



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra



VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

25 - 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 B Editorials - Heading the G20 and New Delhi's choices
- GSP 02 B News - India said to plan sops for rupee use in Russia trade
- GSP 02 M Editorials - The Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2022
- GSP 02 O Editorials - Keep it simple
- GSP 02 R Editorials - Making out a case for the other UBI in India
- GSP 02 R News - Why can't govt. call all-party meet on freebies'
- GSP 02 S Editorials - Regional language important in early learning UGC Chairman
- GSP 02 T News - The 'tomato flu' outbreak and the Centre's advisory
- GSP 03 A News - 'Corporate bond market grew fourfold in a decade
- GSP 03 A News - GST kitty for top States could rise 20% in FY23, says Crisil
- GSP 03 D News - 'Wind project addition to peak by 2024'
- GSP 03 G News - SC asks Centre to expand food security coverage

Heading the G20 and New Delhi's choices

With geopolitical currents redefining geo-economics, India needs to be ready to emerge as the chief global diplomat



RAJIV BHATIA

The clock is ticking. In about three months, India will assume for the first time the Group of 20 (G20) year-long presidency from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023, culminating with the G20 Summit in India in 2023. The subsequent months will witness India hosting over 200 meetings with hundreds of ministers, officials, diplomats, businessmen, non-governmental organisations, working groups, and engagement groups of the G20 composed of 19 powerful economies and the European Union (EU).

India has hosted large international conferences such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in 1983 and the Third India-Africa Forum summit in 2015. But nothing compares with hosting the G20. It is the world's informal steering directorate on global economic issues; it entails the responsibility of shaping decision-making on key challenges facing the world today; and its summit is preceded by a large quantum of preparatory deliberations that feed into the final outcome.

Importance, complexities

It is essential to neither overstate nor underestimate the significance of the G20's work. The G20 membership represents nearly 90% of the world's GDP, 80% of

global trade, and 67% of the planet's population. It is an advisory body, not a treaty-based forum and, therefore, its decisions are recommendations to its own members.

The weight of this powerful membership carries enormous political and economic influence. The representation of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, and other multilateral institutions in it makes the G20 an incomparable body.

The G20 has played a vital role in addressing financial and economic challenges such as the global financial crisis of 2008-09 and the Eurozone crisis of 2010. The forum was elevated from the finance ministers to the heads of government/state in 2008. This was the era of the G8 (up to 2014 when Russia was suspended), of the major powers – the United States, the EU, Russia, and also China, but they needed to work together with the emerging economies in defining global challenges and crafting their solutions.

However, in this second decade of the G20, the forum is faced with an existential crisis, where the major powers have fallen out. It makes the task of the presidency country much more complicated, as the current president (Indonesia) is discovering.

The disastrous impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the war in Ukraine, India-China border tensions, EU/U.S.-Russia hostility, and deteriorating U.S.-China relations are already visible in the run-up to the 2022 Bali summit (in No-



vember) where all G20 leaders may not be sitting physically in the same room. The outcome in Bali will affect the Delhi summit. Indian officials are thus carefully planning their strategy as the burden and the prestige of the presidency are bestowed on India. They know well that the currents of geopolitics are redefining the contours of geo-economics today. Their mission will be not only to save the G20 but also the future of multilateral cooperation in diverse domains of the grouping's multi-dimensional agenda.

India's choices

Guided by the triple motivation of promoting India's national interest, leaving its mark on the G20, and maintaining its primacy as an effective instrument of global governance, there are four different ideas have emerged in New Delhi.

First, the G20 presidency offers a unique branding opportunity for India's recent achievements, including the ability to combat COVID-19 effectively at home and abroad through vaccine aid and diplomacy. Other major achievements are India's digital revolution, its steady progress in switching to renewables, meeting its targets to counter climate change, and its push for self-re-

liance in manufacturing and reshaping global value chains. New trends in entrepreneurship, business innovation, the rise of many start-ups as unicorns, and gender progress too need to be showcased. A single-year presidency does not empower the host to change the world, but India can provide evidence of its domestic successes, tested at the continental scale, for global adoption. It can also be utilised to transform India's sub-optimal physical infrastructure to create an attractive investment and tourism destination, especially as several important G20 meetings will be hosted outside Delhi.

Second, by a remarkable coincidence, four democracies on the path to becoming powerful economic players – Indonesia, India, Brazil, and South Africa – hold the presidency from December 2021 to November 2025. This offers a rare opportunity for synergy and solidarity to advance the interests of the developing world and to assert their combined leadership of the Global South.

Third, another exceptional coincidence is that all three members of IBSA – India, Brazil, and South Africa – will hold the G20 presidency consecutively in 2023, 2024, and 2025. This forum, insulated from the geopolitical pressures constraining the BRICS (where these three countries are required to work with Russia and China), can develop a cohesive plan to project the priority concerns of the Global South. IBSA needs an urgent rejuvenation by convening an informal meeting of its top leaders, perhaps on the sidelines of the Bali summit.

Four, India needs to get ready to emerge as the chief global diplomat. As the G20 president, India will be obliged to take a broader view of the G20 agenda to synthesise divergent interests of all constituents of the forum: five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the developed world united under the flag of the G7, five members of BRICS, and other G20 members such as Argentina and Mexico. More importantly, as the president and host, India should factor in the perspectives of countries not represented in the G20. India will advocate an inclusive approach, with pragmatic and human-centric solutions to global issues. An important aim should be to end Africa's marginalisation by elevating the African Union (AU) from permanent observer to a full-fledged member of the G20, thus placing it on a par with the EU.

A parting thought

These four choices are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to weld them together to create a holistic and comprehensive approach for the Indian presidency of the G20. The challenge is to combine an India-focused view, promote the vital interests of the Global South, and demonstrate diplomatic acumen to communicate with and reconcile the viewpoints of rival and adversarial power centres such as the West, Russia, and China. India today is in the enviable position to deliver this unique package. It must rise to the occasion.

Rajiv Bhatia, a former Ambassador, is Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House. He is also an author, writing regularly on multilateral governance

India said to plan sops for rupee use in Russia trade

‘Rebates on taxes, duties are likely’

REUTERS
MUMBAI

India may give incentives to exporters settling trades using rupees to boost the acceptability of the currency and increase sales of goods to Russia, which has fallen because of western sanctions, according to government and industry sources.

The move is designed to boost Russian trade after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) put in place a mechanism for international trade settlements using the rupee last month. Indian companies are already swapping out the dollar and euro for Asian currencies to settle trades to avoid Western sanctions imposed on Russia after their invasion of Ukraine. The most likely incen-

 **RBI had earlier set up a mechanism to settle global trades using the rupee**

tive that will be granted would apply a current programme for trades using fully convertible currencies such as the dollar and the euro to the rupee, which is only partially convertible, according to the three sources.

Under the existing programme, Indian exporters receive rebates on a portion of the taxes and customs duties accumulated during the entire process of manufacturing a good. The new incentive would apply those rebates to goods exported using the rupee as a currency, the sources said.

EXPLAINER

The Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2022

Why is an amendment to the already existing Indian Competition Act necessary?

G.S. BAJPAI
ANKIT SRIVASTAVA

The story so far: The Indian Competition Act was passed in 2002, but it came into effect only seven years later. The Competition Commission primarily pursues three issues of anti-competitive practices in the market: anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominance and combinations. As the dynamics of the market changes rapidly due to technological advancements, artificial intelligence, and the increasing importance of factors other than price, amendments became necessary to sustain and promote market competition. The long-awaited Bill to amend the Competition Act, 2002, was finally tabled in the Lok Sabha recently.

What is the major change in dealing with new-age market combinations? Any acquisition, merger or amalgamation may constitute a combination. Section 5 currently says parties indulging in merger, acquisition, or amalgamation need to notify the Commission of the combination only on the basis of 'asset' or 'turnover'. The new Bill proposes to add a 'deal value' threshold. It will be mandatory to notify the Commission of any transaction with a deal value in excess of ₹2,000 crore and if either of the parties has 'substantial business operations in India'. The Commission shall frame regulations to prescribe the requirements for assessing whether an enterprise has 'substantial business operations in India'. This change will strengthen the Commission's review mechanism, particularly in the digital and infrastructure space, a majority of which were not reported earlier, as the asset or turnover values did not meet the jurisdictional thresholds.

When business entities are willing to execute a combination, they must inform the Commission. The Commission may approve or disapprove the combination, keeping in mind the appreciable adverse effect on competition that is likely to be caused. The Commission earlier had 210 days to approve

the combination, after which it is automatically approved. The new Bill seeks to accelerate the timeline from 210 working days to only 150 working days with a conservatory period of 30 days for extensions. This will speed up the clearance of combinations and increase the importance of pre-filing consultations with the Commission.

What is gun-jumping?

Parties should not go ahead with a combination prior to its approval. If the combining parties close a notified transaction before the approval, or have consummated a reportable transaction without bringing it to the Commission's knowledge, it is seen as gun-jumping. The penalty for gun-jumping was a total of 1% of the asset or turnover. This is now proposed to be 1% of the deal value.

What challenge do combining parties face in open market purchases?

There have been several gun-jumping cases owing to the combining parties' inability to defer the consummation of open market purchases. Many of them argue that acquisitions involving open market purchase of target shares must be completed quickly, lest the stock value and total consideration undergo a change. If parties wait for the Commission's clearance, the transaction may become unaffordable.

Similar to the European Union merger regulations, the present amendment Bill also proposes to exempt open market purchases and stock market transactions from the requirement to notify them to the Commission in advance. This is subject to the condition that the acquirer does not exercise voting or ownership rights until the transaction is approved and the same is notified to the Commission subsequently.

Does the amendment Bill address the issue of Hub-and-Spoke Cartels?

A Hub-and-Spoke arrangement is a kind of cartelisation in which vertically related players act as a hub and place horizontal restrictions on suppliers or retailers (spokes). Currently, the prohibition on

anti-competitive agreements only covers entities with similar trades that engage in anti-competitive practices. This ignores hub-and-spoke cartels operated at different levels of the vertical chain by distributors and suppliers. To combat this, the amendment broadens the scope of 'anti-competitive agreements' to catch entities that facilitate cartelisation even if they are not engaged in identical trade practices.

What is the amendment to the 'settlements' and 'commitments' mechanisms?

The new amendment proposes a framework for settlements and commitments for cases relating to vertical agreements and abuse of dominance. In the case of vertical agreements and abuse of dominance, the parties may apply for a 'commitment' before the Director General (DG) submits the report. 'Settlement' will be considered after the report is submitted and before the Commission decides. According to the amendment, the Commission's decision regarding commitment or settlement will not be appealable after hearing all stakeholders in the case. The Commission will come out with regulations regarding procedural aspects.

What are the other major amendments?

In the amendment Bill, a provision called 'Leniency Plus' allows the commission to give an additional waiver of penalties to an applicant who discloses the existence of another cartel in an unrelated market, provided the information enables the Commission to form a prima facie opinion about the existence of the cartel. Other noteworthy amendments include the appointment of the DG by the Commission rather than the Central government, giving the Commission greater control. According to the Bill, the DG has the power to conduct investigations, including raids. The Commission will only consider information filed within three years of the occurrence of the cause of action. As part of the Bill, penalties and penalty guidelines are proposed to be amended. For any false information filed, a penalty of five crore will be imposed, and for failure to comply with



the Commission directions, a penalty of ₹10 crore will be imposed. Additionally, the Commission will develop guidelines regarding the amount of penalties for various competition violations. For an appeal to be heard by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) against the Commission's order, the party will have to deposit 25% of the penalty amount.

What next?

By implementing these amendments, the Commission should be better equipped to handle certain aspects of the new-age market and transform its functioning to be more robust. The proposed amendments are undoubtedly needed; however, these are heavily dependent on regulations that will be notified by the Commission later. These regulations will influence the proposals. Also, the government needs to recognise that market dynamics change constantly, so it is necessary to update laws regularly.

G. S. Bajpai is the Vice-Chancellor Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab where Ankit Srivastava is Assistant Professor

THE GIST

■ As the dynamics of the market changes due to technological advancements, artificial intelligence, and the increasing importance of factors other than price, amendments became necessary to sustain and promote market competition. The long-awaited Bill to amend the Competition Act, 2002, was finally tabled in the Lok Sabha recently.

■ Some of the major amendments include allowing the commission to give an additional waiver of penalties to an applicant who discloses the existence of another cartel in an unrelated market, giving the Commission authority to appoint the DG rather than the Central government etc.

■ By implementing these amendments, the Commission should be better equipped to handle certain aspects of the new-age market and transform its functioning to be more robust.

Keep it simple

Any mandatory linking of Aadhaar to the voter ID is problematic

One of the clear successes of Indian democracy has been the regular conduct of elections and the relatively high participation of electors in the voting process compared to other countries. Besides the fact that the process is relatively simple with the use of the electronic voting machine, high voter turnout has also been possible due to registration drives by the Election Commission of India (ECI). Periodically, the ECI does face the issue of a cleaning up of electoral rolls due to increases in migrant populations in urban sprawls, demographic changes due to the entry of more eligible voters, besides deaths of older people. But repeated cycles of elections have allowed for a cohesion in this process with voters allowed to register based on proofs of their age and current place of residence. With the increase in the school-educated population, and most Indian citizens living in houses whose addresses are to be mentioned in several identity documents, registering to vote is a relatively easy process. This begs the question as to why election authorities are coercing citizens to mandatorily link registration in voter rolls with their Aadhaar number, as recent reports have indicated. In December 2021, the Lok Sabha passed the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill seeking to link the voter identity card with the Aadhaar number in order to avoid errors such as voter duplication on the electoral roll. But the Government and later, ECI authorities, have insisted that this process would be voluntary.

The Aadhaar number is not a proof of citizenship and is meant to be issued to residents, while only adult citizens who are resident in India are eligible to vote. Instrumentally speaking, matching the Aadhaar number to the electoral roll in order to perform verifications is not a foolproof process. The Internet Freedom Foundation has cited data to show that self-reported errors in the Aadhaar database are higher than those in the electoral database. There is also evidence that Aadhaar-linkage with voter identity cards, as in the Assembly elections in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh recently, for example, led to the arbitrary deletion of eligible voters on a large scale. Besides, with the Aadhaar number now being used to access a variety of services, linking to voter IDs, when aggregated from booth level data, can possibly lead to misuse by agencies that can access them to profile voters based on harvested information. The absence of a data protection law heightens the risk of this possibility as well. Scholars studying elections in various countries have averred that simplicity of design and effectiveness of constitutional institutions such as the ECI have gone a long way in easing voting and setting India apart as an electoral democracy. The insistence on linking Aadhaar with the voter ID militates against these principles. The ECI should limit itself to utilising existing proofs for voter authentication and Aadhaar declaration should remain voluntary.

Making out a case for the other UBI in India

There are good reasons why Universal Basic Insurance is a better proposition than Universal Basic Income



RAJESH GUPTA

It took the COVID-19 pandemic to expose the precariousness of human society across the world. As the importance of social security came into focus after the major waves of the pandemic, the debate on universal basic income (UBI) began to resurface in policy circles across the globe. However, there is another UBI that needs to be examined in the Indian context, i.e., universal basic insurance. Before discussing the second UBI, or insurance, it is worthwhile looking at the design options for social security.

Types of security nets

Income shocks result in a free fall of those living on the line of basic living wages (say line 1) down towards the critical survival line (say line 2). In any case, a fall that is further below line 2 needs to be prevented as it can be catastrophic – a household can end up facing a poverty trap. Social security systems are like a safety net placed at line 2. These social security nets can be of three types. The first is a passive safety net which catches those falling from line 1 and prevents a fall below line 2. The second is an active safety net which works like a trampoline so that

those who fall on it are able to bounce back to line 1. The third is a proactive safety net which acts like a launchpad so that those who fall on it will not only bounce back but will also move up beyond line 1.

The first type of safety net is basically a social assistance programme meant for the most income-deprived sections of society. The second type of safety net is a scheme with a higher outlay. The third type of social security net is the most desirable option but requires immense resources and institutional capacity. For social security, people on the south end of the income line need social assistance schemes. Those on the north end of the income line should have voluntary insurance.

Social security mainly encompasses food security, health security and income security. India operates the widest spectrum of social security schemes which cater to the largest number of people than any other country. The sheer scale of Indian social security programmes delivered to millions of households spread over a vast geography is mind-boggling.

The Indian food security programme, for example, has over 800 million beneficiaries being provided heavily subsidised food grain under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). The NFSA is the world's largest food security programme. About 120 million children are provided free lunch under the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. In addition, some 50 million people benefit from the free meals pro-

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



gramme run by a few State governments. Nevertheless, there are issues of financial sustainability and leakages in the food security programme.

For health and income

On the health security front, for the unorganised sector, there is the Ayushman Bharat Scheme of the central government with over 490 million beneficiaries. In the organised sector, the Central government runs the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) and Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) catering to 130 million and four million beneficiaries, respectively. Health insurance schemes run by various State governments cover about 200 million people. Only about 110 million people in India have private health insurance. Despite these large-scale provisions, about 400 million Indians are not covered under any kind of health insurance.

Income security is the trickiest part to tackle in the social security basket. For the organised sector, there are three types of provident fund schemes: General Provident Fund (GPF) which is availed by about 20 million Central and State

government employees in the country. The second is the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) which is availed by about 65 million workers in the other organised sector. The third is Public Provident Fund (PPF) that can be availed by any Indian citizen but has contributions from the organised sector mostly. There are about 53 million New Pension Scheme subscribers in the country (about 2.2 million in the Central government, 5.6 million in the State government and the rest in the private sector).

In the unorganised sector, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana (PM-KMY) and the PM-KISAN scheme is availed by about 120 million farmers. Atal Pension Yojana (APY) benefits 40 million people. The Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana has about five million beneficiaries while there are about 50,000 beneficiaries under the National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self-Employed Persons (NPS-Traders) scheme. The largest unorganised sector income security programme is the scheme under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which has about 60 million beneficiaries. Thus, out of 500 million workers in India, about 100 million have no income security (pension, gratuity or other income) coverage. Proponents of universal basic income cite the informality of the Indian economy as the hurdle in rolling out schemes such as unemployment insurance in the

country. However, besides huge fiscal implications (around 4.5% of GDP), the proposal of universal basic income runs the risk of implementation failure due to large-scale beneficiary identification requirements.

Why UBI

The other UBI, i.e. universal basic insurance, is a better proposition for two reasons. One, the insurance penetration (premium as a percentage of GDP) in India has been hovering around 4% for many years compared to 17%, 9% and 6% in Taiwan, Japan and China, respectively. Two, though the economy largely remains informal, data of that informal sector are now available both for businesses (through GSTIN, or Goods and Services Tax Identification Number) and for unorganised workers (through e-Shram, which is the centralised database of all unorganised workers). As a result of the recent initiatives by the Government, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) portal has 13.5 million registrations and the e-Shram portal has over 280 million registrations. As a prototype of a social security portal based on such data, the social registry portal, 'Kutumba', developed by Karnataka is available as a blueprint. Till the Indian economy grows to have adequate voluntary insurance, social security can be boosted through the scheme of universal basic insurance.

Rajesh Gupta is a research scholar

‘Why can’t govt. call all-party meet on freebies?’

SC poser comes amid its proposal to form a ‘broad-based and neutral committee of experts’ to study the issue

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre why it cannot call an all-party meeting to discuss ways to prevent “irrational freebies” from destroying the national economy and to draw a line between State largesse and welfare schemes.

The court’s question came amid its proposal to form a “broad-based and neutral committee of experts” to study the problem of free gifts.

“Until and unless there is a process or vision among political parties that ‘we have to stop somewhere’, these types of freebies, which will destroy the economy, will continue. Nothing can happen by way of legislation, by way of Model Code of Conduct, by way of our orders. It will be unmanageable... If we pass an order, a mandamus, that from tomorrow onwards no political party should make these promises, nobody will care... So, that is why there must be a debate. The issue is serious, no doubt about it. Why can’t the Government of India call for a meeting of

all political parties and ask for their views on how to go ahead?” Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana, heading a three-judge Bench, asked.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, demurred, saying the court should take the lead and form an expert committee.

A “comprehensive” report from the committee would help in resolving the problem of freebies.

“All the political parties are here before the highest court, claiming that this is their fundamental right. So there is no question of starting a debate by the Government of India. We have political parties whose only wish is to distribute freebies to get elected... That is not the way forward,” Mr. Mehta submitted.

To buttress his point, Mr. Mehta read back to the court its own earlier order, proposing an expert committee comprising representatives of the government, the Opposition and other bodies like the Finance Commission, etc., to study the problem of freebies.

 **Until and unless there is a process or vision among political parties that we have to stop somewhere, these types of freebies, which will destroy the economy, will continue**

N.V. RAMANA
Chief Justice of India



“But if you want a committee of representatives of the government, Opposition, etc., the biggest problem is who will head such a committee...” the Chief Justice asked.

‘Freebies party-centric’

The court indicated that the issue of freebies was party-centric.

“It is political parties who make these promises. They contest elections... Individuals do not have much importance in the present system. It is the political party, their philosophy and manifesto which are important... that is how our democracy is... Suppose I contest, I will not get 10 votes... Ultimately, all political parties, whether

in power or not, have to face the reality. That is, a party in opposition can come to power tomorrow and will have to manage the affairs of the State. The government in power has to govern and also balance the economy,” Chief Justice Ramana explained.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, the *amicus curiae*, urged the court to not get into a “political quagmire”. He said instead of the court getting into a morass, the problem could be resolved with the aid of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act of 2003, which makes the Centre responsible for ensuring inter-generational equity in fiscal management and long-term macro-economic stability.

But Mr. Mehta said Mr. Sibal was in fact urging the court to let things be the way they were. “People are lured by these promises. The voter is deprived of a considered decision on whom to vote for... A committee of eminent people can be formed to suggest a way forward... It can give a report in two months,” he pressed.

“If that is the case, why can’t the Government of India constitute a committee to study the impact of freebies on the economy?” Chief Justice Ramana asked.

Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi said it was very ill on the part of the government to say “I will not take any action on my own”. “Why can’t the Centre do something without depending on the court?” the senior lawyer for the Aam Aadmi Party asked.

Expert committee

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, for petitioner Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, suggested former Chief Justice of India R.M. Lodha could head the expert committee.

Mr. Mehta suggested a retired Comptroller and Audi-

tor General (CAG).

“No judge will preside over this... Persons who retire or who are retired have no value in this country,” Chief Justice Ramana said.

Senior advocate Arvind P. Datar said there was clear evidence from past elections that freebies could influence the outcome of elections.

Senior advocate Prashant Bhushan said three types of freebies were dangerous. Those which are discriminatory in nature, those which are against public policy and those rolled out immediately, say six months, before elections and disturb the level playing field.

“Mr. Bhushan says promises should not be made six months before elections. Then parties will make it nine months before polls. So, should there be a standstill in governance in view of an impending election? Today, people are not so gullible with literacy anywhere between 60% to 90%... Let us not assume that everybody can fool the public every time,” Mr. Singhvi, the AAP counsel, said.

Regional language important in early learning: UGC Chairman

Panel aims to bring out 1,500 books in regional languages in the next one year

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Early initiation into the mother tongue is important for a child's creative thinking, while English can be learnt at any time in life for use as a communication tool, according to University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman M. Jagadesh Kumar.

The teaching of regional languages, however, could not be done at the cost of English in a globalised world, he said.

"Suppose I give you a task and say you have to reach a destination, but you don't know how to reach there. I give you a cycle to reach the destination, but you don't know how to cycle. Now, you have to learn how to cycle as well as ask people for directions to reach the destination. On which will you focus? That is the dilemma a child faces. We want to remove that dilemma and let the child think naturally in the mother tongue, forget about English. You can learn

 One of the challenges was our colonial mindset and there was a need to change our attitudes so that when someone asked a question in a class in a regional language they should not feel inferior

M. JAGADESH KUMAR
UGC Chairman



it at any time," Mr. Kumar told *The Hindu* in an interview.

However, English could not be ignored either.

Global competency

"There is a misunderstanding that needs to be removed that when we talk of Indian languages, it is at the cost of English. Today, we are a globally connected community and if we want to communicate with the rest of the world, it is a practice we have to [continue] and our students need to be trained to become proficient in using English as a communication tool," he said.

But one of the challenges was "our colonial mindset" and there was a need to change our attitudes so that when someone asked a question in a class in a regional language, they should not feel inferior, he said.

The UGC was in talks with various regulatory bodies for promotion of vernacular languages and a committee had been formed under former Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde which would look into how institutions could provide legal education in local languages.

The All India Council of Technical Education too had introduced courses in re-

gional languages in 10 colleges.

It was also working with the High-Powered Committee on Indian Language Development established by the Ministry of Education to identify experts as well as 10 to 12 disciplines so that books could either be translated or written afresh.

The UGC Chairman said that the regulatory body was aiming at preparing 1,500 books in regional languages in the next one year across different disciplines.

Mr. Kumar said that this would lead to two things – either institutes would adopt a regional language as a medium of instruction or it would serve as a learning aid for students in the English medium who may not be proficient in the language.

The National Education Policy, 2022 lays emphasis on promoting the mother tongue which should be a medium of instruction at least till Class 5 or 8 and after which it should be offered as a language.

EXPLAINER

The 'tomato flu' outbreak and the Centre's advisory

What are the symptoms of the flu? Why are experts against calling the infection 'tomato flu'?

SUMEDA

The story so far: Days after a paper in *The Lancet* journal raised concerns over the rise in cases of the "new virus known as tomato flu" among children in India, the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday issued an advisory, asking States to take measures to prevent its spread. In a set of guidelines, the Centre referred to the disease as a probable variant of the hand, foot and mouth disease, or HFMD, which commonly occurs in children under 10 years of age and can also infect adults. As per the *Lancet* paper, India recorded around 100 cases of 'tomato flu' in children below nine years of age in less than three months. The transmission of the "highly contagious" yet "non-life-threatening virus" could lead to serious consequences by spreading to adults as well, it adds.

What does *The Lancet* report say?

In the article "Tomato flu outbreak in India", published in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* journal on August 17, the authors define the infection as a "new virus" that has emerged in Kerala in children younger than five years. The report, however, contradicts itself by also claiming the infection to be in an endemic state. 'Endemic' is a term used to refer to a disease which has spread in a limited area but has been around for

some time. The report further claims that 'tomato flu' was first identified in the Kollam district of Kerala on May 6 this year. However, a study published by the U.S. National Library of Medicine in its *Immunity, Inflammation and Disease* journal in July says that cases of 'tomato fever' have been reported in the past in 2007 as well.

The authors do not mention a specific origin, type or cause of the infection. They suggest that it may be an after-effect of chikungunya or dengue fever in children rather than a viral infection, or that the virus could also be a new variant of the HFMD – a common viral infection affecting young children that appears with fever, rashes or blisters on the skin and mouth sores.

What are experts saying?

As far as its etymology is concerned, the *Lancet* report claims that the 'tomato flu' is so named because of the "eruption of red and painful blisters throughout the body that gradually enlarge to the size of a tomato." Medical experts have taken strong exception to this, saying that the usage of such terms is unscientific and misleading. They also clarify that the infection is not related to the consumption of tomatoes in any way.

"Tomato fever is a misleading colloquial name for hand, foot, and mouth disease. This is a mild viral illness



commonly affecting young children typically below age 10. It is usually caused by a Coxsackie virus... It produces red spots on the skin, and hence someone called it 'tomato fever', and the name became popular. But using such terms is misleading because many people mistakenly believe it comes from tomatoes," Indian Medical Association (IMA) member Dr. Rajeev Jayadevan was quoted as saying by news agency ANI. Hyderabad-based paediatrician Dr. Suresh Kumar Panuganti shared a similar view with *The Hindu*. "'Tomato flu' is caused by Coxsackievirus A16. It belongs to the Enterovirus family. HFMD is a frequent febrile rash illness of childhood caused by enteroviruses (EV): Coxsackie

A16 (CA16), EV A71, Coxsackie A6, Coxsackie B and Echo viruses."

Another doctor said such reports cause panic. "The community is just recovering from COVID and therefore is very sensitive and receptive to new epidemics. Additionally, this type of news creates panic," Dr. Dhiren Gupta of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital told ANI.

Virologist Dr. Angela Rasmussen has also highlighted the lack of evidence in the report published by *The Lancet*. In a series of tweets, she said that the paper had failed to establish some crucial points related to 'tomato flu'. She also pointed out that the paper was published in the 'correspondence' section of *The Lancet*. According to the medical journal's website, 'correspondence' news or discussions are not normally externally peer-reviewed.

What did the advisory state?

In its communication on Tuesday, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare stated that the illness is a clinical variant of the HFMD. The Ministry, however, also used the term 'tomato flu' in the advisory. The Ministry clarified that the virus causing 'tomato flu' is not related to SARS-CoV-2, monkeypox, dengue, or chikungunya despite symptoms similar to those in viral infections. "It seems that disease is a clinical variant of the

so-called hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) that is common in school-going children. Infants and young children are also prone to this infection through the use of nappies, touching unclean surfaces as well as putting things directly into the mouth," the Centre said. It is a self-limiting illness and no specific medication exists for its treatment yet, it said.

On symptoms, the Centre said a child infected with 'tomato flu' will have fever, rashes and pain in joints. The illness usually begins with a mild fever, poor appetite, malaise, and occasionally, a sore throat. Small red blisters appear one or two days after the fever and these sores are usually located on the tongue, gums, inside of the cheeks, palms and soles. In some cases, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, dehydration, swelling of joints, body ache, and common influenza-like symptoms have also been noted.

It advised isolation for five to seven days from the onset of any symptom to prevent the spread of infection. Other guidelines mentioned in the report include supportive therapy of paracetamol for fever and body ache as well as other symptomatic treatments, a nutrition-rich, balanced diet to boost immunity, rest, plenty of fluids and a hot water sponge to provide relief from irritation and rashes etc.

THE GIST

■ In the article 'Tomato flu outbreak in India', published in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* journal on August 17, the authors define the infection as a "new virus" that has emerged in Kerala in children younger than five years.

■ In its communication on Tuesday, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare stated that the illness is a clinical variant of the hand, foot and mouth disease.

■ Medical experts have taken strong exception to calling the infection as 'tomato flu', saying that the usage of such terms is unscientific and misleading. They also clarify that the infection is not related to the consumption of tomatoes in any way.

‘Corporate bond market grew fourfold in a decade’

Primary market is key: RBI’s Sankar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Illiquidity in the secondary corporate debt market is a global issue and so focus should be on further deepening the primary market that had grown almost fourfold in a decade to ₹40 lakh crore, an RBI official said.

Addressing a Bombay Chamber of Commerce & Industry event on Wednesday, Reserve Bank Deputy Governor T. Rabi Sankar said concerted efforts by regulators and the government had seen corporate bond outstanding cross ₹40 lakh crore as of March 2022, from ₹10.4 lakh crore in March 2012.

During the same period, the secondary market volume spiked from ₹4.4 lakh



crore to ₹14 lakh crore.

Only the U.S. has a ‘very’ liquid secondary corporate bond market and India has the second best, which is very low, the RBI official said.

The U.S. market is very deep because it is led by corporates and municipalities. But corporate bond market as a percentage of GDP is also the highest at 120% in the U.S., while in India, it is only 18%, Mr. Sankar said.

GST kitty for top States could rise 20% in FY23, says Crisil

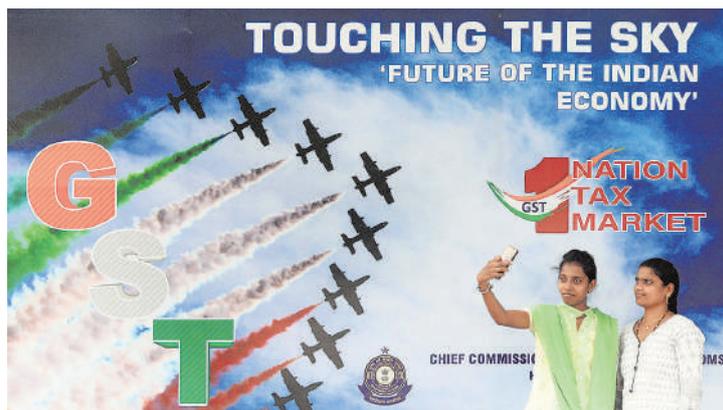
‘Their overall revenues are expected to grow at a moderate 7%-9% this year’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India’s top 17 States’ overall revenues were expected to grow at a moderate 7%-9% rate this year from about 25% in 2021-22, but their Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections would likely increase by about 20%, Crisil Ratings said on Wednesday.

Aggregate State GST collections, which had already rebounded by about 29% last year, would provide the biggest impetus to the revenue growth for these States which account for 85%-90% of aggregate Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).

“We expect this momen-



Welcome respite: With GST compensation payments ending, higher GST revenue will aid State finances. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

tum to sustain and collections to further increase about 20% this fiscal, supported by better compliance levels, higher inflationary environment and steady

economic growth,” said Anuj Seth, senior director at Crisil Ratings.

India’s overall GST collections in the first four months of FY23 stood at ₹6.02 lakh

crore, rising 34.8% from a year earlier. However, GST revenues had slipped below the ₹1-lakh crore mark in May and June 2021 amid the second COVID-19 wave.

With GST compensation payments, which accounted for 7%-9% of States’ revenue in the past two years, coming to an end from July 1 this year, the uptick in GST revenues would help State finances, Crisil reckoned.

“Healthy tax buoyancy will support revenue growth, with GST collections and devolutions from the Centre – together comprising 43-45% of States’ revenue – expected to show robust double-digit growth,” it said.

'Wind project addition to peak by 2024'

After that year, fresh projects are likely to be wind-solar hybrids, says report

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Annual installation of new wind power projects in India will peak by 2024 and likely decline thereafter, according to a report released on Wednesday by the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC) and MEC+, a consulting firm that specialises in renewable energy.

As part of its transition away from fossil fuels, India has committed to sourcing half its electricity in 2030 from non-fossil fuel sources and installing 60 gigawatt (GW, or 1000 MW) of wind power by 2022.

So far, only 40 GW of wind power capacity has been established.

Wind industry installations have been slowing



Power point: India currently has 13.4 GW of prospective projects in wind energy. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

down in India since 2017. Only 1.45 GW of wind projects were installed in 2021 with many delayed due to the second wave of COVID-19 and supply chain-related disruptions.

To compensate, the Ministry of New and Renewable

Energy (MNRE) granted a blanket timeline extension for seven-and-a-half months after the scheduled commissioning date (SCD) for projects with power purchase agreements (PPAs) signed before June 2021, which pushed the SCD of 0.7 GW

projects to 2022.

The trigger for the slowdown, according to the report, was the advent of the auction regime in 2017 to award tenders. The new scheme led to large orders but highly competitive bids.

Subsequently, the market has concentrated wind projects around a few substations of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, which were home to the strongest resource potential and lowest cost of land. This created bottlenecks and slowed down project activity and made it costlier than solar power.

After 2024, fresh projects are likely to be wind-solar hybrid projects (where both systems are installed on a piece of land to generate power through the day).

SC asks Centre to expand food security coverage

Bench takes decadal population hike till 2021 into account

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to increase coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) so that “more and more needy persons and citizens get the benefit” under the 2013 law which entitles rural and urban poor to subsidised food-grains under the Targeted Public Distribution System.

The coverage under the NFSA is still decided by the population figures of the 2011 census.

In an eight-page order, a Bench of Justices M.R. Shah and B.V. Nagarathna ordered the Union government to re-determine the NFSA coverage in the States and Union Territories after considering the population increase between 2011 and 2021 so that benefits were not restricted to beneficiaries identified back in 2011.

Fundamental right

“The right to food is a fundamental right available under Article 21 of the Constitution,” the Supreme Court



noted. The Union, in its affidavit, had stated in court that the Act required coverage to be updated under the latest published census figures.

However, such coverage cannot be determined as the 2021 census has been postponed indefinitely and no date has been notified.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, for petitioners Anjali Bhardwaj, Harsh Mander and Jagdeep Chhokar, had pointed out that due to the absence of the latest population figures, over 10 crore people were left outside the food security law’s protective umbrella without even ration cards.

Mr. Bhushan had urged the court to direct the government to use the official population projections published by the Health Ministry to expand the coverage.

The court found the petitioners’ concerns “genuine and justified”.

e-Shram portal

In the order, the court directed the States which were not able to register unorganised workers, including migrant labourers, in the e-Shram portal to do so within six weeks.

The Union Labour Ministry has developed a National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW) portal and the e-Shram portal for registration of labourers spread over 400 occupations including in constructions, agriculture, fishing, and dairy, those self-employed and even ASHA and anganwadi workers.

However, many States have achieved less than 50% registration, with Tamil Nadu being one of the lowest at only 34.84%.

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

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

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