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DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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‘It is vital to protect Indian Ocean Region’

NSA Ajit Doval calls for coordination

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

The changing geopolitical scenario in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) had led to “international rivalries, competition and clash of interests” and it was important for India to protect its interests in this area, said National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval on Wednesday, while calling for seamless coordination among all stakeholders involved in the maritime domain. He stated that the maritime domain was a multilateral construct and a nation “cannot unilaterally decide” in the maritime domain.

He was addressing the first meeting of the Multi-Agency Maritime Security Group chaired by the country’s first National Maritime Security Coordinator Vice-Admiral Ashok Kumar (Retd.) who took charge on February 16 and for the first time also brought together maritime security coordina-



Ajit Doval

tors from all 13 coastal States and Union Territories as well as other stakeholders.

“In the national security discourse, maritime security has its own specific emphasis,” Mr. Doval said. “We are destined for greater things. India’s time will come. We, as a nation have to be strong. Coastal and maritime security will play an important role in this,” he said. He said, “Maritime borders cannot be fenced. We cannot have the concept of zero per cent tolerance for intrusion. So we need technology and other ways of countering it.”

Do not weaken the anti-defection law

The moral content of democracy cannot be eroded and India expects better compliance of the law by its lawmakers



P.D.T. ACHARY

The political developments in Maharashtra throw up troubling questions about how the political class is emasculating the anti-defection law which was described by the Supreme Court of India as “constitutional correctives against a legislatively perceived political evil of unprincipled defections induced by the lure of office and monetary inducements”. Almost with the farsight of a clairvoyant, the Supreme Court drew the attention of citizens to the very danger of subversion of democracy by unprincipled defection.

The ongoing developments in Maharashtra have once again brought before the country the reality of what the Supreme Court also described as the political evil of unprincipled defection. But the greatest irony is that the order of the Supreme Court, on June 27, on petitions from the dissidents in the Shiv Sena, gives undue advantage to the dissident legislators. The Court has granted them a longer time to submit replies than the rules mandate. This order is going to set in motion certain political developments which will resurrect in a big way what the Supreme Court characterised as political evil; it was to prevent this that the anti-defection law was enacted in 1985.

Important thrust areas

To put the issue in perspective, let us quickly run through the thrust areas of this law. It was enacted as the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India, in 1985, under Rajiv Gandhi's premiership. It was actually the culmination of long years of debate, deliberations, disagreements, formulations and reformulations, with finally a consensus. The law as it was enacted provided for the disqualification of

a legislator belonging to a political party if he voluntarily gave up his membership of his party or if he defied the whip of his party by voting contrary to its directions in the legislative house. Initially, there were two exceptions provided in the schedule which would exempt a legislator from disqualification. The first exception was a split in their original political party resulting in the formation of a group of legislators. If the group consisted of one third of such legislators of that party, they were exempted from disqualification. This exception was deleted from the schedule through a Constitution Amendment Act of 2003 because of frequent misuse of this provision.

The second exception was ‘merger’ which can be invoked when the original political party of a legislator merges with another party and not less than two thirds of its legislators agree to such a merger. So, if a legislator shows that his original party has merged with another party and he and his colleagues who constitute two thirds of the legislators of that party have agreed to the merger, then he and his colleagues will be exempted from disqualification.

Interpretation of ‘merger’

It is this exception contained in paragraph four of the schedule which has been taken recourse to by a large number of legislators across States and even in Parliament to defect to the ruling party. These legislators interpreted for themselves the term ‘merger’ to mean the merger of two thirds of legislators. They convinced themselves that the merger of their original party is not necessary, mainly because it is not a possibility. Politics being the art of the possible, they believed that what is not ordinarily possible can be conveniently ignored.

Now, this story is being repeated in Maharashtra. But there is a little difference here. It appears that the dissidents of Shiv Sena believed that if they get the two third number they can form a separate group and topple the government



and then form a government with the help of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Although the Maharashtra Chief Minister has resigned and the direction of the Governor to hold a floor test has become infructuous, the issue arising out of the anti-defection petitions is still live and needs to be addressed by the next Speaker.

The law imposes the condition of merger of the original political party (namely, the Shiv Sena) which is not likely to happen now or in the future. If there is no merger of the original party, then these dissidents cannot claim any exception from disqualification no matter whether they are two thirds or three fourths. However, a recent judgment of the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court (*Girish Chodankar vs The Speaker, Goa State Legislative*) that held that the merger of two thirds of Members of the Legislative Assembly is deemed to be the merger of the original party seems to have given them a ray of hope. This judgment, unfortunately, does not reflect the correct law and needlessly complicates it. Nevertheless, this judgment too emphasises the need for merger with another party. So, the legal position is if the dissidents do not merge with another party they will be disqualified now or later. They cannot operate as a separate group in the Assembly because the law does not permit them to do so.

On disqualification

Now, disqualification petitions have been filed by the Shiv Sena against 16 of the dissidents under paragraph 2(1)(a) on the ground that they have voluntarily given up

the membership of the party. The question of whether they have voluntarily given up the membership of the party is decided on the basis of the conduct of a member. In *Ravi S. Naik vs Union of India* (1994), the Supreme Court had said “an inference can be drawn from the conduct of a member that he has voluntarily given up the membership of the party to which he belongs”. Wilful non-participation in a crucial meeting of a party whose government is facing a serious crisis because of them, may, in the present circumstances, offer the ground for disqualification.

Point of intervention

However, the notice of no-confidence against the Deputy Speaker has added another piece to the jigsaw puzzle. The intervention by the Supreme Court too has thrown up some crucial questions regarding the operation of the anti-defection law.

The first question is whether the Court can intervene at a stage prior to the decision by the Deputy Speaker. A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had held in *Kihoto Hollohan* (1993) that judicial review cannot be available prior to the making of a decision by the Speaker nor at an interlocutory stage of the proceeding. Giving longer time to the dissidents to submit replies is contrary to this decision. The mandatory period for replying to the charge is seven days under the rule. The court gave them 15 days. It is an intervention at the interlocutory stage which was barred by the Constitution Bench.

Another question of considerable importance is whether the Deputy Speaker can decide the disqualification petition when a no-confidence motion is pending against him. The Supreme Court had held in *Nabam Rebia* (2016) that the Speaker shall not decide the disqualification cases till the no-confidence motion against him is disposed of. In the Maharashtra case, the Deputy Speaker who had assumed the duties of the Speaker because of the vacancy in the office of the Speaker, did not admit

the notice of no-confidence because he had doubts about the authenticity of the notice. The House rules clearly say that the notice of no-confidence against the Speaker/Deputy Speaker needs to be admitted in the first place which is done only by the Speaker. Rules do not recognise any other authority for admitting a notice. But it is the House which takes the final decision on the motion. If the notice of no-confidence does not contain specific charges, it can be disallowed by the Speaker. Therefore, in this case, there is no occasion to say that the Speaker cannot be a judge in his own cause. Disallowing a notice does not prevent Members from giving another notice complying with the requirements of the rule. Further, the notice can be given only if the House is summoned. When the notice was given, the Assembly was not convened. So, the notice against the Deputy Speaker can have no validity under the rules. Therefore, it cannot be said that the notice is pending against the Deputy Speaker.

An observation, its spirit

The anti-defection law is facing many challenges. Since it deals with the political class, the challenges are grave. The law, though not perfect, is a serious attempt to strengthen the moral content of democracy. Piloting the Bill on the Tenth Schedule, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, said, “There are lots of areas in this Bill which are grey. We are covering new grounds... it is better for us to tread cautiously than to make serious errors and repent later. There will be shortcomings in this Bill but as we see and identify those shortcomings we will try to overcome them.”

Parliament needs to recapture the spirit of this observation. The anti-defection law needs to be strengthened and not weakened. The nation expects better compliance of the law by the lawmakers.

P.D.T. Achary is former Secretary General, Lok Sabha

A.P. tops country in ease-of-doing-business

State carried out 301 reforms in FY21

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) achieved No.1 rank in ease-of-doing-business (EoDB) for 2020-21 with a score of 97.89% leaving behind Gujarat (97.77%), Tamil Nadu (96.97%) and Telangana (94.86%) in the second, third and fourth positions respectively. Along with those States, Haryana, Karnataka and Punjab have been adjudged 'top achievers' in the implementation of the 2020-21 Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) jointly formulated by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the World Bank.

According to a press release from the Industries Department, A.P. showed significant progress than any other State in introducing major regulatory, process, and transparency reforms. It implemented 372 reforms in 2017-18, 187 in 2019-20 and 301 in 2020-21 as the economy made a steady recovery from the blow by the pandemic.

The reforms were categorised as general, related to the Public Service Guarantee Act etc., and the specific ones laid out for the purpose of survey. The feedback of 10,200 investors and stakeholders was obtained for assessing the States' performance.

Banks have capital to buffer any shock

Financial Stability Report underlines improvements in lenders' asset quality, NBFCs' capitalisation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

India's scheduled commercial banks as well as non-banking financial companies have sufficient capital buffers to withstand any shock that may emanate from the pandemic or the ongoing geopolitical tensions in Europe, the Reserve Bank of India said in its biannual Financial Stability Report (FSR) released on Thursday.

Banks had bolstered capital and liquidity positions while asset quality had improved. "NBFCs remain well capitalised. Market risks are rising as spells of volatility are unleashed by foreign portfolio investment outflows and the sharp appreciation of the U.S. dollar," the RBI noted.

Observing that the outlook for the global economy



On watch: The external sector is well-buffered to withstand the ongoing terms of trade shocks, says Das. ■ PAUL NORONHA

was shrouded by considerable uncertainty due to the war in Ukraine, elevated commodity prices, supply chain disruptions and darkening growth prospects, the RBI said: "Stagflation risks are mounting... as tight-

ening financial conditions threaten to restrain the pace of growth".

Given the global volatility and spillover risks to the Indian economy, India's financial system was well capitalised and returning to

profitability, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das wrote in the foreword to the report.

SCBs maintained robust capital positions, with the capital to risk weighted assets ratio (CRAR) rising to a new high of 16.7%, while their gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio slipped to a six-year low of 5.9% and net non-performing assets (NNPA) ratio fell to 1.7% in March 2022.

The provisioning coverage ratio (PCR) increased to 70.9% in March 2022, from 67.6% in March 2021

"Macro-stress tests for credit risk reveal that SCBs are well-capitalised and all banks would be able to comply with the minimum capital requirements even under adverse stress scenarios," the RBI asserted.

Noting that network ana-

lysis indicated that the total outstanding bilateral exposures among constituents of the financial system continued to grow, the RBI said the share of SCBs in bilateral exposure remained the largest, although lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Contagion analysis

"A simulated contagion analysis shows that even though losses due to failure of five banks with the maximum capacity to cause contagion increased in March 2022 vis-à-vis their September 2021 position, this would not lead to failure of any additional bank," the RBI stressed in the report.

"The external sector is well-buffered to withstand the ongoing terms of trade shocks and portfolio outflows," Mr. Das added.

External debt rose \$47.1 bn to \$620.7 bn in FY22: RBI data

External debt to GDP ratio declined to 19.9% from 21.2%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

India's external debt rose to \$620.7 billion at end-March 2022, recording an increase of \$47.1 billion over the year earlier period, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data showed.

The external debt to GDP ratio declined to 19.9% at end-March 2022, from 21.2% a year earlier.

Valuation gains on account of the appreciation of the U.S. dollar vis-à-vis the Indian rupee and major currencies including the Japanese yen and euro was estimated at \$11.7 billion.

"Excluding the valuation effect, external debt would have increased by \$58.8 billion instead of \$47.1 billion at



end-March 2022 over end-March 2021," the RBI said.

India's long-term debt (with original maturity of above one year) rose to \$499.1 billion, recording an increase of \$26.5 billion over its level at end-March 2021, RBI data showed.

During the same period, the share of short-term debt

in total external debt increased to 19.6% from 17.6%.

Similarly, the ratio of short-term debt to foreign exchange reserves increased to 20%. U.S. dollar-denominated debt remained the largest component of external debt, with a share of 53.2%.

Separately, the RBI said net claims of non-residents on India increased by \$5.6 billion during the fourth quarter of 2021-22 to \$359.8 billion in March 2022.

"This rise in net claims was due to larger decline in the Indian residents' overseas financial assets... when compared to the decline in foreign-owned assets in India," the central bank said.

(With PTI inputs)

Fiscal deficit touched 12.3% of FY23 goal in May

Deficit projected at 6.4% of GDP in FY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Union government's fiscal deficit at the end of May stood at 12.3% of the annual Budget target for 2022-23, mainly on account of higher expenditure, according to official data released on Thursday.

Fiscal deficit is the difference between total expenditure and revenue of the government. It is an indication of the total borrowings that are needed by the government.

The fiscal deficit had stood at 8.2% of the Budget Estimate (RE) of 2021-22 during the corresponding year-earlier period.

In actual terms, the deficit was at ₹2,03,921 crore at the end of May, as per the data released by the Con-



troller General of Accounts (CGA).

The country's fiscal deficit is projected at 6.4% of the GDP for this fiscal ending March 2023 as against 6.71% for the previous year.

As per the data, the total receipts of the government at the end of May were at ₹3.81 lakh crore, or 16.7% of the BE for 2022-23. The collection was about 18% of the BE of 2021-22 in the corresponding period last fiscal.



Construction boost: Cement output surged 26.3%, compared with production in May 2021. ■AFP

May core sector output rises 2.6% sequentially

Cement output slips 3.15% from April

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Output at India's eight core sectors grew 18.1% year-on-year in May, with all sectors except crude oil and natural gas posting double-digit growth. On a sequential basis, average output across the sectors was about 2.6% higher than in April.

Cement output surged 26.3%, compared with production in May 2021, when the country was in the grip of the second COVID-19 wave. However, in absolute terms, cement was the only sector to record a drop in output from April, declining 3.15%, as per the index of core industries.

Coal production jumped 25.1%, followed by fertilisers (22.8%) and electricity, which grew 22%. Refinery products and steel products grew 16.7% and 15%, respectively, while crude oil and natural gas output saw upticks of 4.6% and 7%, respectively.

'Optically misleading'

Rating agency ICRA termed the 18% growth rate 'optically misleading' as it was boosted by the low base of the second pandemic.

"In sequential terms, the uptick was modest across the core sectors, other than

In sequential terms, the uptick was modest across the core sectors

Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA

the sharp 31% spike in fertiliser output ahead of the kick-off in kharif sowing, whereas cement output dipped by 3%," the rating agency's chief economist Aditi Nayar said.

Exceeds pre-COVID level

Compared with the pre-COVID level, the core index registered a growth of 8.1% in May, led by all the constituents except crude oil. Fertiliser, coal, cement and electricity output displayed double-digit expansions this May over May 2019's levels.

The eight core industries comprise 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). Ms. Nayar projects the IIP to have expanded by 16%-19% in May.

The Commerce and Industry Ministry also upgraded core sectors' growth rate for April 2022 to 9.3%, from its earlier estimate of 8.4% expansion.

The IIP had risen 7.1% in April. February's core sector growth rate was also revised to 5.9%, from the 5.8% provisional figure.

Govt. keeps small savings interest rates unchanged

Move belies hopes of hike amid surge in yields from bonds

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

The government has left the interest rates on small savings schemes such as the Public Provident Fund (PPF) and the National Savings Certificate (NSC) unchanged for the July-September quarter.

A hike in small savings rate was expected in view of a surge in yields on government bonds, to which their returns are linked as per a formula, amid a surge in inflation and increases in key interest rates by the Reserve Bank. “The *status quo* on small savings rates for

Rate card | A look at the existing rates of interest for select small savings schemes

| Instruments | Existing interest rates (%) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1-year term deposit | 5.5* |
| 5-year term deposit | 6.7* |
| 5-year recurring deposit | 5.8* |
| Senior Citizen Savings Scheme | 7.4 |
| National Savings Certificate | 6.8 |
| Public Provident Fund | 7.1 |
| Monthly Income Account | 6.6 |
| Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana | 7.6 |

**approximate*



Source: CMIE

the next quarter is contrary to our expectations of a hike in rates, given the sharp increases seen in the yields on government se-

curities of various maturities,” said ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Small savings interest rates unchanged

This is the ninth quarter in a row that small savings rates have been held at the same level after rates were reduced in the range of 0.5% to 1.1% on different instruments for the April to June 2020 quarter. Further cuts, ranging from 0.4% to 1.1%, were announced for the April to June 2021 quarter but revoked overnight, citing an ‘oversight’.

For July to September, the Sukanya Samriddhi scheme will continue to earn 7.6%, the Senior Citizens Saving Scheme will earn 7.4%, PPF 7.1%, Kisan Vikas Patra 6.9%, and NSC 6.8%. Five-year term deposits will fetch 6.7% interest.

In April, the Reserve Bank of India had said the rise in government bond yields had led to a reduction in the gap between the announced interest rates on small savings over the formula-based rates to a range of 9 to 118 basis points for the April to June quarter,

from a range of 42-168 basis points in the previous quarter. One basis point equals 0.01%.

However, yields have risen further since then. After hitting a four-year high of 7.6% during June, yields on government bonds with a maturity of 10 years stood at 7.46% on June 29.

With the central bank expected to hike interest rates further in the coming months to rein in runaway inflation, ICRA projected last week that the yield on these bonds could rise further to as much as 7.75%-8% in the July-September quarter.

“The average month-end G-Sec yields for one-year, two-year and five-year bonds have increased substantially to 5.26%, 5.65% and 6.79%, respectively, during March and May 2022, from 3.88%, 4.72% and 6%, respectively, during the December 2021 to February 2022 period,” pointed out Ms. Nayar.

EXPLAINER

The free fall of the rupee

Why are countries increasing their interest rates? What are the ways in which the RBI has tried to cushion the fall of the rupee?

THE GIST

■ The Indian rupee hit an all-time low against the U.S. dollar, weakening past the 79 rupees to a dollar mark and selling as low as 79.05 against the dollar on Wednesday.

■ Since March this year, the U.S. Federal Reserve has been raising its benchmark interest rate causing investors to pull capital away from emerging markets such as India and back into the U.S. This, in turn, has put pressure on emerging market currencies which have depreciated significantly against the U.S. dollar so far this year.

■ The RBI has been trying to rein in domestic consumer price inflation, which hit a 95-month high of 7.8% in April, by raising rates and tightening liquidity.

PRASHANTH PERUMAL

The story so far: The Indian rupee hit an all-time low against the U.S. dollar this week weakening past the 79 rupees to a dollar mark and selling as low as 79.05 against the dollar on Wednesday. Many analysts expect the rupee to weaken further in the coming months and move past the 80 rupees to a dollar mark. In fact, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the rupee to weaken past the 94 rupees to a dollar mark by FY29.

What is happening with the rupee?

The Indian rupee has been witnessing a steady decline this year, losing more than 6% against the U.S. dollar since the beginning of 2022. India's forex reserves have also dropped below \$600 billion, plunging by more than \$50 billion since September 3, 2021, when forex reserves stood at an all-time high of \$642 billion. The drop in India's forex reserves is believed to be largely due to steps taken by the Reserve Bank of India to support the rupee. RBI officials, however, have noted that the drop in forex reserves is due to a fall in the dollar value of assets held as reserves by the RBI. For instance, if a portion of the reserves are in euros and the euro depreciates against the dollar, this would cause a drop in the value of forex reserves.

It should be noted that, as a matter of policy, the Indian central bank has usually tried to slow down or smoothen, rather than reverse or prevent, the fall in exchange value of the rupee against the U.S. dollar. The aim of the RBI's policy is to allow the rupee to find its natural value in the market but without undue volatility or causing unnecessary panic among investors. State-run banks are usually instructed by the RBI to sell dollars in order to offer some support to the rupee.

By thus selling dollars in the open market in exchange for rupees, the RBI can improve

demand for the rupee and cushion its fall.

What determines the rupee's value?

The value of any currency is determined by demand for the currency as well as its supply. When the supply of a currency increases, its value drops. On the other hand, when the demand for a currency increases, its value rises. In the wider economy, central banks determine the supply of currencies, while the demand for currencies depends on the amount of goods and services produced in the economy.

In the forex market, the supply of rupees is determined by the demand for imports and various foreign assets. So, if there is high demand to import oil, it can lead to an increase in the supply of rupees in the forex market and cause the rupee's value to drop. The demand for rupees in the forex market, on the other hand, depends on foreign demand for Indian exports and other domestic assets. So, for instance, when there is great enthusiasm among foreign investors to invest in India, it can lead to an increase in the supply of dollars in the forex market which in turn causes the rupee's value to rise against the dollar.

What is causing the rupee to lose value against the dollar?

Since March this year, the U.S. Federal Reserve has been raising its benchmark interest rate causing investors seeking higher returns to pull capital away from emerging markets such as India and back into the U.S. This, in turn, has put pressure on emerging market currencies which have depreciated significantly against the U.S. dollar so far this year. Even developed market currencies such as the euro and the yen have depreciated against the dollar and the dollar index is up more than 9% so far this year. In fact, some analysts believe that the RBI's surprise decision to raise rates in May could have simply been to defend the rupee by preventing any rapid outflow of capital from

India. In 2013, the rupee fell 15% against the dollar in about three months after investors were spooked by the US Federal Reserve's decision to trim down its bond purchase program that had helped keep long-term interest rates low.

Moreover, India's current account deficit, which measures the gap between the value of imports and exports of goods and services, is expected to hit a 10-year high of 3.3% of gross domestic product in the current financial year. This means that India's import demand amid rising global oil prices is likely to negatively affect the rupee unless foreign investors pour sufficient capital into the country to fund the deficit. But foreign investors are unlikely to plough capital into India when investment yields are rising in the U.S. Yields on U.S. 10-year Treasuries, for instance, have risen from around 0.5% in mid-2020 to over 3% now.

The rupee, it should also be noted, has consistently lost value against the U.S. dollar for several decades now. A major reason for this has been consistently higher domestic price inflation in India. Higher inflation in India suggests that the RBI has been creating rupees at a faster rate than the U.S. Federal Reserve has been creating dollars. So, while capital and trade flows gain a lot of attention in discussions on the rupee's value, the difference in the rates at which the U.S. Federal Reserve and the RBI regulate the supply of their currencies may play a much larger role in determining the value of the rupee in the long run.

What lies ahead?

Analysts believe that, over the long run, the rupee is likely to continue to depreciate against the dollar given the significant differences in long-run inflation between India and the U.S.

At the moment, as the U.S. Federal Reserve raises rates to tackle historically high inflation in the country, other countries and emerging markets in particular will be



forced to raise their own interest rates to avoid disruptive capital outflows and to protect their currencies. It should be noted that inflation in the U.S. hit a 41-year high of 8.6%.

The RBI too has been trying to rein in domestic consumer price inflation, which hit a 95-month high of 7.8% in April, by raising rates and tightening liquidity. As interest rates rise across the globe, the threat of a global recession also rises as economies readjust to tighter monetary conditions.

'Gaganyaan crew safety is top priority'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRIHARIKOTA

The Indian Space Research Organisation is not in a hurry to execute Gaganyaan, the manned mission to space, and the Chandrayaan-3 mission in a hurry as the space agency wants to ensure all safety aspects and systems are absolutely in place leaving no room for any issues to occur, ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said on Thursday.

While the Gaganyaan mission was an extremely important one for ISRO, ensuring the safety of astronauts flying on the GSLV Mk III was the top priority for the agency, he said. Scientists were working on the crew escape module and implementing intelligence into the rocket so that in case an issue arises, the rocket can decide that the crew needs to eject the vehicle.

"Aircraft can let pilots know that they have to eject. But rockets cannot do that. Rockets are moving very fast and rockets themselves have to find out something is going bad now 'so let these fellows go away'. It will automatically command an escape system and the astronauts can escape. This is a new system we are working on," he said.

Another key aspect ISRO was looking at was the sensors on the Chandrayaan-3 mission. "Last time we had doubts on sensors. So we are adding new sensors, helicopter sorties, experiments. Let us complete all tests and be clear," Mr. Somanath said.

Modified PSLV places three foreign satellites into orbit

ISRO uses PS-4 stage as an orbital platform for experiments

T.K. ROHIT
SRIHARIKOTA

On a hot summer evening accentuated by clear blue skies, the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) workhorse launch vehicle on its 55th mission, the PSLV-C53, rose into the sky, painting it with a pencil-shaped plume of smoke before it curved away and injected three Singaporean satellites into their intended orbits in the second dedicated mission for the commercial arm of ISRO, New Space India Limited (NSIL).

The mission also served an additional purpose for ISRO, which decided to use the fourth stage, the PS4, as a stationary platform in orbit to conduct scientific experiments. ISRO Chairman, S. Somanath, described the manoeuvre as "a poem in orbit".

The modified PSLV-C53 took off from the second launchpad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota Range, at 6.02 p.m. and placed the three satellites – a 365 kg Singaporean Earth Observation Satellite, DSE-O, a 155 kg small commercial satellite with a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) payload, the NeuSAR; and a 2.8 kg satellite from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and SCOOB-1 – into orbit 19 minutes after lift-off.

"After the primary mission, the PSLV-4th stage is going to write some poems in orbit. The PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM) is going to be functional after this [placing of



The PSLV-C53 taking off from the second launchpad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre on Thursday. ■S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

satellites into orbit] taking over the control of the primary mission computer to another computer. The fourth stage will be powered, generating power on board and will be stabilised with altitude control and host some experiments by some of young start-ups enabled by InSpace," Mr. Somanath said from Mission Control.

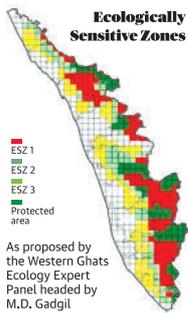
Mr. Somanath said that, normally, the fourth stage would end up as debris in space. But ISRO had repurposed the fourth stage and introduced a computer control system to fire its thrusters, sensors such as star sensors that will enable it look at the stars, find its own position, and also send commands from the ground. The fourth stage can be used in missions where the load is light, like on the PSLV-C53. On missions with higher pay-

loads, such as an upcoming launch with a 1.5-tonne satellite, there will be too little propulsion left to operate the POEM.

S.R. Biju, Mission Director, said the PSLV was in a different configuration this time with the core-alone version being used after a long time.

"We had to introduce some changes to improve the production of PSLV so that we can meet the growing demand of customers, which we have implemented, and it has yielded results," he said.

Explaining about the fourth stage and POEM, Mr. Biju said ISRO would take over the PS-4 stage and give it some energy to do some cost-effective experiments in orbit that can satisfy the growing demand from start-ups, and the student and scientific communities.



As proposed by the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel headed by M.D. Gadgil

The Western Ghats

1,490 km
from Tapi Valley down to Kanyakumari

Nearly 15% of the Ghats under protected area system

Home to over 500 species of birds

120 species of mammals

Over 4,000 species of flowering plants or 27% of India's species from the Ghats

645 species of evergreen trees endemic to the Ghats

Around 850-1,000 species of Bryophytes

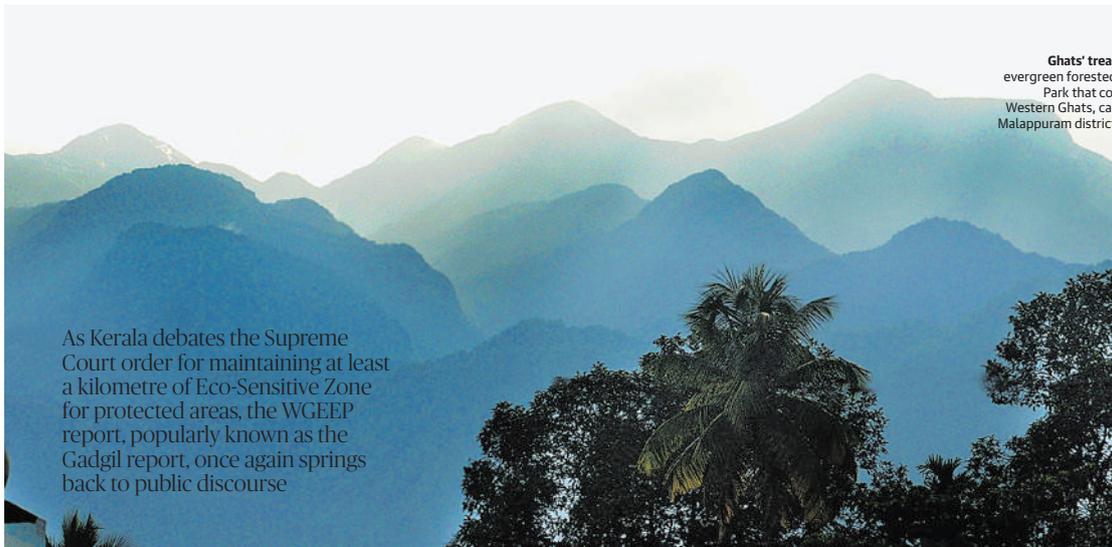
350 species of ants

330 species of butterflies

174 species of dragonflies, damselflies

269 species of molluscs

288 species of fish fauna, 41% of them endemic to the region



As Kerala debates the Supreme Court order for maintaining at least a kilometre of Eco-Sensitive Zone for protected areas, the WGEEP report, popularly known as the Gadgil report, once again springs back to public discourse

K.S. SUDHI
KOCHI

Green touchstone

A posse of hawk-eyed policemen stood guard outside a packed conference hall at Thodupuzha in Idukki some time in 2013, watching over the crowd for signs of unrest.

The situation was tense outside as the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) had stirred up a series of protests across the State. Everyone at the venue was expecting some heckling or sloganeering to greet the chief guest of the day.

Clad in kurta and pyjama, the willowy Gandhian walked into the hall calmly. The chitchats and murmur in the hall gave way to heavy silence as he approached the podium. The audience was all ears as Madhav Dhnananjaya Gadgil began his lecture on the ecological significance of the mountain ranges of Western Ghats and the need to adopt sustainable development models.

Nearly two hours later, armed policemen escorted

back to public discourse in Kerala. A decade after the WGEEP panel report was released in public domain, the man and the report are being repeatedly discussed. While some view him as the messiah of Kerala's ecology, there are a few others who see him as an eco-terrorist out to wreak havoc on the lives of millions of people who had painstakingly set up their lives in the high ranges and near forest areas.

It had taken a year-and-a-half, 14 meetings across the Ghats States, several brainstorming sessions, public consultations, and field visits for the panel to evolve a methodology to categorise the Western Ghats into three zones of varied ecological sensitivity and suggest broad sectoral guidelines for

back to public discourse in Kerala.

It had also spelt out a broad framework for the establishment of the Western Ghats Ecology Authority. The report was submitted to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests on August 31, 2011.

No one had any hint of the political unrest the report was to trigger in the State, which has a significant segment of its population settled in the Ghats districts. The report saw some political parties and a section of the Church coming together to oppose it and later extending the camaraderie to the 2014 Parliament elections.

The period also witnessed churning in the State unit of the Congress. P.T. Thomas, the sitting MP of the Idukki constituency, came under attack from the Syro-Malabar Church for his pro-Gadgil stance and was denied a ticket to contest. Political compulsions and stiff opposition from the Church also forced him to move out of his home turf Idukki and settle in Ernakulam.

"Probably," remembers ecologist V.S. Vijayan, a member of the WGEEP, "this was the only election in the State influenced by an ecological issue. Though the State had earlier witnessed public protests and campaigns to protect the verdant forest of Silent Valley, they had not snowballed into a political issue in those

down. The period also witnessed churning in the State unit of the Congress. P.T. Thomas, the sitting MP of the Idukki constituency, came under attack from the Syro-Malabar Church for his pro-Gadgil stance and was denied a ticket to contest. Political compulsions and stiff opposition from the Church also forced him to move out of his home turf Idukki and settle in Ernakulam.

"Looking back, one can find that the WGEEP report has become a platform for creating awareness on ecological issues and a sustainable model of development in Kerala. One also realises the games played out by the mining lobby and a section of the Church to unleash a misinformation campaign and propaganda aimed at creating panic in the minds of the people," says Mr. Vijayan, who spoke at around 175 public meetings to spread the "truth about the WGEEP recommendations."

"The panel was all for inclusive development models that took care of the people and the ecology. We never recommended evicting people from their homelands. We suggested eco-friendly mode of farming in the Ecologically Sensitive Areas," remembers Mr. Vijayan.

Ghats' treasures: The Koomban Mala, the evergreen forested hills of Silent Valley National Park that contribute to the richness of the Western Ghats, captured from Karuvarakundu in Malappuram district. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

report, says Mr. Vijayan, is that the misconceptions and mischief created and spread by certain vested interest groups influenced the masses. The organised campaigns succeeded in creating a wrong impression in the minds of people and the ecological issues suddenly assumed a political colour, he remembers.

TV. Sajeew, entomologist and Principal Scientist of the Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi, who had addressed over 75 public meetings to spread the message of the WGEEP report, feels that the report had brought out the real issue of ecological conservation from the clutches of a romantic approach spread by some poets and writers.

"If asked about the outcome of the report, I will say that it served as the ammunition for hundreds of mass movements at local levels against the indiscriminate and illegal exploitation of natural resources and spread the word about conservation of ecology. The report, which put forward a scientific approach and framework for addressing ecological issues, dismantled the wrong notions of science and knowledge and helped at least a few scientists of the research institutions to listen to the lives of people and issues concerning them," he says.

The report also put forward a democratic approach towards ecological governance. It suggested discussing ecological issues and development concerns and initiatives at the grass-roots level of grama sabhas rather than adopting a top-down approach. Even a decade after the report, the democratic spirit of ecological governance is yet to percolate down the system, he

General Studies Paper I

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| 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 |
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General Studies Paper II

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| 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; |

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| J | Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions; |
| K | Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies; |
| L | Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; |
| M | Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections; |
| N | Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; |
| 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; |

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| 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. |
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| 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. |