



**VEDHIK**  
IAS ACADEMY

*The New Learning Mantra*

# VEDHIK

# DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

09 - SEP - 2022

## **FOREWORD**

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

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

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

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INTERVIEW | SHAHRIAR ALAM

## 'So much has moved forward, on trade, on visa, on people-to-people ties'

Bangladesh Minister of State for Foreign Affairs says Sheikh Hasina's visit was productive on major aspects, rejects concerns over attacks on minorities

**SUHASINI HAIDAR**

*Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's state visit to India ended on Thursday. After a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, where the Kusiyara river sharing agreement was signed, Ms. Hasina said she hoped the Teesta issue would be resolved "soon". Bangladesh Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said the visit was productive, and Bangladesh and India have an understanding on even difficult issues related to Rohingya refugees and minority rights.*

What, according to you, are the major outcomes of this visit by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina?

■ This visit is special, even though we are quite frequent visitors to each other's capitals. We have seven tangible outcomes, seven memoranda of understanding (MoUs). The Kusiyara water sharing agreement is only the second river water sharing agree-

tment, it looks like there is no immediate solution. We hoped Myanmar would at least honour its agreement [to take back refugees]. But unfortunately, there are reports that there are fresh problems in Rakhine State, and things are looking worse than in 2016 and 2017 [the last big ethnic attacks].

The Indian government has said it will deport more Rohingya, and have already sent back 12. So what exactly did Prime Minister Hasina ask Prime Minister Modi for, given that she said India is a big country and can help?

Apart from that, we have other regional issues like the Rohingya issue, where unfor-



**G** Bangladesh has performed way better than many other countries in the region when it comes to minorities

mar], as well as with other countries who are not supporting Rohingya causes or their safe repatriation...

Are you disappointed that India has not done more, in

terms of using its relationship with the Myanmar military to push for the return of the Rohingya?

■ Well, we are only disappointed that there is no result, even with countries who have claimed to do more. We actually set a date and time for Rohingya to return voluntarily, but on that particular day, no one showed up to return [to Myanmar] due to safety concerns. We understand that it's a difficult situation, a difficult country to deal with.

On the river agreements, Prime Minister Hasina mentioned the unfinished Teesta agreement in her opening comments. Has there been any headway on

the Teesta agreement during this visit or since 2011?

■ As far as we are concerned, unfortunately not. But it's not just about what we are gaining from this particular visit... At a time where there is trouble everywhere, we should focus on the positives in our relationship: we have restarted the Joint River Commission (after 12 years), very regular BGB-BSF [border] talks are taking place.

People who criticise should see the progress – out of 54 shared rivers, we have ticked the Ganga and now we have ticked the Kusiyara. Yes, it would have been nice to tick Teesta as well. We cannot possibly wait 25 years for our third agreement to be signed, we should be doing

two or three rivers in a year. But so much else has moved forward, on trade, on visa, on people-to-people ties, that it is wrong to claim that the results from the visit are not enough.

India has publicly spoken about its concerns over the attacks on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh. Did Prime Minister Hasina raise the issue of minorities in India as well, and in particular the Citizenship Amendment Act?

■ We consider such issues as our own internal issues as the Citizenship Act is in India's case [an internal matter]. We have been assured and we believe that India will not do anything that might create a crisis for us, target-

ing Bangladesh or where Bangladesh will be negatively impacted.

I have not been asked about [minority attacks] during my visit here, and I would say that the prompt action taken by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina should give enough confidence to the practitioners of all religions that Bangladesh is for everyone. It's not for any particular religion. Some politicians from both sides will go to a great length and make comments publicly, which are not justified, and not fact-based, and they do not help the greater cause [of bilateral ties]. And Bangladesh has performed way better than many other countries in the region when it comes to minorities.

(Full interview on [bit.ly/shahriaralam](http://bit.ly/shahriaralam))

# U.S. to refit Pak. F-16s; India silent

Announcement came amid talks between senior Indian and U.S. officials

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

NEW DELHI

India maintained a studied silence a day after the U.S. announced a \$450-million package to refit Pakistan's large F-16 fighter fleet with the latest technological advances. The announcement from the U.S. State Department came against the backdrop of inter-sessional talks that senior Indian and U.S. officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu, held on Wednesday.

The External Affairs Ministry is yet to clarify if Mr. Lu and his team had informed the Indian side about the announcement by the Biden administration that will add considerable lethality to Pakistan Air Force, which poses the biggest challenge for India from west and northwest.

"The proposed sale will continue the sustainment of Pakistan's F-16 fleet, which greatly improves Pakistan's ability to support counter-terrorism operations through its robust air-to-ground capability. Pakistan will have no difficulty absorbing these articles and services into its armed forces," said the State Department announcement. The F-16 fleet of Pakistan was last seen in action against Indian fighter aircraft during dog-fights over the skies of Kashmir in the aftermath of Balakot strike by India in 2019.



**Threat perception:** Pakistan's F-16 fleet was last seen in action against Indian jets over Kashmir in 2019. ■REUTERS

a clandestine manner. President Reagan, however, cleared the sale despite opposition from certain members of the U.S. Congress and the CIA's counter-proliferation wing.

In 1990, the U.S. cancelled delivery of nearly 30 F-16 aircraft to Pakistan after the Pressler Amendment came into effect. Nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 further confirmed Indian concerns about the danger posed by nuclear-armed aircraft of Pakistan's Air Force.

The U.S. has repeatedly used the strategic aircraft as a tool in its diplomatic relation with Pakistan. In 2001, following the Al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade

Center in New York, the U.S. had released a package of \$3 billion to refit and supply new F-16 aircraft to Pakistan. With nearly 2,000 miles as its range of operation, the F-16 has obvious usage against Pakistan's primary military rival – India.

The subsequent findings of widespread terrorist network inside Pakistan and the attacks against U.S. citizens like Daniel Pearl could not dent the decision taken by the George W. Bush administration.

A similar decision to supply F-16 aircraft was taken in late 2015, when the Obama administration was in negotiation with the Pakistan-backed Taliban leaders in exile for an exit strategy for the U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

India had vehemently protested against the sale of F-16 fighters to Pakistan.

The Biden administration's decision to refit Pakistan's F-16 aircraft fleet with the latest weapons and electronic systems indicates that despite the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the U.S. will continue to maintain strong strategic commitment to the armed forces of Pakistan.

## Long diplomatic battle

Pakistan first received the F-16 aircraft package from the Ronald Reagan administration in the 1980s despite heavy objection from the Government of India, which cautioned that the aircraft would be used against Indian targets. India's objection was based on the findings that Pakistan would arm the F-16s with nuclear weapons that it had procured in

# ECB lifts rates by record 75 bps to fight inflation

## Central bank sees more rate increases

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
FRANKFURT

The European Central Bank announced the largest rate increase in its history Thursday and said it would raise rates again as it scrambles to tame record inflation.

Policymakers lifted the ECB's key rates by 75 basis points, a leap matched only by a technical move made in 1999 shortly after the central bank's founding.

Eurozone inflation hit a record 9.1% in August, as steep increases in the price of energy in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine heaped pressure on households and businesses.

Consumer prices were likely to continue to rise quickly "for an extended period", the ECB said in a statement, with its latest fo-



Christine Lagarde

recasts expecting inflation to average 8.1% in 2022.

The step quickened the ECB's move away from a "highly accommodative" level of policy rates to one that would bring inflation back to its 2% target, it said.

The Frankfurt-based institution was on a "journey" to raise interest rates and tame inflation, ECB President Christine Lagarde said at a press conference.

# 'Heckler's veto cannot be allowed'

State's responsibility to protect belief if it does not violate public order: petitioner

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

Wearing a hijab on the street does not offend public order, but can schools not intervene to maintain public order if a student wears it to school, the Supreme Court asked on Thursday.

To this, senior advocate Devadatt Kamat, appearing for Aishat Shifa, a student from Karnataka who was banned from entering her classroom wearing a hijab, said schools have no say in deciding public order.

Maintaining public order is the responsibility of the State, Mr. Kamat contended.

"If I wear a headscarf and someone is offended and shouts slogans, the police cannot turn to me and say not to wear hijab. That will be the heckler's veto," the senior lawyer argued.

Mr. Kamat asked whether the government can restrict speech and expression of honest beliefs and choices merely on the possibility of a violent reaction by hecklers.

"The State, instead of prohibiting me, must ensure conditions in which free-



**C**If I wear a headscarf and someone is offended and shouts slogans, the police cannot turn to me and say not to wear hijab. That will be the heckler's veto

**DEVADATT KAMAT**  
Senior Advocate tells Supreme Court

doms must flourish... Last day the State Advocate General said the government order on hijabs was issued after some students demanded to wear orange shawls... Is heckler's veto permitted?" he asked.

Mr. Kamat said the argument of Karnataka was "look here, if we allow you to wear hijab, some will want to wear orange shawls".

"Wearing of orange shawls is a belligerent display of religious jingoism... 'You are wearing a headscarf, I will wear something to show my identity. That Article 25 does not protect. It protects an innocent display of faith. Naamam, yes. Tila-kam, yes. A rudraksham,

yes... Bonafide and innocent display of faith is protected," the senior advocate argued.

## Honest belief

He said it may also be a person's honest belief that wearing a kada or naamam may make him a better person. "It is the State's obligation to protect my belief as long as it does not violate public order, health or morality," Mr. Kamat said, asking how a display of "honest belief" by wearing hijab affects any of the three criteria.

Mr. Kamat said every practice may not be an essential or core religious practice. "But that does not mean the State can restrict it... I can wear whatever I want,

even though it may not be part of my essential religious practice, as long as I do not hamper public order, health or morality," he submitted.

"Just because other people can get offended is not a ground for prohibiting me from wearing a hijab," he said.

Advocate Nizam Pasha, who argued next for the petitioner students, said to make a Muslim student choose between education and the hijab was a violation of Article 19 (freedom of expression).

The Bench asked whether "all religions accept the same God". To this Mr. Pasha replied that the Quran mandated respect towards other religions.

He quoted the verse "O you disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship. I will never worship what you worship nor will you ever worship what I worship. You have your way, I have my way".

The court adjourned the hearing to continue on Monday at 2 p.m.

# SC fixes 3 key questions for examining EWS quota

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**

NEW DELHI

A Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India U.U. Lalit on Thursday finalised three cardinal issues for examining whether the 103rd Constitutional Amendment, which provides 10% quota to economically weaker sections (EWS) of society in government jobs and educa-

tional institutions, violates the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

The five-judge Bench, also comprising Justices S. Ravindra Bhat, Dinesh Maheshwari, S.B. Pardiwala and Bela Trivedi, will start hearing the arguments from September 13.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12**

# SC fixes key questions for examining EWS quota

The court will examine whether the amendment breaches the Basic Structure by permitting the state to make special provisions, including reservation, based on economic criteria; whether it violates the Basic Structure by allowing the state to make special provisions in relation to admissions to private unaided institutions, and lastly, whether the Basic Structure is trampled upon by the constitutional amendment by excluding SEBC/OBC/SC/ST communities from the scope of the EWS quota.

The three issues for the court's examination were forwarded by Attorney-General of India K.K. Venugopal.

Chief Justice Lalit said the three questions of law would form the foundation of the court's examination and lawyers could expand on them while arguing.

Legal scholar and advocate G. Mohan Gopal compared the case to a watershed moment similar to the *ADM Jabalpur (habeas corpus)* case.

"We are crossing a Rubicon and it is the *ADM Jabalpur* of social justice as it restores the theory that one is privileged by being born in upper class and that being

born in the lower classes is a disability," he submitted.

Senior advocate P. Wilson pointed out that the court ought to examine whether the EWS quota was in violation of the rule of equality and non-discrimination, and if the move to grant reservation to forward castes (EWS or otherwise) was simply impermissible.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, who had prepared the draft issues for the court which were circulated among the lawyers in the previous hearing, said nearly 55 issues were suggested by various parties, but an effort was made to trim the questions of law for consideration.

Mr. Venugopal said the question of creamy layer does not come in the economically weaker sections (EWS) quota as it was meant to give quota benefits to the poorest of the poor.

The Chief Justice of India, in the court's order, said issues suggested by the Attorney-General encapsulated the matter under consideration. "We shall go ahead with the hearing apropos the first three issues suggested by the Attorney-General," the Bench said.

# SC wants job policy for transgenders in 3 months

## 'Transpersons Act must be followed'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday gave the government three months to take the lead and devise a policy framework to open up avenues of employment for transgender persons, particularly in the civil aviation industry. The order was a fallout of a petition filed by Shanavi Ponnusamy, a transgender person from Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu, whose dream of flying high as an airline cabin crew member never took off.

The court said the petitioner's case raised wider issues about the formulation of government policy to ensure the guarantee of non-discrimination against transgender people.

A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Hima Kohli observed that the government has to comply with the enabling provisions of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019 in "letter and spirit".

The court detailed specific provisions of the Act

which mandated that no person or establishment, whether government or private, should discriminate against a transgender person in matters of employment, including recruitment or promotion or in any other related areas.

The court reminded the Centre that it was obliged by the Act to "secure full and effective participation of transgender persons and their inclusion in society". "The enactment by the Parliament marks a watershed in the evolution of the rights of the transgender persons," the court emphasised.

The court ordered the Department of Personnel and Training and the Social Justice Ministry to collaborate with the National Council for Transgender Persons, a body constituted under the Act, to consult stakeholders and prepare a "considered" policy for the community's welfare and rights in the next three months. The Centre has to guide States and establishments governed by the Act.

# India ranks 132 in HDI as country's score drops

The world over, nine out of 10 countries have slipped in their human development performance due to multiple crises such as COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and environmental challenges, indicating that human development globally has stalled for the first time in 32 years.

Ranking of countries over different years is not comparable. A large contributor to the HDI's recent decline is a global drop in life expectancy, down from 72.8 years in 2019 to 71.4 years in 2021.

India's HDI score of 0.633 places it in the medium human development category, lower than its value of 0.645 in 2018, indicating a reversal in progress.

Like global trends, in India's case, the drop in HDI from 0.645 in 2018 to 0.633 in 2021 can be attributed to falling life expectancy at birth – 70.7 years to 67.2 years. India's expected years

of schooling stand at 11.9 years, and the mean years of schooling are at 6.7 years. The GNI per capita level is \$6,590.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated gender inequality, which increased 6.7% globally. India has, however, shown a slight improvement in its Gender Inequality Index value in the latest report as compared to the 2020 index (0.490 vs 0.493), after gender inequality worsened between 2019 and 2020 (0.486 vs 0.493). The index measures inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.

The report notes that the uncertainty due to multiple global crises has fuelled support for polarisation in many parts of the world which is detrimental for democratic freedom and human rights.

# 'Monetary tools alone can't tame inflation'

Growth impulses also need to be 'unfettered' in current situation, says Finance Minister Sitharaman

**VIKAS DHOOT**  
NEW DELHI

In a barely veiled signal to the RBI, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday that monetary policy tools like interest rate increases deployed by several central banks would not suffice to cool inflation and suggested that the Reserve Bank of India need not synchronise its actions 'as much' with its counterparts in developed countries.

While monetary policy as a solution for containing inflation had been considered 'sacrosanct', the minister indicated that growth needed attention too, while countries that had been exponents of the monetary policy theory that only increasing interest rates could rein in inflation, had been totally ineffective in managing price



**Indian recipe:** If you talked to people on the ground, they would stress the need for growth, says FM. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

rise, Ms. Sitharaman said.

"Why does one country in that network have a 79% [inflation] and why [does] some country, which is the fountainhead of such theory, have the highest inflation in 40 years," she noted rhetorically. "Why would other

members of that clique of nations also [look] at 8%-9% [inflation]," she asked.

India's experience in handling inflation showed that many different factors needed attention and while the central bank and its instruments like interest rates

form a 'very critical part of it', they could not be the only one, the minister observed.

"I say it with a sense of responsibility... yes, it is one of the tools, but sometimes, for instance in India, if you were to leave the policy makers and talk to people on the ground, they would say, particularly in the situation we are in now, where economic growth would have to be unfettered," she said.

## 'Not prescribing'

"The Reserve Bank will have to synchronise somewhat, may not be as much synchronised as the other western developed countries would do. I am not prescribing or giving a forward direction to the RBI, let me be careful here," she said at a meet on 'Taming Inflation'.

"But... India's solution to

handling the economy, part of which is handling inflation also, is an exercise where the fiscal and monetary policy have to work together. It can't be singularly left to monetary policy which has proved totally ineffective in many countries whose structure, whose economy's profile forms the basis of monetary policy theory to rivet everything on interest rate and say that's the one and only potent tool to manage inflation," she asserted.

"India's inflation management is an exercise of so many different activities, majority of which are outside the monetary policy in today's circumstances," Ms. Sitharaman said, stressing that such an assertion from a country's Finance Minister would have been considered 'sacrilegious' earlier.

# Nirmala links inflation, State fuel taxes

Finance Minister says States that have not reduced the levies clock higher levels than national average

**VIKAS DHOOT**  
NEW DELHI

Emphasising that it was unfair to blame the Centre for higher price levels in some States, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday that the States that had not reduced fuel taxes were recording inflation rates higher than the national average, and mooted a Centre-State cooperation mechanism to handle price rise matters.

While the Centre had cut petroleum taxes for consumers recently on two occasions in view of surging global prices, Ms. Sitharaman pointed out that several States had not offered any relief to residents who were suffering because of this.

"Very recently, widely available information in the public domain shows how inflation has varied from State to State. But the fact remains, and I find, coincidentally, and I am being careful

**Cut and dry** | As against the Finance Minister's assertion, excise duty cuts by the Centre also reduced States' VAT revenue. The petrol price build-up in Delhi before and after the excise duty cut of ₹8 a litre in May shows, this reduction also brought down the UT's value added tax revenue by ₹0.83 a litre. The Centre's cut caused the sum of the base price, excise duty, and dealer commission to slip to ₹81.01/ltr from ₹85.27/ltr



Component	Before the cut (on April 1)	After the cut (on Aug 1)
Base price (including freight)	53.54	57.35
Excise duty	27.9	19.9
Dealer commission	3.83	3.76
<b>Total (base price + excise duty + dealer commission)</b>	<b>85.27</b>	<b>81.01</b>
VAT at 19.4%	16.54	15.71
<b>Reduction in VAT</b>	-	<b>0.83</b>
Retail selling price	101.81	96.72

here...Coincidentally, inflation being higher than the national-level inflation in States which have not reduced the fuel prices," Ms. Sitharaman said.

"You might think I am

stating the obvious. But it establishes the fact that the movement of foodgrains and food-related items actually have a bearing on the price of these items, which account for a bulk of the Con-

sumer Price Index (CPI)," Ms. Sitharaman said.

While headline inflation has averaged 6.8% since January 2022, 14 States as well as three UTs, including Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), have faced higher than the national inflation, most of them averaging over 7%, as per an analysis of States' inflation trends by *The Hindu*.

Consumers in Telangana (8.32%), West Bengal (8.06%) and Sikkim have been the most affected with 8%-plus inflation, followed by Maharashtra and Haryana (7.7%), Madhya Pradesh (7.52%), Assam (7.37%), Uttar Pradesh (7.27%), and Gujarat and J&K, both of which have averaged 7.2%.

"The inflation that prevails in different parts of the country, despite the GST and despite creation of one market and despite removing the toll taxes and freeing movement of goods, vary from State to State," Ms. Sitharaman said.

man said.

"Now if States and their inflation will also have to be attributed to the Government of India, then we will have to have a way in which we work together to handle inflationary matters with Centre and State co-operation," she said.

Drawing an analogy with the debate over the devolution of taxable revenues where some States argue that they get an unfair share of revenues compared to what they contribute to the economy, she said a similar approach is needed to evaluate States' handling of inflation. "It cannot be that inflation is handled only by the Centre, and when States don't take enough steps, that part of India suffers for want of a release from the stress of inflation... there are enough justification to have an understanding of how States manage handling their inflation," Ms. Sitharaman said.

# 300 new cargo terminals to boost Railways revenue

Govt. pegs it at ₹30,000 crore a year

**YUTHIKA BHARGAVA**

NEW DELHI

A day after the Union Cabinet approved revised policy on long term leasing of Railways Land and plans to develop 300 Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals, Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Thursday said the move will help the national transporter garner a larger share in freight transport, thereby increasing its revenues.

After the launch of the 'Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal (GCT)' policy last December, the government has received a very good response from the industry, he noted.

"The target of 300 terminals is a very achievable target. We already have 150 firm proposals – about 93 applications have been received to build terminals and about 65 entities have expressed their interest," the Minister said.

A senior Railways official added that Indian Railways expects incremental revenues of at least ₹30,000 crore per annum from freight services after the development of 300 'Gati shakti Cargo Terminals' over the next five years. Additionally, the setting up of these terminals is expected to generate direct employment for 30,000 people.

Meanwhile, the Minister



About 93 applications have been received to build terminals, says Minister.

also clarified that there will be no change in policy for existing terminal holders, including PSUs such as CONCUR, Food Corporation of India, COAL India Ltd and Steel Authority of India.

"We don't want any favourable or unfavourable treatment. The new players will come through a transparent bidding process," he shared.

He, however, added that once the lease ends, the existing players will have the option to switch to the new policy via the bidding process.

The Minister also stressed that the role of Railways is crucial to bring down the logistics cost of the country, which is about 13-14% of the GDP presently, and success in this aspect will help make India a more competitive market.

# 39 exotic animals seized in Assam

Two persons from T.N. arrested for alleged bid to smuggle animals into Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Assam Police on Thursday seized 39 exotic animals from two Delhi-registered SUVs that travelled from the Mizoram-Myanmar border and were bound for Siliguri in northern West Bengal.

This was the biggest seizure of smuggled exotic animals in Assam. Two joeys or baby wallabies, 19 chimpanzees and monkeys, 13 small turtles, three large tortoises and two exotic birds were seized.

"The Rangiya Police intercepted the vehicles following a tip-off and arrested two people after finding the rare animals packed in cages. The two said they travelled from the Mizoram-Myanmar border and were heading for Si-



Baby wallabies, chimpanzees, monkeys and tortoises were among the animals seized on Mizoram-Myanmar border. ■AP

liguri for delivering the consignment," Hitesh Chandra Roy, the Superintendent of Police of Kamrup district, told *The Hindu*.

Sunnydeo Chaudhary, the Divisional Forest Officer of North Kamrup division, said the two arrested persons – identified as Raghu from

Theni district and Karthik from Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu – were being interrogated for information about others involved in the animal-trafficking trade.

"The animals have been taken to the Assam State Zoo where their health condition would be assessed and the

species identified," he said.

## North Bengal hub?

Assam forest officials said Myanmar, despite the civil war, has been the source of most exotic animals smuggled into Northeast India and elsewhere in the country with northern West Bengal becoming a hub of this illegal trade.

"There seems to be a craze for keeping exotic animals as pets, which is fuelling the animal trafficking racket. But the biggest worry is that these animals, unlike those exchanged by zoos, come in without health screening, thus posing the risk of spreading diseases," Bibhab Talukdar of the Assam-based green group Aaranyak said.

# 'Spent N-fuel storage should be worked out'

## Plea sought shutdown of nuclear plant

### LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has said the problem of storing spent nuclear fuel from the Kudankulam nuclear power plant has to be "worked out", possibly with the help of experts from the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) and officials at the highest level in the Tamil Nadu government, while *prima facie* disagreeing with the petitioners' idea of shutting down the nuclear plant through a judicial order as an "extraordinary measure".

A Bench, led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, asked Tamil Nadu, represented by senior advocate V. Giri and advocate Joseph Aristotle, to come clear on the time schedule for the completion of public hearings by the State regarding the construction of an Away From Reactor (AFR) facility at the Kudankulam plant.

The court also gave the AERB, represented by Additional Solicitor General Vikramjit Banerjee, two weeks' time to file an affidavit on issues including the storage of

spent nuclear fuel from the plant without posing a hazard to the public.

"The concern of the public about the existence of spent nuclear fuel has to be understood," the Bench said, addressing the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL).

The NPCIL had sought an extension till July 2026 for the construction of the AFR facility. In 2018, the court had given the Corporation time till April 30, 2022.

"The AFR repository was supposed to be built in five years' time, but this has not been done. In 2013, the Supreme Court had granted five years' time to the NPCIL, till July 2018. In 2018, the court gave an extension till 2022 and said this was the final extension of time to create the AFR storage. Now, they are again asking for an extension. If they continue to store spent nuclear fuel, they risk a catastrophe greater than Fukushima, and one which may affect the whole of south India," advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner, said.

# Should the mother tongue or English be the medium of instruction?

PARLEY

English should be taught effectively not as the medium, but as a second language

*Over the years, there has been a raging debate over the need for children to have their mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools. While educationists have emphasised the importance of learning in the mother tongue to enhance a child's learning and overcome glaring inequities, there has been an equally steady demand for English-medium schools in several States. In a discussion moderated by S. Poorvaja, V. Vasanthi Devi and Anita Rampal explain why and how the language policy can be reoriented. Edited excerpts:*

**The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 says the home language, mother tongue, local language, or regional language wherever possible should be the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8. What are your thoughts on this?**



Anita Rampal  
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University



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Nadu



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interview online

pedagogical aspects. It's important to have a well understood, pedagogically considered language policy.

I also find the NEP problematic and cannot endorse most of its thrust. But I want to specify that the regional language itself can be problematic. The mother tongue, home language or the first language educationally means the language which the child is using to connect to the world, to people, to nature, to the environment, and to make sense of everything that's going on. This is the language which helps the child to build, grow and develop in every way. Children may learn to speak if they are immersed in a certain environment, or they are communicating with friends. But reading and writing are different from learning to speak, understand, listen, or think in, and the first language they learn to read and write in is critical. These aspects of child development are important to understand pedagogically.

If we have to talk of learning to read and write, the first language should be the language of the home, the language in which the child is communicating and interacting with the world around her. A lot of research across the world indicates this. As Prof. Vasanthi said, it's the language of learning, not the medium of instruction. We don't want any classroom to be based on instruction, which is a very didactic, authoritative term; it should instead be interactive, and a transaction.

In many places in our country, there are bilingual and multilingual classrooms. In Jharkhand, the state might say Hindi is the language, but 50%-60% of children don't speak the language. We must look at the first language or the languages which children bring to the classroom, their first languages, and that is how we design, develop an interaction. The pedagogy is very different for the first language as compared to the second language. Our system, however, treats language as a subject. This is a tragedy. We have to understand that teachers will also use different pedagogies when they are dealing with a second language or a third language, when we come to English. But this is often a political decision. And all our States are taking these decisions, violating what should be the right of a child.

**Vasanthi Devi:** The only component of the NEP I approve of is this meek suggestion that the mother tongue of the child should be the medium of learning. I call it meek because there seems to be no will to enforce it. This is in the context of the NEP's overall philosophy of the privatisation of education and marketisation with no regulatory control to the state. I think there is an almost-complete consensus among educationists, linguistic experts and psychologists that the mother tongue, or the language of the region where the child lives, is the only appropriate language of learning for the child. A child can be taught any number of languages, particularly later in life, but the medium of learning should be the mother tongue. A number of classrooms today are stalked by the curse of incomprehension. There are a growing number of schools, mostly private, that teach in English. Government schools too in States like Tamil Nadu, unable to bear the pressure from parents and to stop students from migrating to private schools, are switching to English medium.

**Anita Rampal:** I have been saying for a long time that we don't have a language policy. We take ad hoc decisions. The three-language formula also doesn't look too much at the



**Prof. Vasanthi, you mentioned Tamil Nadu specifically and the switch that is happening to English-medium schools. Could you elaborate on this?**

**VD:** I will talk about not only Tamil Nadu, but English becoming the medium of learning all over the country. Tamil Nadu was one of the earliest States to start English-medium learning in a very big way. English-medium education is a profound tragedy in Indian education today. Millions are languishing because of their inability to learn in English—not English as a language but as a medium through which they acquire any knowledge of any subject. English is their dream and their desire. And these are children who belong to the vast majority of the Indian population except those at the very top of the class and caste social pyramid. It is only for those who are at the top that English has become almost a home language.

Why is this happening? India has constructed an education system that is among the most exclusionary in the world. The impulse behind this is excluding the vast majority from all opportunities except the lowest and the least-paying jobs. Every component of education is crafted for fulfilling this class purpose.

I'm not saying that 80% of the Indian population must be denied access to a global language that will open up opportunities. I'm only opposing English as the medium. But as a second language, English must be taught effectively, and that is the way the entire non-English speaking world is also learning it today. And that is the way, it was taught in India till the 1980s and 1990s.

**AR:** There are political forces, especially Dalit groups, who insist that English has been the language of liberation for them. They look at it like that because of the denial and the

**If we have to talk of learning to read and write, the first language should be the language of the home. A lot of research across the world indicates this.**

ANITA RAMPAL

deprivation of Dalits in the education system, and that's important to acknowledge. The pedagogical aspect of a child learning a second language is much better if the proficiency and confidence in the first language is established in the first four-five years. The first language is the language that you speak and think in, and if you learn to read and write and understand the world through that language, that is what gives you the proficiency and confidence to be able to read and write a second language which can be the state language, and a third language which should be English. Our focus should be on children's learning. But we need a lot of public opinion to be shaped and negotiated with.

**VD:** Public opinion is important. If you ask a poor mother from a distant village, she will want English as the medium. How did this opinion build up? This is the clue to why there is such a craze for English as the medium of learning among those who can never succeed in English as the medium. This is a reason why the Tamil Nadu government has introduced English as the medium of learning in many government schools. In our society, whatever has benefited the upper class and castes is taken as the path through which they also advance.

**AR:** In Kerala, they acknowledged that the classical Malayalam that was being used in classrooms was not every child's Malayalam, and the language in northern Kerala is different from that of the south. So, they changed the language curricu-

lum, making it more inclusive for all children. This happened with Hindi when we were working in Madhya Pradesh too. It was a Sanskritised Hindi. What happens with English is also what happens with a given State language where it sometimes excludes a large majority of children. This happens in any language we use because of how it comes of the upper class and castes.

**Prof. Rampal, in what way can we create an enabling environment in classrooms where students come from diverse backgrounds?**

**AR:** We don't use the word dialects, they are all languages for us, because there is a positioning and a politics of language. Firstly, multilingualism gives equal status to all languages and there's enough work, history and research on this. Second, children come from different backgrounds, and in some cases, they are first-generation learners with not much support at home. The multilingual approach thus, is much more flexible, closer to the child, and inclusive. It is democratic, and it accepts that the teacher is not coming from a place of authority and is only correcting spellings and pronunciations. In fact, when we look at children learning English in other countries, their spelling is never corrected, they are initially encouraged to intuitively think out their own spellings. The teachers say to the children there is something strange about our language. They put the onus on the language, not on the child. This way, the child is told that it is not something that has been imposed on you. There are norms, and we don't have to go about it in a structuralist way. We don't insist on grammar coming first, and expression later, and these are the ways and pedagogies which can be used in our classes.

**What do you think about how learning outcomes are measured in India?**

**AR:** The words 'learning outcomes' are a denial of children's rights, because the NEP too says that it will not focus on inputs and only on outcomes. That is not an inclusive way of looking at learning because you're measuring only what the child is giving you and not how the child has learned or what kind of environment the child was provided to

learn in. There are better ways in which you're not forcing them into standardised methods of assessing, but you're encouraging them to construct their thinking and express themselves.

**When students who study their mother tongue come to college, how do you see their ability to learn other languages and their cognitive abilities?**

**AR:** When a student, for instance, learns in Hindi and then transitions into English, the way they express themselves is different from a child who may be from an elite English-medium school. In class 7, children who had studied their mother tongue Hindi and had just started learning English for the last two years wrote much better English and had very good Hindi too. When we say good, it is that their ideas were rich, nuanced and original. When students from Hindi medium schools come to the University, it is our responsibility to get them good material so that they don't bank on terrible coaching guides. When they had gained confidence, I observed that they wrote beautifully, with much better observations and analyses than even some of my English-medium students who had studied only in English right from the beginning. Even at the university level, we can see the difference in their thoughts and expressions. Hindi medium students must be given special support and communication sessions where they can gain confidence in English.

**VD:** The transition for students who have come into English-medium institutions after high school can be done well if English is taught as a second language effectively, maybe from class 6. Teaching a language as a second language is different from teaching in that language as a medium. So, our teachers will have to go through a very different process of teacher education. A considerable amount of investment will need to be done for this. It is a myth that this transition into English-medium learning in higher education will be hard for students, as it is being done well the world over, and was even done by people of my generation.

This myth must be broken that our education system is class and caste neutral. A powerful political movement will have to take place to make the language of learning a choice that is made democratically.

# India, China troops disengage at LAC friction point in Ladakh

Pullback begins from Patrolling Point-15 in the Gogra-Hotsprings area

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

India and China on Thursday announced that their Armies have begun to disengage from Patrolling Point-15 in the Gogra-Hotsprings area of eastern Ladakh, marking a step forward towards ending the stand-off ongoing since May 2020.

The move comes ahead of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Uzbekistan next week, in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to participate. However, neither side has, so far, confirmed if the two leaders would hold bilateral talks on the sidelines of the summit. The leaders have not spoken to each other since a November 2019 meeting during the BRICS Summit in Brasilia and the beginning of the stand-off in April 2020.

"On September 08, 2022, according to the consensus reached in the 16th round of India China Corps Commander Level Meeting, the Indian and Chinese troops in the area of Gogra-Hotsprings (PP-15) have begun to disengage in a coordinated and planned way, which is conducive to the peace and tranquillity in the border areas," the two sides said in a joint statement issued on Thurs-



**Conflict zone:** An Army convoy carrying military material on its way to Ladakh amid the stand-off with China, in this file photo. ■ PTI

day. The consensus was reached at the Corps Commander level and the ground commanders on both sides had worked out the modalities which were now being implemented, a defence official said.

The disengagement began on Thursday morning and was under way, the official said, adding that further details on the modalities were being awaited.

The 16th round of talks was held on July 17 at the Chushul border personnel meeting point on the Indian side.

As per the understanding reached earlier on disengagement, a buffer zone is to

be created at the friction points once troops are withdrawn by both sides and new patrolling norms are to be worked out after complete disengagement and de-escalation.

## 16 round of talks

Since the stand-off began in May 2020, the two sides have so far held 16 rounds of talks, with disengagement undertaken from both sides of Pangong Tso in February 2021, and from PP-17 in the Gogra-Hotsprings area in August, in addition to Galwan in 2020 after the violent clash. The friction points that remain now are Demchok and Depsang, which

China has constantly refused to accept, maintaining that they are not a part of the current stand-off.

India will continue to press for complete disengagement and de-escalation from all the friction areas and the Corps Commander-level talks would continue, officials stated.

Earlier, both sides had undertaken partial disengagement from PP15 and 17A in July 2020 after disengagement from PP14 in Galwan, but the process was stalled after the aggressive actions on the south Bank of Pangong Tso in August 2020.

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# India, China troops disengage at LAC

Shortly after the 15th round of talks in March, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited India, while he and Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar met in July on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers meeting in Bali, Indonesia,

where they discussed the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

India has constantly stated that the relationship cannot go back to normal as long as the standoff continues.

# Naga team continues talks on Constitution

Naga CM, deputy CM in Delhi for discussions with Centre

VIJAITA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The Government of India is ready to incorporate the *Yehzabo*, the Naga Constitution, into the Indian Constitution and has agreed for a civil and cultural flag for the Nagas, a senior government official said on Thursday.

A Naga delegation comprising Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and Deputy Chief Minister Y. Patton are in Delhi to hold talks with A.K. Mishra, former Special Director with the Intelligence Bureau.

"The *Yehzabo* will be incorporated into the Indian Constitution by presenting a Bill in Parliament. As far as flag is concerned, it will only be used for civil and cultural functions, but not in any government function," the official said.

When contacted, Mr. Patton, who represents the BJP in the 60-member Opposition-less Nagaland Assembly, said that the Naga issue should be resolved before the Assembly election due in March 2023.



Neiphiu Rao

"The Centre is clear that there cannot be two Constitutions and two flags in the country. The NSCN-IM is stuck on the demand for a separate flag and constitution," Mr. Patton said.

## Persistent demand

The Centre is engaged in discussions with the Isak-Muiyah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) and seven Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) to find a solution to the Naga political issue. The Isak-Muiyah faction, the key player in the Naga peace talks, has been demanding a separate Con-

stitution and a separate flag for the Nagas.

The NSCN-IM also demands creation of 'Greater Nagaland' or Nagalim by integrating Naga-dominated areas in neighbouring Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and uniting 1.2 million Nagas.

More than hundred rounds of talks spanning over two decades have taken place so far.

On August 3, 2015, a year after the Narendra Modi-led BJP government came to power, the NSCN(I-M) group signed a framework agreement in the presence of the Prime Minister. Mr. Patton met President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday and explained the progress made in the talks.

"There is no question of integration of Naga-inhabited areas in other States with the existing State of Nagaland. It has been ruled out by GOI," Mr. Patton said.

"If a final agreement is signed before the election, an interim government may be in place," he said.

# Longest-reigning monarch of U.K., Elizabeth II, dead

Charles III takes over, says she was a ‘cherished’ queen

**SRIRAM LAKSHMAN**

LONDON

Britain's longest-reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, died on Thursday at the age of 96. Her death at her Scottish estate, Balmoral Castle, was announced by Buckingham Palace shortly after 6 p.m. on Thursday.

“The Queen died peacefully at Balmoral this afternoon,” a statement from the palace said. “The King and The Queen Consort will remain at Balmoral this evening and will return to London tomorrow,” it read, referring to the former Prince of Wales, Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall, Camilla.

Just on Tuesday the



**QUEEN ELIZABETH II: 1926-2022**

Queen had ceremonially appointed the country's 56th Prime Minister, Liz Truss – the 15th during her reign.

On Thursday morning, the palace said the Queen

had been placed under “medical supervision” at her Balmoral Castle.

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**MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 15**

# Longest-reigning monarch of U.K. dies

Many members of her large immediate family, including several children and grandchildren, had gathered by Thursday afternoon at Balmoral.

Pictures of the Queen, standing with the help of a cane and shaking hands with the new Prime Minister, Ms. Truss, were released on Tuesday.

The Queen usually appoints the elected head of government at Buckingham Palace in London but owing to “mobility” issues, had cut back on events this year.

The Queen was known to have stuck to her constitutional role, and while maintaining a deep interest in politics (such as through regular audiences with her prime ministers), had a reputation for maintaining political neutrality during the 70-plus years on the throne.

Britain's new king will be

formally known as Charles III, his Clarence House residence confirmed on Thursday, after suggestions that Queen Elizabeth II's heir might have taken a different regnal name.

Charles III's eldest son William inherits the duchy of Cornwall in addition to his current title of Duke of Cambridge.

Charles III said Queen Elizabeth II was a “cherished sovereign and a much-loved mother” who would be missed around the world.

Her death was “a moment of the greatest sadness for me and all members of my family”, Charles III said in a statement.

“I know her loss will be deeply felt throughout the country, the Realms and the Commonwealth, and by countless people around the world.”

*(With inputs from AFP)*



**Pride of place:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of the Kartavya Path as part of the revamped Central Vista in New Delhi on Thursday. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

# Rajpath, a symbol of slavery, erased: PM

Modi inaugurates Kartavya Path

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

Rajpath, which was a “symbol of slavery”, has been erased forever, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday while inaugurating the redeveloped two-kilometre stretch from India Gate to Rashtrapati Bhavan that was renamed Kartavya Path. Mr. Modi also unveiled a statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose under the canopy at India Gate that during British rule had a statue of King George V.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Modi said: “Today, we are filling the picture of tomorrow with new colours, leaving behind the past. Today, this new aura is visible everywhere, it is the aura of confidence of new India. Kingsway, that is, Rajpath, the symbol of slavery, has become a matter of history from today and has been erased forever. Today, a new history has been created in the form of ‘Kartavya Path’. I congratulate all the countrymen for their freedom from yet another identity of slavery, in this *Amrit Kaal* of Independence.”

The iconic stretch had been closed to the public since January 2021 for redevelopment works as part of the larger Central Vista revamp. The ₹477-crore project is the first of the Central

Vista works to be completed and opened to the public.

Speaking about the 28-foot granite statue of Bose, Mr. Modi said: “At the time of slavery, there was a statue of the representative of the British Raj. Today, the country has also brought to life a modern, strong India by establishing the statue of Netaji at the same place.”

## Remembering Netaji

Mr. Modi said “Subhas babu” was proud of India’s heritage, while wanting to make India modern. He said if India had followed his path after Independence, the country would have been at great heights today. “But unfortunately, this great hero of ours was forgotten after Independence. His ideas, even the symbols associated with them, were ignored,” he said.

“Today when the Rajpath ceases to exist and has become a Kartavya Path; today when the statue of Netaji has replaced the mark of the statue of George V, then this is not the first example of the abandonment of slavery mentality. This is neither the beginning nor the end. It is a continuous journey of determination till the goal of freedom of mind and spirit is achieved,” Mr. Modi said.

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