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

# **VEDHIK**

## **DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS**

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## **FOREWORD**

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

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

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

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# Modi, Xi weigh meeting as chill remains in ties

MEA backs German envoy's comments on Beijing's 'outrageous' claims on Arunachal Pradesh, in its latest message to China

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
ANANTH KRISHNAN  
NEW DELHI/BEIJING

India and China are weighing a first meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in almost three years, even as a chill remains in relations with an as-yet-unresolved border crisis and increasingly sharp recent exchanges.

While this meeting could come as early as mid-September, with both leaders currently expected at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Uzbekistan, the G20 meet in mid-November in Indonesia, where both have confirmed their attendance, offers another possibility.

A meeting does, however, come with risks for New Delhi, which has viewed warily China's recent attempts to portray ties as "normal" despite the situation at the Line

of Actual Control (LAC), a perception that a high-level meet may reinforce. New Delhi reluctantly hosted Foreign Minister Wang Yi in March as he visited the region, but conveyed a strong message that India would not accept China's demand to keep the border "in an appropriate place" and restore relations.

India has since kept up that messaging in public. On Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) backed the German Ambassador to India's comments calling China's claims on Arunachal Pradesh "outrageous" and its transgressions at the LAC a "violation of international law". Responding to German envoy Phillip Ackerman's comments, which had generated anger in Beijing, MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the international community has a "proper



Narendra Modi with Xi Jinping during the BRICS Summit in Brazil in 2019.

appreciation" of India's stand on boundary issues.

On August 29, Mr. Jaishankar, in a speech in New Delhi on August 29, repeated for the third time in recent weeks India's stand that normalcy in ties was predicated on normalcy on the border. China's military, for its part, last week cited those same agreements which India has accused China of violating, to oppose upcoming India-U.S. high-altitude military exercises, calling them "med-

dling". Past meetings between Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi have been seen by both sides as helping calm border tensions – a brief conversation in July 2017 on the sidelines of a summit was seen as breaking the deadlock that led to the resolution of the stand-off in Doklam the following month. In recent months, however, the Chinese military has continued with a hardline stance on slow-moving LAC talks and refused to restore the status quo, a stand which, given Mr. Xi's apparently tight control over the People's Liberation Army (PLA), appears to be following his direction.

This will give New Delhi some pause for thought, even if both leaders appear likely to cross paths in Samarkand. According to an Uzbekistan Foreign Ministry official overseeing logistics, all preparations have been

made for the summit and "heads of all eight member countries" are expected.

The MEA said earlier that Mr. Modi's visit to Samarkand for the SCO summit would be announced at the "appropriate time", although a formal statement on Mr. Jaishankar's visit to Tashkent in July for the SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting said they had "discussed the preparations for the forthcoming SCO Summit of Heads of State scheduled to be held in Samarkand on 15-16 September". A factor in India's possible attendance is India taking over as the Chair of the SCO.

*The Wall Street Journal* reported on August 19 that Mr. Xi's office "has also begun preparing bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the summit with the leaders of Pakistan, India and Turkey". However, the Chinese Defence

Minister being the lone absentee at the recent SCO Defence Ministers' meet has raised doubts on whether Mr. Xi will travel, with Beijing on Wednesday announcing the party congress on October 16.

The last meeting between Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi, in Brazil in November 2019, reflected a period in the relationship that most in New Delhi now believe there is no returning to. Taking place a month after Mr. Xi's visit to Chennai for the second "informal" summit, Mr. Xi told Mr. Modi his "successful meeting" with him "went very well" and he was "willing to maintain close communication" to "jointly steer the direction of China-India relations" and "increase political mutual trust". Mr. Modi said their meetings in Wuhan and Chennai "strengthened trust and friendship".

# Bangladesh Prime Minister to visit India next week: MEA

She will hold talks with Modi, offer prayers at Ajmer Sharif

**KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE**

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh will pay an official visit to India next week, the Ministry of External Affairs announced on Thursday.

During her stay, Ms. Hasina will offer prayers at Ajmer Sharif and award Mujib Scholarships, an initiative of the Government of Bangladesh for the descendants of 200 Indian armed forces personnel who were martyred or suffered critical injuries during the Liberation War of 1971, Dhaka has announced. “In recent years, both sides have sustained high level of engagement including at the highest level between our two countries.



Sheikh Hasina

The forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will further strengthen the multifaceted relationship between our two countries based on strong historical and cultural ties, mutual trust and understanding,” said Arindam Bagchi, Spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs.

Ms. Hasina will be accompanied by a number of Ministers, advisers, and secretaries, as well as a delegation of business houses of Bangladesh, announced a press release from Dhaka.

Ahead of the visit, both sides held the Ministers-level meeting of the Joint River Commission here on August 25, which highlighted the urgency to resolve bilateral riparian issues and the upcoming renewal of the Ganga Waters Treaty.

Ms. Hasina will be hosted by President Droupadi Murmu and Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, and will hold a round of delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Hyderabad House.

# IMF to extend \$2.9 billion to Sri Lanka

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reached a staff-level agreement with crisis-hit Sri Lanka, in a first step before extending a \$2.9-billion loan package that the Fund has made contingent on assurances from the island nation's creditors.

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# IMF to extend \$2.9 billion to Sri Lanka

“IMF staff and the Sri Lankan authorities have reached a staff-level agreement to support Sri Lanka’s economic policies with a 48-month arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility [EFF] of about \$2.9 billion,” a visiting IMF team said on Thursday.

The announcement comes even as Sri Lanka endures an agonising economic downturn that has left scores of families starving.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe termed the agreement “an important step in the history of Sri Lanka”.

The objectives of the new programme – Sri Lanka’s 17th with the Fund – are “to restore macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability, while safeguarding financial stability, protecting the vulnerable, and stepping up

structural reforms to address corruption vulnerabilities and unlock Sri Lanka’s growth potential,” the IMF said. However, the international financial institution has laid out expectations that Sri Lanka must meet, before the IMF management and Executive Board can approve the programme.

“Prior actions” on Sri Lanka’s part include raising fiscal revenue through a “more progressive” income tax regime, rebuilding foreign reserves, and increasing social spending. Significantly, Sri Lanka, which opted for a pre-emptive sovereign default on its \$51 billion foreign debt in April, must work to obtain debt relief from its creditors and additional financing from multilateral partners,” the Fund said in its statement.

# UN accuses China of Uighur rights abuses

China denounces the HRC report as a 'patchwork of false information cooked up' by Western nations

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
GENEVA

The UN accused China of serious human rights violations that may amount to "crimes against humanity" in a report examining a crackdown on Uighurs and other ethnic groups. Beijing on Thursday denounced the assessment as a fabrication cooked up by Western nations.

Human rights groups have accused China of sweeping a million or more people from the minority groups into detention camps, where many have said they were tortured, sexually assaulted, and forced to abandon their language and religion. The camps were just one part of what the rights organisations have called a ruthless campaign against extremism in the far western province of



**Call for probe:** The entrance of the Urumqi No. 3 detention centre in Dabancheng in Xinjiang, in this file picture. ■ AP

Xinjiang that also included draconian birth control policies and restrictions on people's movement.

The assessment from the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council (HRC) largely corroborated earlier reporting by researchers, advocacy

groups and the news media, and it added the weight of the world body to the conclusions.

Still, among Uighurs who have fled overseas, there was a palpable sense of relief that the report had finally seen the light of day.

"The report is pretty damning, and a strong indictment on China's crimes against humanity," said Rayhan Asat, a Uighur lawyer, whose brother is imprisoned in Xinjiang. "For years, the Chinese government has said the Uighurs are terrorists. Now, we can point to them and say, you're the terrorists."

## Report welcomed

Human rights groups, Japan and Germany quickly welcomed the report.

The assessment concluded that China has committed serious human rights violations under its anti-terrorism and anti-extremism policies and calls for "urgent attention" from the UN, the world community and China itself to address them.

Human rights groups re-

newed calls for the UN rights body, which meets next month, to set up an independent body to investigate the allegations. But China showed no sign of backing off its denials.

"The assessment is a patchwork of false information that serves as political tools for the U.S. and other Western countries to strategically use Xinjiang to contain China," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said. "It again shows that the UN Human Rights Office has been reduced to an enforcer and accomplice of the U.S. and other Western nations."

In a sign of China's fury, it issued a 122-page rebuttal, entitled "Fight against Terrorism and Extremism in Xinjiang: Truth and Facts," that was posted by the UN along with the report.

# The big-picture takeaways from China's Taiwan drills

The PLA has still to cover some gaps before it gains the confidence and warfare proficiency in any planned invasion



HARSH V. PANT &  
KARTIK BOMMAKANTI

The recently concluded military drills by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the Taiwan Strait just after the United States House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei in early August reveal a great deal about the nature of the military capabilities of the People's Republic of China. The Chinese military conducted these exercises in six zones around Taiwan with the express aim of testing their capacity to execute an encircling invasive attack against the Taiwanese main island.

## Overview of capabilities

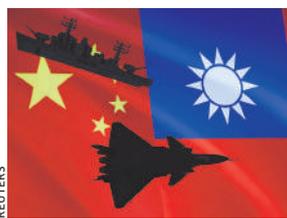
There are three areas the Chinese have built capabilities in order to successfully prosecute an invasion of Taiwan. The first of these is China's air assault capabilities consisting of rotary and fixed wing aircraft for an invasion of Taiwan. The second is in the area of missile capabilities. The third is the PLA's Joint Logistic Support Force (PLAJLSF). Although a detailed analysis may take time, there is a reasonable amount of preliminary evidence to indicate where the relative strengths and weaknesses of

the PLA exist following the conclusion of these exercises. Although China's Eastern Theater Command (ETC) is responsible for planning and executing any potential invasion of Taiwan, the Southern Theater Command (STC) was also in an advanced state of alert for these drills.

## Using air power

First, the Chinese have made substantial progress in the development and operation of rotary and fixed wing aircraft for dedicated assault missions against Taiwan. The People's Liberation Army Army (PLAA) latest helicopters are almost as advanced as their American variants. The comprehensive reorganisation of the PLA into group armies has enabled the Chinese to significantly operationalise their rotary wing aircraft. Indeed, the latter could play a key role in any initial assault to capture Taiwan. An aviation brigade is part of each of the PLAA's 13 group armies and also integral to the group armies deployed in Xinjiang and Tibet.

Alternatively, the rotary component of aviation brigades, which represents frontline combat capabilities of the PLAA, could be kept in reserve and pressed into action for a prospective invasion of Taiwan following an initial assault with less advanced rotary aircraft in the PLAA inventory. There are two specialised air assault brigades as part of the PLAA's 75th and 83rd group armies that are di-



REUTERS

rectly geared for an air assault mission against Taiwan. These brigades have a demonstrated capacity to remain airborne for a long period, but this is insufficient as any potential invasion would require them to fly in close formations while simultaneously maintaining effective air-ground and air-sea communication. The latest drills do not definitively confirm these capabilities. The aviation brigades of the PLAA are a growing strength, but will only reach optimum strength, both operationally and technologically, over the next decade.

## Missile strength

Missile capabilities are the second area where the PLA demonstrated its strength. According to the ETC, the PLA fired several long-range missiles of the Dong-Feng (DF) class in the vicinity of the islands of Matsu, Wuqiu and Dongyin. The purpose was to test whether the PLA's missile brigades could coordinate missile strikes and carry out post-attack battle damage assessment. The PLA likely gained information about Taiwan's missile defence capabilities covering

the island's missile radar tracking capabilities. In addition, the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) which carried out tests also likely assessed the rapidity and precision with which Taiwanese defences could be suppressed to prepare Chinese forces for an air and amphibious assault. Conversely, the Chinese have revealed a significant amount to their adversaries, especially the Americans, about the strength and disposition of their missile forces.

## Issue of logistics

Finally, a key focus of the PLAJLSF has been in the area of precision logistics which were not per se tested in any consequential degree by the PLAJLSF in the latest drills. Indeed, it is a core weakness of the PLA – without logistics, a full-scale invasion of Taiwan is impossible. Notwithstanding improvements, China's amphibious assault capabilities, which are indispensable to an invasion, are a key weakness and can only succeed if the PLA also has a highly developed and taut logistics support system. The PLA is working on the creation of a logistics network that is capable of time-sensitive responses that combine speed, precision and efficiency. Relying heavily on its BeiDou Satellite Navigation System, the PLAJLSF is trying to ensure communications and coordination between spread out mobile units on the battlefield.

Beyond timely combat support centred on supplies, reinforce-

ments and repairs, evacuation and medical assistance to dispersed air and amphibious assault units in unforgiving and demanding battlefield conditions will be crucial for a sustained and effective military mission across the Taiwan Strait. However, the PLA is deficient in amphibious vessels, and has an inadequate number of personnel trained for complex logistics missions and military transport aircraft.

The military drills conducted by the PRC earlier this month were only a partial demonstration of the PLA's military prowess. Irrespective of the progress made by the Chinese, the PLA has still some distance to traverse before it gains the confidence and the requisite proficiency for combined arms warfare that is crucial to the invasion of Taiwan. Significantly complicating the latter is an American intervention on behalf of Taiwan, neutralising China's aim of a low-cost swift and decisive capture of the island, rendering any cross-strait military action by the PRC into a protracted war. The PRC may need to complete several drills, which could lead to more crises, before it can actually execute an invasion.

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# U.S.'s AI chip export ban may hit China tech units

Supply chain may be disrupted: Beijing

**REUTERS**

SHANGHAI

A U.S. order to ban exports of some advanced chips to China is likely to hit almost any major tech company running public clouds or advanced artificial intelligence (AI) training modules in the country, experts said.

Chip designer Nvidia Corp. said that U.S. officials told it to stop exporting two top computing chips for AI work to China.

Advanced Micro Devices also said it had received new licence requirements that will stop its advanced AI chip called MI250 from being exported to China.

Shu Jueting, a Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesperson, said that Beijing opposes the measures, saying they undermine the rights



of Chinese companies and threaten to disrupt global supply chains.

“We’re going from blocking certain U.S. companies from supplying to a certain company, as was the case with Huawei, to banning certain U.S. products from selling to China period,” said Jay Goldberg, CEO of D2D Advisory. Market watchers say the ban may hit a swathe of Chinese tech firms such as Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. and Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd.

# Vostok-2022 begins in Russia with India, China participating

## U.S. criticises India's attendance in the joint military exercise

**DINAKAR PERI**  
**SUHASINI HAIDER**  
NEW DELHI

An Indian Army contingent comprising troops from 7/8 Gorkha Rifles is participating in the multilateral strategic and command exercise 'Vostok-2022' which commenced on Friday at the training grounds of the eastern military district in Russia. The exercise also includes participation by the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

"The exercise is aimed at interaction and coordination amongst other participating military contingents and observers," the Army said in a statement. The exercise is scheduled to be held from Sept. 01 to 07.

The Indian Army contingent, over the next seven days, will undertake joint manoeuvres to include field training exercises, combat discussions, and firepower exercises, it said.

Russia has stated that Vostok-2022 will be conducted in two phases. Participating contingents include observers from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and other partner states including Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Syria and Tajikistan, said Russian Deputy Defence Minister Colonel General Alexander for foreign military at-

tachés in a briefing in Moscow.

India also defended its participation in the exercises in response to U.S. criticism. "India has been regularly participating in multilateral exercises in Russia, along with a number of other countries," said MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi, stressing that the Vostok exercises were routine, and added that they would only include Army contingents.

MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi was responding to comments by the U.S. White House Press Secretary who said that "the U.S. has concerns about any country exercising with Russia while Russia wages an unprovoked brutal war against Ukraine."

# Can civil servants express their views on law, governance?

PARLEY

The Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules could distinguish between government policy and action

On India's 76th Independence Day, the Gujarat government released 11 men convicted on charges of gang-raping Bilkis Bano, who was 21 years old and five months pregnant at that time, and murdering seven members of her family, including her three-year-old daughter, during the 2002 riots. The convicts, once released, were felicitated with garlands and sweets. Two days later, Ms. Bano issued a statement saying, "the trauma of the past 20 years washed over me again." Soon thereafter, a senior IAS officer, Smita Sabharwal from Telangana, tweeted from her personal account in support of Ms. Bano and questioned the Gujarat government's decision, sparking off a row over whether she was in breach of the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules of 1964 and reviving the debate on the freedom of civil servants to express their personal views on matters of law and governance. In an interview moderated by Sonam Saigal, Justice B.N. Srikrishna and K. Sujatha Rao discuss the issue. Edited excerpts:

On August 17, Ms. Sabharwal quoted Ms. Bano's statement and tweeted, "As a woman and a civil servant I sit in disbelief, on reading the news on the #BilkisBanoCase. We cannot snuff out her Right to breathe free without fear, again and call ourselves a free nation. #JusticeForBilkisBano". As a bureaucrat, was she wrong in tweeting this?

**B.N. Srikrishna:** The citizens of this country have the fundamental right of free speech guaranteed to them under the Constitution, which is subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of securing the state's sovereignty, international relations, health, morality, etc. She has the right to tweet. But when you undertake a government service, you subject yourself to certain disciplinary rules. That prevents a government servant from becoming a member of a political organisation, or any organisation of such a nature, or expressing herself freely with regard to anything that has to do with the governance of the country.

This rule is of the British era. There is no doubt that the British were very, very strict and didn't want their officers to be talking about how bad the governance was. But in a democracy, the right to criticise the government is a fundamental right and nobody can muzzle that. Unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to express myself by sitting on the bench either in Bombay or in Kerala or in the Supreme Court, but I would have said this very loudly and without hesitation.

There is a recent judgment of then Tripura High Court Chief Justice Akil Kureshi, one of the best judges I have come across, who did not get enough due because of obvious reasons. He said something very interesting in a (2020) judgment (*Lipika Paul v. The State Of Tripura*), "As a Government servant the petitioner is not devoid of her right of free speech, a fundamental right which can be curtailed only by a valid law." She (the petitioner) was entitled to hold her own beliefs and express them in the manner she desired, subject to not crossing the borders laid down in the Conduct Rules which were applicable in Tripura. A fundamental right cannot be curtailed except by a valid law made by a legislature. In 2018, the Kerala High Court had said, "One cannot be prevented from expressing his views merely because he is an employee. In a democratic society, every institution is governed by democratic norms. Healthy criticism is a better way to govern a public institution." I think the trend is that judges are taking the view that IAS officers have a right to express themselves in a legitimate and decent manner.

Today, things are very bad. I must confess, if I were to stand in a public square and say I don't like the face of the Prime Minister, somebody might raid me, arrest me, throw me in jail without giving me any reason. Now that is something that all of us should oppose as citizens.

**Sujatha Rao:** There are two views in this case. Most colleagues, particularly those who are serving in the government, would take exception and not be very supportive – because the general belief is that as



IAS officers, we should not talk against government actions or government policies in public fora. And if at all we feel very strongly about something that is being done or acted upon, we can at best, if it is such a serious situation, approach the associations.

The Bilkis case was a travesty of justice. It crossed all borders of fairness and humanism. The gang rape and the murder of the child were horrific. Despite that, you find the convicts are not even in jail for life. A committee was constituted so casually and a 1992 (remission) policy was invoked even though there are new laws. And the committee had five members of the ruling party. They just released them and there was a celebration about it – it's a mockery [of justice].

In such a situation, Smita tweeted as a woman. There was anger. Why she added the words 'civil servant' is because the dharma of the civil servant is to uphold constitutional principles in letter and in spirit, and the rule of law. In this case, both the spirit of the Constitution and the rule of law were being subverted. This could be a very dangerous precedent, as we saw recently [when] the Andhra Pradesh government released eight murder convicts (on remission, despite their not completing the mandatory 14 years in jail). If murderers are going to be released by executive action, what is the point of having courts? Wind up the courts and let just the collector, the ruling party, decide who should be in jail and who should not be in jail. For some actions if civil servants, whether retired or in service, speak

We need to make a differentiation between what is something that's going to hurt society, hurt the Constitution, and the rule of law.

K. SUJATHA RAO

up, that would have some kind of a deterrent [effect] on the arbitrary abuse of bureaucratic power.

**Rule 9 of the Rules of the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules states, "No Government servant shall... make any statement of fact or opinion... which has the effect of an adverse criticism of any current or recent policy or action of the Central Government or a State Government." Isn't this in violation of Article 19 (freedom of speech and expression) of the Constitution?**

**BNS:** The courts are now veering towards the view that this rule is too stringent and cannot be applied in this manner. I agree that once you take up government service, you surrender and allow some restrictions on your fundamental rights. You are to operate within bounds. The rule says you cannot criticise a policy judgment. This is a very vague expression and needs to be carefully scrutinised. Releasing criminals who had committed heinous crimes prematurely, without application of mind... is that a policy? I hope that someday the Supreme Court will sit down and thrash out these issues carefully.

**SR:** No, I don't think the rules violate Article 19. It is a rule, it's not the law. It's not in the Constitution. Freedom of speech is given in the Constitution, but these are Conduct Rules and they are imposed because there has to be some discipline in an organisation for that organisation to function. There is a process of decision-making. Right from below, the matter is examined, the pros and cons are taken up, the bureaucracy is given an opportunity to examine all the aspects, write their notes of objection or support, and finally it reaches the political executive. When a policy is decided, it has to be obeyed and complied with by the bureaucracy.

**So, do you think that there was a problem with the medium through which the officer shared her opinion? Would it have been better if she had simply done it behind closed doors?**

**BNS:** Whether she had written an op-ed in *The Hindu* or tweeted or posted about it on Facebook, the bounds are the same, the bounds don't change the game, the rules of the game remain the same. Ultimately, it's your fundamental right which has to be reasonably restricted. The reasonableness of the restriction is not in the medium, it is in the manner in which you're restricted, the purpose for which your right is restricted and the method by which it is restricted, namely, by legislation made in accordance with the Supreme Court in the *Puttaswamy* case (which holds that the right to privacy is protected as a fundamental right under the Constitution) in connection with data protection law. I think it is time that this country encourages its democratic principles.

**SR:** No, she (Ms. Sabharwal) has no authority to express her opinion behind closed doors. What authority does she have? This is happening in Gujarat. She is not a stakeholder in the decision-making process. These rules were made way back during the British time. The scene has changed today. We have social media and there are no laws that say that because I am serving the government, I cannot use Twitter. If I can tweet about my holidays, I can also share my views with my follow-

ers saying, 'I'm very pained by what's happened today.' She has not given a speech about it; it is just a private communication on Twitter. She chose to express her anguish.

**Nowadays, many government officers and ministers are encouraged to communicate government policies to the general public through social media. So, isn't it time to 'un-gag' civil servants when it comes to commenting on such decisions?**

**BNS:** Unfortunately, government officers are given only one way of encouragement: say good things in the media. Do they have the liberty as of today to say what is bad? The only problem I see is, if you are going to implement a policy, let's understand one thing: in democracy, everybody has a right to express his or her opinion, a right to object, a right to dissent. The same thing could be said for an IAS officer; he or she may have a right to dissent. Once a resolution has been adopted, it's your job to implement it. If you don't implement it, you are not being true to yourself. That is the problem that arises. That is a very, very thin line, and also a question of how to balance the two interests.

**SR:** Creating more transparency about policies through social media is the duty of a government officer. This has to be taken on a case-by-case basis. I have supported Smita only because it was the Bilkis case. We need to make a differentiation between what is something that's going to hurt society, hurt the Constitution, and the rule of law. This is not a government policy (decision to release convicts on remission). This is an action, which is ordained by the Supreme Court, executed by the government of Gujarat, and the (question is over the) manner in which it has been done. This was an exception.

**Do you then think that we need to challenge these rules?**

**BNS:** Yes, somebody could challenge it as offending constitutional fundamental rights; then the Supreme Court would be forced to come down and say either it is good, or it is bad, and give good reasons for that.



**B.N. Srikrishna** is a retired justice of the Supreme Court



**K. Sujatha Rao** is a retired IAS officer

# UGC proposes clustering of colleges

It finalises norms for transforming universities into multidisciplinary bodies, a key NEP suggestion

JAGRITI CHANDRA  
NEW DELHI

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has finalised guidelines for transforming colleges and universities into multidisciplinary institutions and has prescribed three different approaches which include “clustering” of establishments located in proximity to each other.

The UGC will make public its “Guidelines for transforming higher educational institutions into multidisciplinary institutions” on Friday. These aim to help State governments and universities frame appropriate rules and policies. Promoting multidisciplinary institutions was a key recommendation of the National Education Policy, 2020.

The UGC has suggested academic collaboration between institutions through “clusters” of higher educa-

tion institutions (HEIs) in order to promote multidisciplinary education and research in online and offline modes.

The cluster system will help single-stream institutions with poor enrolment due to lack of employment-oriented, innovative multidisciplinary courses and lack of financial resources and help such centres improve their grades in National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation, say the guidelines. They will have to design their timetable in consultation with partner institutions so that students can register for courses offered by them without facing scheduling clashes.

The member colleges in a cluster will continue to function as affiliated colleges under the university in the initial phase during which they



They aim to help State governments and universities frame rules and policies.

will share their resources to offer programmes and guide student research projects. After the initial years, the affiliating university may affiliate the cluster of colleges as a single unit during which they will pass through graded autonomy before developing into an autonomous degree-granting cluster of

college. These can then later evolve into research or teaching universities.

The UGC has also prescribed two other approaches for existing colleges and universities to become multidisciplinary. These include merger of single-stream institutions with other multidisciplinary institutions under the same management or different managements, as well as expanding the number of departments in a college or university by adding new subjects such as languages, literature, music, Indology, sports, etc.

Students opting for courses offered as a result of collaborations and mergers can also avail credit mobility between partnering institutions as the National e-Governance Division of the Ministry of Electronic and Information Technology has developed the ABC platform

which allows students to open an academic account and add HEIs of interest and store credits earned from them for receiving degrees and diplomas.

The guidelines also identify student orientation programmes as an important element to familiarise them with the new options available to them.

The UGC also suggests capacity-building for faculty so that they can teach, train and research in multidisciplinary academic programmes such as through initiatives like Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching as well as investment in learning assessment tools. It has also harped on setting up Education Departments in universities and colleges that will teach curriculum design, pedagogy, communication and writing to future teachers.

# Slow improvement

Fiscal authorities should spur consumption and investment to aid faster recovery

The latest official GDP estimates would in normal circumstances be a cause for cheer, pointing as they ostensibly do to a double-digit expansion in economic output in the first quarter. The NSO's projection of 13.5% growth in gross domestic product from the year-earlier April-June period, however, is disconcertingly slower than the 16.2% pace that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had projected just last month and points to an economy that is still in search of a firmer footing. Faced with headwinds – signs of a global recession and the Ukraine war – the first-quarter's underwhelming momentum may pitch the economy into a far shallower growth trajectory even as faster-than-acceptable inflation erodes consumer confidence. Output in the eight broad sectors that combine to provide the Gross Value Added (GVA) shows that while year-on-year all sectors expanded, with public administration, defence and other services growing 26.3%, six of these sectors posted sequential contractions. Only two services sectors – electricity, gas, water and other utility services, and financial and professional services – logged expansions from the January-March quarter, growing by 12.6% and 23.7%, respectively. The major employment-providing sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, construction and the contact-intensive trade, hotels and transport services sector suffered quarter-on-quarter contractions of 13.3%, 10.5%, 22.3% and 24.6%, respectively.

The demand side has flattered to deceive. Private final consumption expenditure, the essential bulwark of the economy, appeared to have revived with a year-on-year expansion of 25.9% lifting its share in the GDP to just shy of 60%. However, when viewed sequentially, the estimated ₹22.08 lakh crore of private consumption spending in April-June 2022 was a not insignificant ₹54,000 crore, or 2.4%, less than what was spent in the preceding quarter. And both government spending and gross fixed capital formation, which is viewed as a proxy for private investment, shrank quarter-on-quarter by 10.4% and 6.8%, respectively, undermining overall output. That GDP, in fact, contracted 9.6% sequentially should be a cause for concern among policymakers. Given that this year's monsoon has distributed rains in an erratic scattershot pattern that has caused disruptive flooding in some parts while leaving key paddy and pulses growing areas in northern and eastern India moisture deficient, both farm output and consumer spending in the rural hinterland are likely to take a hit. And with global trade also becalmed amid the sharp slowdown in advanced economies, India's merchandise exports are sure to weaken in momentum, any benefits from the rupee's depreciation against the dollar notwithstanding. With the RBI needing to stay laser focused on taming inflation, the onus is on fiscal authorities to spur consumption and investment.

# GST revenues cross the ₹1.4 lakh cr. mark again

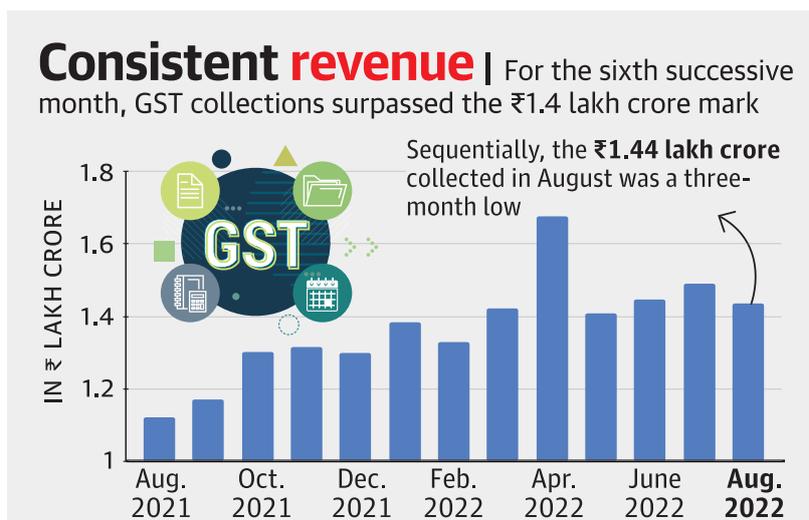
However, August collection is 3.6% lower than July's

**VIKAS DHOOT**  
NEW DELHI

India's gross revenues from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) were ₹1,43,612 crore in August, 28% higher than a year ago. Revenues from import of goods soared 57% during the month while domestic transactions and import of services yielded 19% higher taxes than in August 2021.

This is the sixth successive month when GST revenues have been over the ₹1.4 lakh crore mark, the Finance Ministry said, stressing that GST collections have risen 33% till August this year, compared to the corresponding period of 2021-22, and are "continuing to display very high buoyancy".

On a sequential basis, however, August's GST kitty, based on transactions carried out in July, was 3.6% lower than July's collection of ₹1,48,995 crore and marks a three-month low. As per the Ministry, 7.6 crore e-way



bills were generated in July, "marginally higher" than 7.4 crore in June and 19% higher than the 6.4 crore in July 2021.

The Ministry said the sustained uptick in GST collections is "a clear impact of various measures taken by the

(GST) Council in the past to ensure better compliance". Better reporting coupled with economic recovery has been having positive impact on the GST revenues on a consistent basis, it added.

**CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 14**

# GST revenues cross ₹1.4 lakh crore mark again

The gross GST revenue collected in August includes ₹24,710 crore of Central GST, ₹30,951 crore collected as State GST, and Integrated GST of ₹77,782 crore, which comprises ₹42,067 crore collected on import of goods. GST Compensation Cess collections were ₹10,168 crore.

“While absolute GST collections displayed a mild sequential dip in August, the impressive 28% year-on-year growth reflects the revival in consumption, improved compliance as well as elevated inflation,” said Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency of India chief economist Aditi Nayar.

While overall domestic GST revenues rose 19%, there were wide variations in collections across States, with 13 States seeing a higher growth in revenues, three States reporting a flat or negative growth, and 14 States, including the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir, seeing a slower uptick than 19%.

August GST revenues grew 19% in Tamil Nadu, 21% in Haryana and Delhi, 22% in Andhra Pradesh, 24% in Maharashtra, 25% in West Bengal, 26% in Kerala, and 29% in Karnataka.

Mizoram and Goa reported the highest growth in revenues at 78% and 32%, respectively.

# PMI flags fastest manufacturing output growth since November

Easing inflation fears lift sentiment to 6-year high: S&P Global

## **SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Manufacturers reported the fastest rise in output and new orders in August since November, aided by strengthening demand and a spike in export orders, as per the survey-based S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI).

The seasonally adjusted index eased to 56.2 in August, from July's 56.4, signalling the second-strongest improvement in operating conditions for producers since November.

Input cost inflation, a major worry for producers due to high global commodity prices, softened to the weakest rate in a year as prices of



aluminium and steel cooled, but firms continued to pass on higher freight, labour and material prices to clients at a rate that was little-changed from July.

While August marked the fourth successive monthly slowdown in input cost inflation, factory gate charges rose at the second-weakest

pace since April.

With inflation concerns fading a bit, business sentiment strengthened further, raising the degree of optimism among manufacturers to its highest in six years. "Predictions of stronger sales, new enquiries and marketing efforts all boosted confidence in August," S&P Global said.

"Firms welcomed the weaker increase in input costs with an upward revision to output forecasts amid renewed hopes that contained price pressures will help boost demand," remarked Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

# Indian-made HPV vaccine this year

One shot will be priced at ₹200-400

**JACOB KOSHY**

NEW DELHI

India's first indigenously developed vaccine to prevent cervical cancer, CERVAVAC, will likely cost ₹200-400 a shot and be commercially available later this year, Adar Poonawalla, CEO, Serum Institute of India (SII), said on the sidelines of a launch event here on Thursday.

CERVAVAC, developed by SII, was approved by the Drug Controller General of India in July. The event also underlined the role of the Indian government, particularly the Department of Biotechnology, in facilitating trials and investments in the vaccine candidate.

CERVAVAC is a quadrivalent vaccine, meaning it is effective against at least four

variants of cancer-causing Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), and resulted from a partnership of DBT's Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that supported Serum's development efforts.

Annually, about 1.25 lakh women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and over 75,000 die from the disease in India. Close to 83% of invasive cervical cancers in India and 70% of cases worldwide are attributed to HPV-types 16 or 18. HPV transmission is influenced by sexual activity and age. Almost 75% of all sexually active adults are likely to be infected with at least one HPV type. A vast majority of the infections resolve itself.

## EXPLAINER

# Effecting the ban on single-use plastics

What are single-use plastics and how do they impact the environment? What are the amended rules and are alternatives available?

## THE GIST

- The purpose of single-use plastics is to use them once or for a short period of time before disposing of them. There is a greater likelihood of single-use plastic products ending up in the sea than reusable ones.

- The Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, prohibited the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of plastic carry bags whose thickness is less than 75 microns.

- To ensure the effective enforcement of the ban, national and State-level control rooms will be established, as well as special enforcement teams for the purpose of checking the illegal manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of single-use plastics.

G.S. BAJPAI  
SANGEETA TAAK

**The story so far:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021 on August 12, 2021. In keeping with the spirit of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the country is taking steps to curb littered and unmanaged plastic waste pollution. Since July 1, 2022, India has banned the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of single-use plastic (SUP) items with low utility and high littering potential. India is a party to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). In all, 124 nations are party to the UNEA, and India has signed a resolution to draw up an agreement in the future that will make it legally binding for signatories to address the full life cycle of plastics, from production to disposal.

### Why are single-use plastics harmful?

The purpose of single-use plastics is to use them once or for a short period of time before disposing of them. Plastic waste has drastic impacts on the environment and human health. There is a greater likelihood of single-use plastic products ending up in the sea than reusable ones.

India has taken resolute steps to mitigate pollution caused by littered single-use plastics. A number of items are banned, including earbuds with plastic sticks, balloon sticks, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice cream sticks, polystyrene (thermocool) for decorations, plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straws, trays, wrapping or packing films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners less than 100 micron, stirrers, etc.

### What is the impact on the environment?

Littered single-use plastic items have an adverse effect on both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. All countries face a major environmental challenge due to pollution caused by single-use plastic items. India piloted a resolution on single-use plastics pollution at the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly in 2019, recognising

the urgent need for the global community to address this issue. This resolution was adopted at the UN Environment Assembly as an important step forward. In the recently concluded 5th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in March 2022, India engaged constructively with all member states to develop a consensus on a resolution to drive global action against plastic pollution.

However, India is not the first country to ban single-use plastics. Bangladesh became the first country to ban thin plastic bags in 2002; New Zealand banned plastic bags in July 2019. China had issued a ban on plastic bags in 2020 with a phased implementation. As of July 2019, 68 countries have plastic bag bans with varying degrees of enforcement.

### What are the plastic waste management rules in India?

With effect from September 30, 2021, the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, prohibited the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale, and use of plastic carry bags whose thickness is less than 75 microns. From December 31, 2022, plastic carry bags whose thickness is less than 120 microns will be banned.

It means that the ban does not cover all plastic bags; however, it requires the manufacturers to produce plastic bags thicker than 75 microns which was earlier 50 microns. As per the notification, the standard shall be increased to 120 microns in December this year.

The notification clearly mentioned that plastic or PVC banners/hoardings should have more than 100 microns in thickness, and non-woven plastic (polypropylene) must be more than 60 GSM (grams per square metre). Non-woven plastic bags have a cloth-like texture but are counted among plastics. Still, plastic or PET bottles, counted among the most recyclable types of plastic, have been left out of the scope of the ban.

In addition, the Indian government has taken steps to promote innovation and create an ecosystem for accelerated adoption and availability of alternatives across the country. To ensure the effective enforcement of the ban, national and State-level control rooms will be established,

as well as special enforcement teams for the purpose of checking the illegal sale and use of single-use plastics. To prevent the movement of banned single-use plastic items between States and Union Territories, border checkpoints have been established.

In an effort to empower citizens to help curb the plastic menace, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has launched a grievance redressal application.

The Government has been taking measures for awareness generation towards the elimination of single-use plastics. The awareness campaign has brought together entrepreneurs and start-ups, industry, Central, State and local Governments, regulatory bodies, experts, citizen organisations, R&D and academic institutions.

### What is the role of the manufacturer?

In addition, the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022 on February 16, 2022. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is the responsibility of a producer for the environmentally sound management of the product until the end of its life. The guidelines provide a framework to strengthen the circular economy of plastic packaging waste, promote the development of new alternatives to plastic packaging and provide the next steps for moving towards sustainable plastic packaging by businesses.

### What are the challenges?

The ban will succeed only if all stakeholders participate enthusiastically and engage in effective engagement and concerted actions.

However, if we look back at our past, almost 25 Indian States previously banned plastic at the state level. However, these bans had a very limited impact in reality because of the widespread use of these items.

Now the challenge is to see how the local level authorities will enforce the ban in accordance with the guidelines. Banned items such as earbuds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, etc., are non-branded items and it is difficult to find out who the manufacturer is and who is accountable for selling because these items will be available in the market even after the



issuing of guidelines.

### What's happening on the research and development front?

The consumer needs to be informed about the ban through advertisements, newspaper or TV commercials, or on social media. In order to find sustainable alternatives, companies need to invest in research and development. The solution to the plastic pollution problem is not the responsibility of the government alone, but of industries, brands, manufacturers and most importantly consumers. Finding alternatives to plastic seems a little difficult, however, greener alternatives to plastic may be considered a sustainable option. For example, compostable and bio-degradable plastic, etc., may be considered as an option.

While the total ban on the use of plastic sounds a great idea, its feasibility seems difficult at this hour, especially in the absence of workable alternatives.

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General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 <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
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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
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B	Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth;
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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
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T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
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W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
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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.
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F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
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L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
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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.