



**VEDHIK**  
**IAS ACADEMY**  
*The New Learning Mantra*



**VEDHIK**

**DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS**

03 - AUG - 2022

## **FOREWORD**

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

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

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

## CONTENTS

- GSP 02 A News - India is highest priority Maldives President
- GSP 02 C News - Pelosi lands in Taiwan, China slams U.S. Part I
- GSP 02 C News - Pelosi lands in Taiwan, China slams U.S. Part II
- GSP 02 H Editorials - Tracing the Vice-President's stint as a parliamentarian
- GSP 02 K News - A-G says Waqf Board is 'targeting' him
- GSP 03 A News - No one is denying price rise, efforts on to control it, says FM
- GSP 03 A News - Rupee jumps 53 paisa to close at 1-month high
- GSP 03 A News - Rupee not collapsing, says Finance Minister Part I

- 
- GSP 03 A News - Rupee not collapsing, says Finance Minister Part II
  - GSP 03 A News - Trade deficit soared past \$31 bn in July
  - GSP 03 Editorials - A turning point in crypto regulation, led by Europe
  - GSP 03 L Editorials - Recalling India's Antarctica activities
- 

# India is highest priority: Maldives President

The two countries sign a cybersecurity pact to promote closer cooperation, exchange of information

**KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE**  
NEW DELHI

The Maldives on Tuesday signed a cybersecurity agreement with India as both sides affirmed bilateral will to strengthen ties to take on “transnational crimes and terrorism” in the Indian Ocean region.

Addressing the media after the signing of six agreements, President Ibrahim ‘Ibu’ Solih expressed gratitude to India for the help extended to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and for providing a landing craft and utility vehicles to the Maldives National Defence Force.

“The MoU signed today on cybersecurity aims to promote closer cooperation and exchange of information

pertaining to cybersecurity in accordance to our domestic laws, rules and regulation and based on equality, reciprocity and mutual benefit,” Mr. Solih said.

Before that, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Solih participated remotely in the pouring of the first concrete of the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) that would include a 6.74-km bridge and the causeway linking capital Male with the neighbouring islands.

The \$500-million project is being financed by India. India on Tuesday also extended a \$100-million new Line of Credit to finance infrastructure projects in the Maldives.

In his remarks, Mr. Solih



**Joining hands:** Narendra Modi and Ibu Solih during an event at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Tuesday. •PTI

referred to India as the “highest priority” of the Maldives and said, “Maldives-India relation, goes beyond diplomacy. Our values, our cultures and our histories are intertwined, making it a traditional relationship. Our

centuries-old relationship is grown with political trust, economic cooperation and coherent strategic policies between our two countries.”

In his remarks, Mr. Modi referred to the threats of terrorism and transnational

crime and said that he and Mr. Solih took an “overview” of all the factors in the bilateral relation.

## **India’s gift to Maldives**

To strengthen Maldivian maritime capacity, India has announced the gifting of a second landing assault craft to the Maldives National Defence Force. Mr. Solih thanked India for the gift of 24 utility vehicles to the National Defence Force. Maldives was one of the first recipients of the Covishield vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and the visiting dignitary acknowledged the support that his country received in combating the pandemic from India.

# Pelosi lands in Taiwan, China slams U.S.

Beijing condemns 'political provocation', vows 'targeted military' countermeasures

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
BEIJING

U.S. House Speaker and veteran Democratic politician Nancy Pelosi arrived in Taipei on Tuesday evening, marking the most high-level political visit from the U.S. to Taiwan in 25 years.

China condemned the visit as "a major political provocation", and said it would launch "targeted military operations" as countermeasures, even as Beijing on Tuesday scrambled Su-35 fighters across the median of the Taiwan Strait in a show of force, placed restrictions on several Taiwanese exporters, and announced live-fire drills to be held in six regions near the island of Taiwan from Thursday to Sunday.

China's Defence Ministry said it is "on high alert" while the PLA Eastern Theatre Command announced it will hold joint sea and air exercises in the sea and airspaces of northern, southwestern and southeastern Taiwan and also carry out missile tests.

China's Foreign Ministry, in a statement released shortly after Ms. Pelosi's U.S. Air Force-operated Boeing C-40C plane touched down in Taipei, said "her visit to and activities in Taiwan, in whatever form and for whatever reason, is a major political provocation to upgrade U.S. official exchanges with Taiwan".

Ms. Pelosi, on arrival, said her "delegation's visit to Tai-



**On a mission:** U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, centre, arriving in Taipei, Taiwan, on Tuesday. ■ AP

wan honours America's unwavering commitment to supporting Taiwan's vibrant democracy". "Our discussions with [the] Taiwan leadership reaffirm our support for our partner & promote our shared interests, including advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific region," Ms. Pelosi said.

Underlining the importance on the visit placed by Taiwan, which has seen the number of countries that maintain formal relations dwindle to only around a dozen, Foreign Minister Joseph Wu welcomed Ms. Pelosi at the airport. Talks with President Tsai Ing-wen are set for Wednesday.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying earlier accused the U.S. of "hollowing out" its commitment to a "One China Policy". "The U.S. and Taiwan have made provocations together first, whereas China has been compelled to act in self-defence," she said. "Any countermeasure to be taken by China would be a justified and necessary response to the U.S. oblivion to China's repeated démarches and the U.S.'s unscrupulous behaviour".

Chinese analysts expected a series of measures to be announced in coming days and weeks, from military drills to economic actions, as well as a period of increasingly fraught relations between the world's two biggest powers.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

# Pelosi lands in Taiwan, China slams U.S.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken sought to distance the White House from the visit, underlining, as President Biden had also conveyed to his counterpart Xi Jinping in a phone call on July 28, that “Congress is an independent, coequal branch of government” and “the decision is entirely the speaker’s”.

He said if “China tries to create some kind of crisis or otherwise escalate tensions, that would be entirely on Beijing” and there was “precedent”. The last visit by a House Speaker was, however, as far back as in 1997, although members of Congress have since visited.

China rejected that argument, saying “when the House Speaker, being the third-highest ranking figure in the U.S. government, flies on U.S. military aircraft and

makes a provocative visit to the Taiwan region, it is by no means an unofficial action”.

## ‘Crossing red lines’

While China has blamed the U.S. of crossing “red lines”, the visit has been welcomed in Taiwan, which has accused Beijing of trying to change the current status quo through a combination of military pressure and moves to isolate Taiwan internationally.

Economic measures may now follow. China, which is Taiwan’s biggest trading partner, on Monday barred shipments from 100 Taiwanese exporters of products including seafood and honey.

For now, however, the rare high-level visit is being welcomed in the island of 23 million people.

# Tracing the Vice-President's stint as a parliamentarian

He served in the House for 19 years on both sides of the aisle



K.V. PRASAD

By Saturday, India will have a new Vice President. In the following week, it would bring to an end the long parliamentary journey of M. Venkaiah Naidu and his tenure as the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, the other role for the post in the Constitution.

Work done during the term of the outgoing Chairman and progress achieved by the House is documented at the end of every session. Mr. Naidu's term reflects on the progress of the legislative work; increased productivity at 70%; greater oversight of the work done by Parliamentary Committees; and a step-up in its primary role as a deliberative chamber.

Statistics show that in the five-year period of Mr. Naidu, the House held 261 sittings over 13 sessions, passing or returning 177 Bills including the abrogation of Article 370 with regard to Jammu and Kashmir, Triple Talaq, Transgender Persons and the now repealed contentious Farm Bills.

Chairman Naidu entered the office with the unique advantage of having served in the House for 19 years - as a member of the Union Council of Ministers including a decade-long stint in the Opposition. This across-the-aisle experience guided his work, providing him with an innate ability to understand and appreciate the compulsions of all members.

## Continuity and change

This period was marked by both continuity and change. Chairman Naidu retained the practice of holding the Question Hour at 12 noon, a major Rule change effected by his predecessor M. Hamid Ansari. The changes suggested by the Rules Committee advanced the Zero Hour. Functioning of the Question Hour suggests that the shift had a positive effect and reduced the incidence of it being washed out. Early in his tenure, deciding on a complaint under the 10th Schedule, Mr. Naidu disqualified members Sharad Yadav and Ali Anwar Ansari of the Janata Dal (United). In disposing of the petition, he suggested presiding officers tasked to adjudicate such complaints should avoid a tendency to delay a decision.

Another significant step was to bring greater accountability to the Parliamentary Committees by monitoring its workings. Periodic reports on the duration of meetings held, at-

tendance of its members, and studies undertaken sent a message of strong oversight by the Chair. In order to encourage members to speak in their preferred language, existing infrastructure was strengthened.

Drawing upon his vast parliamentary experience, he ordered a comprehensive study of the Secretariat with the aim of bringing about systemic improvement and making its work more transparent, accountable and subject to periodic scrutiny.

After extensive interactions with members and staff, the in-house panel came up with 130 recommendations. One path-breaking suggestion is to dedicate an hour in Parliament to discuss select reports of Committees. This move would result in the Houses evaluating the work done by its panels.

## Unprecedented times

Chairman Naidu's tenure also witnessed an unprecedented situation of a world in the grip of a global health pandemic. The working of the Parliament came under strain with both the Houses evolving a common protocol to fulfil its constitutional obligation.

With a strong commitment to scrutiny, the Chairman, as a veteran parliamentarian, could have guided the Houses to usher changes in Rules allowing Committees and even the chambers to meet in a virtual and/or hybrid mode.

Just as shifting the Question Hour led to improving its efficacy, holding meetings at least of the Committees in a digital format should be a step in the right direction.

Another area where the Council of States could have taken a lead is expanding its institutional reach through social media. Rajya Sabha could have been a pioneer in this regard under Chairman Naidu who is well-versed with the media and its new avatar

Following its guidelines on the use of social media published a few years ago, the Inter-Parliamentary Union in its latest Global Parliamentary Report in collaboration with UNDP identified four trends parliaments should embrace to engage with citizens. These were growing reliance on digital tools; listening and not informing; visibility in the blizzard of information; growing public demand to influence decision making.

With its own Rules, Rajya Sabha could come up with a stand-alone policy and grant seamless access to people to this deliberative body discharging legislative obligations at its own pace.

*K.V. Prasad is a senior journalist and former Fulbright-American Political Science Association Fellow in the U.S. Congress*

# A-G says Waqf Board is 'targeting' him

It removed him from sensitive case

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal on Tuesday accused the Maharashtra State Board of Waqfs in the Supreme Court of "targeting" him through a "serious, uncalled for and unwarranted attempt" to remove him as its lawyer at the last minute in a sensitive case.

The Board, a statutory body, superintends Waqf property running into acres and worth crores in the State. Mr. Venugopal was representing the Board in a batch of petitions on the seminal question of whether every charitable trust established by a person practising Islam was necessarily a Waqf.

Waqf is the property given in the name of God for religious and charitable purposes.

Taking serious note of the Board's "casual" treatment of the country's top law officer and constitutional authority, Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, heading a three-judge Bench, said "this is not the way you behave to the Attorney-General... This is improper".

## **Contempt action sought**

Mr. Venugopal said the court should even contemplate initiating contempt action.

He had written to the Supreme Court narrating the surprising turn of events.

Mr. Venugopal said he had come across a letter written by a lawyer purportedly on behalf of the Board. This letter had wanted the cancellation of a two-week



K.K. Venugopal

adjournment sought previously in the case owing to the "health of the Attorney-General". The lawyer's letter had said the case was of an "urgent nature" and could not be adjourned. The lawyer said that the Board had already made "alternative arrangement" for representation in the case.

Mr. Venugopal said the move to replace him as counsel came even as he had himself written a letter to cancel the adjournment in order to appear in the case on August 2.

## **'Right of audience'**

He said the A-G had the "right of audience" in all courts in the country under Article 76(3) of the Constitution, adding such conduct amounted to "interference in the administration of justice".

The Board had taken "shocking steps", including the removal of lawyers who were assisting him in the case, he said, adding, "This clearly is an act of contempt of court." His communication was placed before the court on Tuesday.

The court scheduled a hearing on August 19.

# No one is denying price rise, efforts on to control it, says FM

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Replying to a short duration discussion on the “rising prices of essential items” in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the Centre was not denying the fact that there was price rise. She said the Centre was taking constant efforts to check prices of essential items.

“We will look at the numbers [on economy] and also at the ground situation. We are not running away,” she said, adding that the Centre was making efforts to keep the inflation level at 7%. “Ideally it should be below 6%,” she noted.

The Finance Minister said the Opposition was trying to build a narrative that the poor person was not being given anything from the cess and duties collected by the Centre.

 **We will look at the numbers [on economy] and also at the ground situation. We are not running away**

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN  
Finance Minister

Countering the Opposition’s allegation that cess and additional taxes on petrol and diesel were not shared with the States, she said the Centre collected ₹3.77 lakh crore as cess and ₹3.93 lakh crore had been utilised through States. “It goes to the States promptly. Centre does not sit on it. Cess collected, cess utilised. It is a misconception that cess is not shared,” she said and added that total flow of funds to the States had increased close to 15%. “14.8% average resource growth in States after the GST,” the Mi-

nister said. Earlier, initiating the debate, CPI(M) leader Elamaram Kareem said there was no unanimous decision at the GST Council on the tax on pre-packed items as Kerala and some other States ruled by non-BJP parties had opposed it.

The BJP’s Prakash Javadekar said all countries in the world suffer from inflation.

“But no country has given free ration as we did,” he said.

Congress MP Shaktisinh Gohil said people were fed up with the price rise. He said the Centre collected ₹27 lakh crore through additional cess and duties on petrol and diesel and ₹98,000 crore was used to pay for oil bonds.

DMK MP Tiruchi Siva said consumption of rural households had fallen and profits of corporate houses had increased.

# Rupee jumps 53 paise to close at 1-month high

## FII flows, softening crude boosts unit

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

**MUMBAI**

The rupee rallied 53 paise – its best single-day gain in more than 11 months – to close at a more than one-month high of 78.53 against the U.S. dollar on Tuesday.

Persistent foreign fund inflows into capital markets, softening crude oil prices and a weak U.S. dollar in the global markets boosted the local currency.

Increased risk appetite on hopes of a slow pace of tightening by the U.S. Federal Reserve has also strengthened the sentiment.

“Rupee gained strongly crossing above 78.50 on the back of dollar index weakness and crude prices falling below \$95 in WTI,” said Ja-teen Trivedi, VP Research



Analyst at LKP Securities.

“The range for rupee can be seen between 78.45 to 78.85,” he added.

“The focus is now on three key events scheduled for the week – OPEC+ meeting, RBI monetary policy outcome, and the U.S. jobs report that will provide cues and dictate trend for the domestic currency,” said Sugandha Sachdeva, VP - Commodity and Currency Research, Religare Broking.

# Rupee not collapsing, says FM

Currency finding its natural course, Sitharaman tells RS

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

There is no collapse in the rupee's value and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is only intervening in the forex markets to rein in volatility, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman assured Parliament on Tuesday.

The Minister also emphasised that India, unlike many other countries, was not fix-

ated on pegging the currency at a particular level, and said the government was working with the central bank to bolster foreign currency inflows.

“Indian rupee's fluctuations are more versus the U.S. dollar and even there, its performance is much better than its own peers,” she said, during Question Hour in the Rajya Sabha.

“We have withstood the impact of the U.S. Fed's decisions much better than any other peer currencies, and the rupee is appreciating in value compared to other currencies. Let us understand the context and I assure you there is no collapse,” Ms. Sitharaman asserted.

# 'Rupee not collapsing, says Finance Minister

While India's foreign exchange reserves had declined to \$571.5 billion in July, from about \$600 billion recently, the Minister pointed out this was 'not a small amount', adding that the country was still 'comfortably placed'.

The rupee, she noted, 'is actually finding its natural course' and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) (is continuously monitoring it and intervening only) if there was volatility. "The RBI's intention is not so much to fix the value of the rupee," she noted.

"I want the House to take cognisance of Indian rupee's performance versus others such as the U.K. pound and contextualise its performance versus the U.S. dollar particularly because of the various steps being taken by the U.S. Fed," she said.

## **Rupee during UPA govt.**

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said that the rupee had fallen by 10% to 12% in some years during the UPA regime from 2004 to 2014, compared with a maximum fall of 7.8% in a single year under the current administration's eight-year tenure since 2014.

In a written response, the junior finance minister also attributed global factors such as the Russia-Ukraine war, soaring crude oil prices and tightening of global financial conditions as the cause for the depreciation of the rupee against the U.S. dollar.

"However, the Indian rupee has strengthened against major currencies such as the British pound, the Japanese yen and the euro," he added.

## **Congress remarks**

When Congress MP Pramod Tiwari referred to remarks made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2013 (in his tenure as Gujarat Chief Minister) on the fall of the rupee leading to a drop in the country's stature, Ms. Sitharaman said India's economy had become one of the fragile five economies at the time.

"When the then Gujarat CM and current PM had given statements about the Indian currency in 2013, that was because India's situation was quite serious on all other parameters as well. The economy had become one of the fragile five.... The economy had double digit inflation for 22 months and the Indian economy had reached such a serious situation just because of the taper tantrum," she pointed out.

"Today, there is pandemic, recovery, second wave, Omicron, Russia-Ukraine war, the whole world's supply chain is disrupted, India's currency is still staying strong," Ms. Sitharaman concluded.

On Tuesday, as per provisional data, the rupee rose 41 paise to close at 78.65 against the dollar, continuing to recover from the low of 80 to the dollar it had hit a couple of weeks ago.

# Trade deficit soared past \$31 bn in July

Goods exports slid marginally even as imports surged 43.6%; silver imports zoomed

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

India's merchandise trade deficit widened sharply to a record \$31.02 billion in July, as per preliminary trade estimates that peg imports during the month at \$66.26 billion, or 43.6% higher than a year earlier.

Goods exports declined 0.8% year-on-year to \$35.24 billion and were 12.8% lower than June's exports. Imports were flat on a month-on-month basis from June.

July's trade deficit, which is almost thrice the \$10.63 billion deficit a year earlier, takes India's merchandise trade deficit for the first four months of 2022-23 past \$100 billion. The trade deficit stood at \$42.07 billion in April to July 2021.

This is the third month in



**Boding ill:** Goods exports fell 0.8% year-on-year to \$35 bn and were 12.8% lower than in June 2022. ■K.K. MUSTAFAH

a row that the monthly trade deficit had breached previous records – May had clocked a deficit of \$24.3 billion, followed by \$26.2 billion in June.

The Commerce and Industry Ministry attributed

the decrease in exports largely to a 7.07% fall in petroleum products, followed by a 28.3% decline in cotton yarn and handloom products, a 94.3% slump in iron ore and a 2.5% dip in engineering goods. While coal and petro-

leum products continued to drive up imports, like they did in June, silver imports shot up exponentially in July.

Petroleum imports rose 70.4%, while inward shipments of coal jumped 164.4% to cross \$5.1 billion from just a little less than \$2 billion a year earlier.

## Gold imports decline

Silver imports were up 9,331%, and electronics goods also escalated 27.8%, the Ministry said. Gold imports, however, dropped sharply, both on a year-on-year and sequential bases.

Only \$2.37 billion worth of the yellow metal was imported in July, 43.6% lower than in July 2021 and 12.2% below June 2022 levels.

The sharp uptick in the trade deficit was unexpected

and did not augur well for the current account deficit (CAD) in the second quarter, said ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar. The CAD is likely to have crossed \$30 billion in the first quarter of 2022-23, equivalent to about 80% of the full-year deficit last year.

“Lower commodity prices should temper the trade deficit going ahead, although the strength of merchandise and services exports in the face of the global slowdown fears remains crucial,” Ms. Nayar said.

She expressed concern that imports were almost double the exports in July.

EEPC India chairman Mahesh Desai said the drop in engineering goods reflected weakening demand from the U.S. and Europe amid recession concerns.

# A turning point in crypto regulation, led by Europe

If GDPR marked a decisive moment in consumer data protection, MiCA could point to responsible crypto management



ASHISH SINGHAL

There has been a lot of noise over Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman's answer to a question recently in Parliament about the Indian government's stance on cryptocurrencies. Some headlines even went as far as to suggest that there was a fresh plan to ban crypto in India.

As per my reading, the only thing the Finance Minister's answer reveals is that while India's central bank wants a ban on cryptocurrencies, any legislation for the "regulation or for banning crypto" can be effective only after significant international collaboration.

## A seamless asset

This is true. Crypto is an Internet-native asset not limited by geographical boundaries. To transfer crypto, one does not need a pipeline or shipping container. A steady Internet connection and some

elemental knowledge of crypto services are what are needed that will allow anyone in the world to transfer crypto assets.

Further, crypto assets are not issued or controlled by any enterprise. There are a little over 19 million bitcoins in circulation at present, out of the total capped supply (hence, the scarcity) of 21 million bitcoins. Any of the estimated 75 million crypto wallet holders could be owning these bitcoins, or their fractions (called satoshis or sats).

How then can such a seamless financial asset be regulated? How can regulators monitor the flow of capital in and out of their jurisdiction? Answers to these questions will lead us to a framework to regulate the crypto industry. Fortunately, global consensus is emerging on this aspect.

This June, amid all the attention over inflation and the related capital market turmoil, the European Parliament and Council, the legislative arms of the European Union, came to a provisional agreement on long-awaited regulations on crypto, namely, the Regulation of Markets in Crypto-Assets, or MiCA.



It took two years of brainstorming and negotiations for Europe to get here. But before we parse through MiCA, it is important to understand why European regulations are noteworthy.

The European market is second to the United States economically and behind Asia in terms of the number of Internet users. Yet, Europe is the global yardstick on technology regulations. The General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR, first published in 2016 and implemented in 2018, marked a turning point on consumer data protection and privacy not just in Europe but the world over.

The GDPR introduced a framework for seeking user consent and introduced several progressive rules such as the right to forget.

The Supreme Court of India has also held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right and an integral part of the right to life and liberty.

## Setting standards

Now, Europe is showing us the path to regulate crypto assets. So, how does MiCA intend to regulate an asset not limited by geography? It proposes to regulate crypto asset services and crypto asset issuers. By regulating these entities, Europe intends to provide consumer protection, transparency, and governance standards, regardless of the decentralised nature of the technology.

For instance, under MiCA, crypto asset service providers will be liable in case they lose investors' assets, and will be subject to European market-abuse regulations, including those on market manipulation and insider trading.

Then, MiCA goes further to put forth specific regulations for stablecoins, rightly demarcating them from other crypto assets. Under the proposed rules, issuers of stablecoins – asset-referenced tokens is the term it uses – are subject to a greater degree of compliance and declaration. Under

MiCA, stablecoin issuers must maintain reserves to cover all claims of the coins, and should implement a process for immediate redemption if and when holders seek one.

## The TerraUSD example

This is significant. The recent collapse of TerraUSD, an algorithmic stablecoin that had no adequate reserve and relied mainly on the demand-and-supply balance with its sister coin, Luna, had caused significant losses to retail and institutional investors. If the laws Europe proposes were in effect, TerraUSD issuers would have had to maintain 1:1 reserve, which would have prevented the bank run that roiled the crypto market.

To be clear, Europe still has some distance to cover to implement these proposed rules. But like the GDPR did for data protection, Europe has shown the way forward to regulate crypto in a manner that enables responsible businesses and protects users. It would not be too long for other nations to follow suit.

Ashish Singhal is the co-founder and CEO of CoinSwitch

# Recalling India's Antarctica activities

Having been left out of 1959's Antarctica Treaty, the country's maiden voyage in 1982 stunned the world



JAIRAM RAMESH

Parliament has just passed the Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022 albeit raucously in the Rajya Sabha. It is an important step forward in our engagement with the continent which began way back in February 1956. It was then, at the instance of Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon, that India became the first country in the world to request for an item on the agenda of the eleventh United Nations General Assembly entitled "The Question of Antarctica" to 'ensure that the vast areas and its resources were used entirely for peaceful purposes and for general welfare'.

But India did not press the point further because it got caught up later in the year with the almost simultaneous crises in the Suez and Hungary and also because of resistance from countries like Argentina and Chile. But the Nehru-Menon initiative in which India's Permanent Representative at the UN Arthur Lall also played an important part did have one very tangible impact. Twelve countries who believed that they had a direct stake in Antarctica started discussions among themselves and on December 1, 1959 the Antarctica Treaty was signed in Washington DC.

Not surprisingly, since its moves at the UN had irked a number of countries including the USSR, India was neither involved nor invited. But in May 1958, India's Prime Minister had told Parliament: "We are not challenging anybody's rights there. But it has become important more specifically because of the possible experimentation of atomic weapons and the line, that the matter should be considered by the UN...the fact that Antarctica contains many very important minerals—especially atomic energy minerals—is one of the reasons why this area is attractive to various countries. We thought it would be desirable to have a discussion about this at the UN."

Subsequently, Antarctica faded from the Indian geopolitical gaze. The Treaty members worked on the development of the continent among



**Need of the hour:** India has been chartering ships from other countries until now and needs to address its lack of a polar research vessel. ■ REUTERS

themselves, inviting occasional criticism from other countries, including India, who were actually helpless to make any difference.

## Indian expedition

But the morning of January 9, 1982, transformed the international discourse when news of India's first Antarctic expedition reaching its destination not only electrified India but stunned the world. Operation Gangotri, as it was christened by the Prime Minister, had been a hush-hush exercise started as soon as Indira Gandhi had returned to power two years earlier. She had appointed noted marine biologist Syed Zahoor Qasim as secretary of the newly-created Department of Environment in April 1981 and three months later had brought into existence a separate Department of Ocean Development.

The Prime Minister was well aware of the political impact a successful Indian expedition would have since India was not a member of the Antarctic Treaty and no other Asian country, including China, had a presence there. Rather tellingly and reflective of the mindset of members of the Treaty, the well-known British science magazine *New Scientist*, some days later, reported India's expedition under the headline 'Indians quietly invade Antarctica'.

Yet, beyond global geopolitics and strategic consideration, there was another impulse compelling a naturalist Prime Minister to back the expedition. Well aware of Antarctica's

mineral wealth, Indira Gandhi was drawn equally—I would venture to suggest even more—to the ecological dimensions of Operation Gangotri: greater knowledge of the Indian Ocean and the monsoons, life in ice-bound regions and marine biodiversity. It was therefore no coincidence that the leader of the expedition was Qasim who had earlier served as the Director of the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa. C.P. Vohra, a member of the successful Indian expedition of 1965 to Mount Everest, was Qasim's deputy.

A second expedition led by one of India's top geologists V.K. Raina landed in Antarctica on December 10, 1982. Incidentally, it was Raina who challenged the very intellectually lazy and loose assertion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that Himalayan glaciers would become extinct by 2035. It was his critique that forced the IPCC to revamp the manner in which it carried out peer reviews of climate science literature. Raina's point was limited to questioning such a precise date of extinction: he was not doubting, nor was the government of the day, the reality of the retreat of the preponderant majority of glaciers in the Himalayas that is having serious environmental impacts.

With two expeditions successfully completed within a span of 11 months, India finally became a member of the Antarctic Treaty in August 1983 and China followed in 1985. Today the Treaty has 46 members and

has a Convention on Marine Living Resources and a Protocol on Environmental Protection as well.

## More achievements follow

1984 saw two more striking Indian achievements: its first Antarctic team started wintering there from March 1, 1984 and a few months afterwards an unmanned Antarctic research base—named by the Prime Minister a few months before her assassination as Dakshin Gangotri—was established. Since then, India has set up two manned (an inappropriate word since women scientists have also been part of expeditions doing the country proud) research stations in Antarctica—Maitri in 1988 and Bharati in 2012. Forty expeditions to the continent have taken place.

The Bill passed by Parliament has been under discussion in the government for over five years at least. It is largely administrative in nature but nonetheless is a milestone. It provides a detailed legal framework for India's Antarctic activities that is consistent with its international treaty obligations.

The issue of a polar research vessel, however, still needs to be addressed immediately. So far, India has been chartering such ships from countries like Russia and Norway while China has two of its own. Of late, chartering has been presenting its own difficulties. A decision was indeed taken in October 2014 for India to have its own research ship with ice-breaking and other advanced technological capabilities but it remains unimplemented. Surely if fighter aircraft could be acquired from abroad giving a go-by to the Make-in-India policy, a research ship could also be so acquired.

The acquisition of a vessel on a permanent basis is a logical next step to the passage of the Bill as also the revamp of the quite old Maitri research station. The polar research vessel will also be required as India expands its association with and involvement in the Arctic as well. Its research station there called Himadri was inaugurated in July 2008 and five years later India got observer status at the eight-country Arctic Council.

Jairam Ramesh is a Member of Parliament & Chairman of the Standing Committee on Science & Technology, Environment, Forests & Climate Change

General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 <sup>th</sup> century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

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

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