

ed, and scrapped for items imported by private vendors for use by defence forces.

At the meeting, over a dozen States wanted the GST compensation to continue for some more time.

The upward changes in GST levies include tweaks for 17 goods and services, to correct anomalies that had crept in from inverted duty structures where tax rates on inputs were higher than the final product.

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Tax tweaks | Revised tax rates for some goods and services announced by the GST Council after a two-day meet that concluded on Wednesday



Goods and services	From	To
Knives, spoons, forks and ladles	12%	18%
LED lamps and lights	12%	18%
Water pumps, deep tube-well turbine pumps, submersible pumps	12%	18%
Solar water heater and system	5%	12%
Dairy machinery	12%	18%
Work contract for roads, railways, metro, monuments, canals, dams, educational institutions and hospitals	12%	18%
Ostomy appliances	12%	5%
Orthopaedic appliance for splints and fractures, and intraocular lens	12%	5%

Government hikes GST for household items

Separately, the tax rate on tetra packs has been raised from 12% to 18%, while cut and polished diamonds will now attract GST at 1.5% instead of the prevailing 0.25%.

The GST rate on splints for treating fractures, intraocular lens for those with failing eyesight and ostomy appliances will be reduced from 12% to 5%. The Council has also clarified that Assisted Reproductive Technology and In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) services are covered under the health care services for the purpose of GST exemption, but stem cell preservation services will no longer be tax-free. Hospital room rents over ₹5,000 a day, excluding patients in intensive care units, shall now be taxed at 5%.

Exemptions and concessional rates on several items shall be withdrawn, based on recommendations of a Group of Ministers (GoM) led by Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai that were accepted in 'toto' by the Council, said its chairperson and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sith-

araman.

Responding to concerns that the GST rate changes could feed into the prevalent high inflation, Ms. Sitharaman said inflation was everyone's concern and the Council's decisions were not taken in isolation.

"The elected representatives who are part of the Council are conscious of inflation," Ms. Sitharaman noted.

Steering the first 'regular' meeting of the Council since September 2021, Ms. Sitharaman said reports of three other Ministerial groups were also considered at this meeting, of which two had been ratified.

While Mr. Bommai panel's suggestions on exemptions and tax tweaks for some items were accepted, the GoM has been granted three more months to recommend the larger overhaul of GST rates which would include a possible reduction in the multiple tax slabs and higher tax rates to raise revenue collections from the indirect tax regime that completes five years this week.

Rupee weakens past 79 on dollar buying by FPIs, oil firms

Indian currency has weakened by about 6.3% versus U.S. dollar so far in 2022

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The rupee plunged to a new low past 79 against the dollar on persistent demand for the U.S. currency, from oil refiners needing to settle their rising crude import bills, and foreign portfolio investors who continue to withdraw capital from Indian equity and debt.

The rupee depreciated 18 paise to close at 79.03.

“The rupee has continued to move on the downhill journey since the beginning of the year, amid a backdrop of heavy foreign fund outflows from the domestic markets, strength in the safe-haven dollar towards two-



Slip sliding: Rising crude prices and the deteriorating trade balance have spurred the rupee's decline this year. ■ REUTERS

decade highs, and firming crude oil prices,” said Sugandha Sachdeva, VP - Commodity and Currency Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

The rupee has weakened by about 6.3% against the

dollar since the beginning of 2022, she added.

“Even as the rupee holds a depreciation bias in the near term, we envisage that the rupee would manage to reverse some of the losses in

the second half of the year,” Ms. Sachdeva said. “Strong long-term fundamentals, political stability, and a large pile of forex reserves are likely to provide a cushion to the Indian rupee around the crucial 80 mark,” she added.

“The Indian rupee has been adversely affected mainly by the FIIs pulling out funds from the equity market, rising crude prices, the deteriorating trade balance and dollar strengthening,” analysts at Emkay Wealth Management wrote in a note.

Foreign institutional investors have sold local shares and bonds worth \$29.7 billion so far in 2022.

'India to have 122 unicorns in 2-4 years'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

India will have 122 new unicorns in the next 2 to 4 years and these firms currently have a cumulative value of \$49 billion, according to Hurun India Future Unicorn Index 2022.

Bengaluru alone would add 46 new unicorns, while Delhi NCR would get 25 new unicorns, Mumbai 16, Chennai 5, and Pune 3, while the rest are expected from 20 other cities, according to the unicorn index released by the Hurun Research Institute here on Wednesday.

Venture Capital firm Sequoia Capital had invested in 39 of these future unicorns, followed by Tiger Global, which holds stake in 27 of them.

A direct approach to conservation

The mobilisation of private and public finance for Payments for Ecosystem Services lacks lustre



KAVITA SARDANA

Incentives for biodiversity protection and sustainable use include biodiversity-relevant taxes, fees, levies, tradeable permits, and Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES). Through these economic instruments, governments can affect both public and private financing flows for biodiversity. Mobilisation of biodiversity finance through pesticide levies, admission fees to natural parks, hunting and fishing permit fees, and the trade-in energy-saving certificates has gained governmental support and political will, but the mobilisation of private and public finance for PES has lacked lustre.

Lack of academic research, governmental support, and political will have vexed environmental economists. Despite a solid theoretical foundation and the ability to tether investments more directly to outcomes, the debate revolves around the same issues from two decades: monetisation of environmental benefits, lack of additionality (how much environmental service would have been provided without conditional payments), and so on. In this article, I answer whether this is a missed or a lurking opportunity for biodiversity financing in India.

Increasing ecosystem services

PES is one way to conserve and increase ecosystem services. It works through the establishment of performance contracts. People who can help provide the desired ecosystem service are rewarded based on their actions, or the quantity and quality of the services themselves. PES presents a unique scope for incentivising local land stewards to manage threatened ecosystems. It has the potential to achieve the dual goals of conservation and poverty alleviation towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. This places PES as one of the pivotal economic instruments for conservation.

However, PES has not achieved much attention either in the research or policy mandate in the Indian subcontinent. This is in sharp contrast to the successful implementation of PES in Latin American and African countries. In the Western Cape, South Africa, the CapeNature Stewardship Programme protects biodiversity on private lands. Kiten-gela, Kenya's Wildlife Conservation Lease Programme, maintains open areas for wildlife and grazing on personal grounds. In

terms of raising money, PES programmes such as Costa Rica's Pago Por Servicios and Ecuador's Socio Bosque were among the few to mobilise significant finances.

Why have such economic incentives for ecological restoration not received academic, research, and policy prioritisation? A research paper published in *Science* by Ferraro and Kiss in 2002 argues that any successful PES programme is one that overcomes the impediments to implementation. Such limitations include a solid institutional mechanism capable of simultaneous transfer of funds from buyers to suppliers, monitoring through investment in local capacity building, cost efficiency, the scope for development benefits, and maintaining the sustainability of funds. A local monitoring mechanism is the key to successfully implementing a PES programme. A study (Sardana 2019) conducted in the Kodagu district of Karnataka to restore native trees that grow in the understory of coffee plantations shows a successfully designed local institutional mechanism for PES implementation. However, the PES mechanism is yet to be implemented or even tested for efficacy. The results of such studies offer support for potential research funding in restoration financing. Impact evaluation studies that evaluate financial instruments' performance in attaining biodiversity are also important. The OECD (2019) Biodiversity: Finance and the Economic and Business Case for Action highlighted the importance of evaluating financial instruments' performance in attaining biodiversity goals. According to recent OECD research, few thorough impact evaluation studies have been done for terrestrial biodiversity and fewer for ocean/marine biodiversity. The OECD advocates comprehensive impact evaluations and the formulation of strategic criteria to help determine which policies or initiatives warrant more scrutiny.

Additionally, a strong policy thrust, such as the TEEB India Initiative highlighting the economic consequences of the loss of biological diversity, would help prioritise ecosystem restoration financing through a direct approach. A global initiative such as the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative to mobilise private sector finance to benefit people and the environment would help maintain the funds. The cheapest way to receive anything you desire is to pay for it directly. This would allow the country to effectuate the nation's commitments to achieving the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

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General Studies Paper I

A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies

General Studies Paper II

A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

J	Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions;
K	Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies;
L	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies;
M	Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections;
N	Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;
O	Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;
P	Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures;
Q	Issues relating to poverty and hunger,
R	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes;
S	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources;
T	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health
General Studies Paper III	
A	Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment;
B	Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth;
C	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
D	Infrastructure Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. Government budgeting;
E	Land reforms in India
F	Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems;
G	Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints;
H	e-technology in the aid of farmers; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.
I	Issues of buffer stocks and food security, Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping;
J	Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management;
K	Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices
L	Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology;
M	Indigenization of technology and developing new technology;
N	Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life;
O	Issues relating to intellectual property rights
P	Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment
Q	Disaster and disaster management
R	Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security;
S	Money-laundering and its prevention;

T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
V	Linkages of organized crime with terrorism;
W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
General Studies Paper IV	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.