



**VEDHIK DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**  
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## FOREWORD

We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - "Vedhik - Daily News Analysis (DNA)\_The Hindu" compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - "Vedhik - Daily News Analysis (DNA)\_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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# Hindi not a competitor of regional languages: Shah

They depend on each other for their growth, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday that only 6% of the children received education in English and a large majority who did not speak fluent English were deprived of a platform at the national and State levels.

Mr. Shah appealed to guardians to speak to children in their mother tongue to enable them to learn Hindi without much effort.

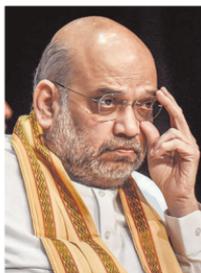
He said it was time that inferiority complex around Indian languages, instilled by the British, was overthrown from people's conscience with the help of regional languages and Hindi.

Mr. Shah said Hindi was not a competitor but a "friend" of all the other regional languages in the country and they were mutually dependent on each other for their growth.

## False campaign

He said there was a concerted "disinformation" campaign to pit Hindi against other languages such as Marathi and Tamil, and underlined the need to strengthen local languages with Hindi.

Addressing the All-India Official Language Conference in Surat on Hindi Di-



 I want to say with sincerity that it should be our aim to keep all the languages and mother tongues alive and prosperous. Only with the prosperity of all these languages will Hindi prosper

AMIT SHAH  
Union Home Minister

vas, Mr. Shah said that accepting the coexistence of languages was necessary, and stressed the need to make Hindi flexible by taking words from other languages to expand its dictionary.

Mr. Shah observed that unless the Hindi language became flexible, it could not grow. "I want to make one thing very clear. Some peo-

ple are spreading disinformation that Hindi and Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil, Hindi and Marathi are competitors. Hindi cannot be a competitor to any other language in the country. You must understand that Hindi is the friend of all the languages of the country," Mr. Shah said.

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# ‘Hindi not a competitor of regional languages’

Mr. Shah said native languages in the country would prosper only when Hindi prospered and vice versa.

“So long as we do not accept the co-existence of languages, we cannot realise the dream of running the country in our own language. And I want to say with sincerity that it should be our aim to keep all the languages and mother tongues alive and prosperous. Only with the prosperity of all these languages will Hin-

di prosper,” Mr. Shah added.

Citing personal experience, Mr. Shah said children who studied in their mother language could learn Hindi easily.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, in a written message, said all regional languages were rich in history, literature, knowledge, science and cultural traditions, yet “it is Hindi which as a contact language ties the entire country together in a thread”.

# Union govt. push for use of Hindi

## Home Ministry to promote use of language for official work in foreign countries

**VIJAITA SINGH**  
**JAGRITI CHANDRA**  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has written to the Ministry of External Affairs to promote the use of Hindi for official work in banks, public sector undertakings, embassies and other government offices located in foreign countries.

On August 30, the MHA asked the Ministry of External Affairs to provide a list of all the government institutions in foreign countries and constitute an Official Language Implementation Committee that would oversee the progress of Hindi in official work.

This was one of the several steps taken by the BJP go-



vernment since 2014 to promote Hindi in government business.

In 2017, MHA accepted most of the recommendations contained in the 2011 report of a parliamentary standing committee on Hindi. Some of the recommendations were: option to write exams in Hindi, minimum knowledge of Hindi must for

government jobs, 50% government advertisements in Hindi, railway tickets should be bilingual with Hindi being one of the languages and announcement at railway stations in “C” category (non-Hindi speaking) such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala should be in Hindi.

In 2017, the Ministry said that the websites of all the Union Ministries and the offices under their control should be bilingual and the Hindi pages should also be compulsorily uploaded while updating the website.

Most government websites are bilingual now- Hindi and English. However, the websites of organisations

such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF) and even the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) open in Hindi by default.

After the Union Home Minister joined office in July 2019, additional staff was engaged to translate the files into Hindi. In the past two years, most press releases by the Union Ministries were released first in Hindi.

As per the MHA's April 26 notification, more than 80% staff in at least seven offices under the Ministry including the Directorate of Census Operations in West Bengal and the Delhi Police's Commissioner office had attained the working knowledge of Hindi.

# India's growing water crisis, the seen and the unseen

Rural-urban water disputes are very likely to occur as scarcity grows, exacerbated by climate change



SRIKUMAR CHATTOPADHYAY

The UNESCO United Nations World Water Development Report of 2022 has encapsulated global concern over the sharp rise in freshwater withdrawal from streams, lakes, aquifers and human-made reservoirs, impending water stress and also water scarcity being experienced in different parts of the world. In 2007, 'Coping with water scarcity' was the theme of World Water Day (observed on March 22). The new Water Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) sounded a note of caution about this silent crisis of a global dimension, with millions of people being deprived of water to live and to sustain their livelihood.

## Growing water stress

Further, the Water Scarcity Clock, an interactive webtool, shows that over two billion people live in countries now experiencing high water stress; the numbers will continue to increase. The Global Drought Risk and Water Stress map (2019) shows that major parts of India, particularly west, central and parts of peninsular India are highly water stressed and experience water scarcity. A NITI Aayog report, 'Composite Water Management Index' (2018) has sounded a note of caution about

the worst water crisis in the country, with more than 600 million people facing acute water shortages. The typical response of the areas where water shortage or scarcity is high includes transfer of water from the hinterlands/upper catchments or drawing it from stored surface water bodies or aquifers. This triggers sectoral and regional competition; rural-urban transfer of water is one such issue of global concern.

Increasing trans-boundary transfer of water between rural and urban areas has been noted in many countries since the early 20th century. A review paper published in 2019 reported that, globally, urban water infrastructure imports an estimated 500 billion litres of water per day across a combined distance of 27,000km. At least 12% of large cities in the world rely on inter-basin transfers. A UN report on 'Transboundary Waters Systems - Status and Trend' (2016) linked this issue of water transfer with various Sustainable Development Goals proposed to be achieved during 2015 to 2030. The report identified risks associated with water transfer in three categories of biophysical, socio-economic and governance. South Asia, including India, falls in the category of high biophysical and the highest socio-economic risks.

## Urban water use

According to Census 2011, the urban population in India accounted for 34% of total population distributed in 7,935 towns of all classes. It is estimated that the urban pop-



RAJEEV BHATT

ulation component in India will cross the 40% mark by 2030 and the 50% mark by 2050 (World Urbanization Prospects, 2018). The urban population accounted for 50% of the total world population by the end of the last century. Although the pace of India's urbanisation is relatively slow, it is now urbanising at a rapid pace – the size of the urban population is substantial. Water use in the urban sector has increased as more and more people shift to urban areas, and per capita use of water in these centres rises, which will continue to grow with improved standards of living.

Examining the urban water management trajectory, it is evident that in the initial stages when a city is small, it is concerned only with water supply; in a majority of cases, water is sourced locally, with groundwater meeting the bulk of the supply. As the city grows and water management infrastructures develop, dependence shifts to surface water.

With a further growth of cities, water sources shift further up in the hinterlands, or the allocation of urban water is enhanced at the

expense of irrigation water. Almost all cities in India that depend on surface water experience this trend. City water supply is now a subject of inter-basin and inter-State transfers of water.

## The case of Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad is an interesting case in this context. More than 80% of water supply in this city used to be met from groundwater sources till the mid-1980s. The depth to groundwater level reached 67 metres in confined aquifers. The city now depends on the Narmada canal for the bulk of its water supply. The shift is from local groundwater to canal water receiving supply from an inter-State and inter-basin transfer of surface water.

Dependence on groundwater continues particularly in the peri-urban areas in almost all large cities that have switched to surface water sources. While surface water transfer from rural to urban areas is visible and can be computed, the recharge areas of groundwater aquifers are spread over well beyond the city boundary or its periphery.

Whatever be the source, surface or groundwater, cities largely depend on rural areas for raw water supply, which has the potential to ignite the rural-urban dispute. Available studies covering Nagpur and Chennai indicate the imminent problem of rural-urban water disputes that the country is going to face in the not-so-distant future as water scarcity grows, which will be further exacerbated by climate change.

At present, the rural-urban transfer of water is a lose-lose situation in India as water is transported at the expense of rural areas and the agricultural sector; in cities, most of this water is in the form of grey water with little recovery or reuse, eventually contributing to water pollution. Rural and urban areas use water from the same stock, i.e., the water resources of the country. Therefore, it is important to strive for a win-win situation.

Such a situation is possible through a host of activities in the rural and urban areas, which is primarily a governance challenge. A system perspective and catchment scale-based approach are necessary to link reallocation of water with wider discussions on development, infrastructure investment, fostering a rural-urban partnership and adopting an integrated approach in water management.

Institutional strengthening can offer entry points and provide opportunities to build flexibility into water resource allocation at a regional level, enabling adjustments in rapidly urbanising regions. In India's 75th anniversary of Independence, it is time to examine the state of its water resources and ensure that the development process is not in jeopardy.

Srikumar Chattopadhyay is former Scientist, Centre for Earth Science Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, and Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) National Fellow, Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, Thiruvananthapuram

# PM may hold bilateral talks with Putin, Raisi

He will reach Samarkand today for the SCO summit

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
SAMARKAND

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will land in Samarkand on Thursday ahead of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit the next day, and is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and the host Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

While diplomatic sources said Indian and Turkish officials were in touch over the possibility of a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, officials have indicated that a “structured” meeting between Mr. Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping or Pakistan’s President Shahbaz Sharif was “unlikely” at present.

“It is up to the leaders of countries to decide which other leaders they wish to speak on the sidelines of the



Narendra Modi

summit,” said the Uzbekistan Coordinator of the SCO Rakhmatulla Nurimbetov, responding to a question from *The Hindu* about whether the host country was involved in facilitating the meetings. “But the Samarkand summit will be an opportunity for leaders who have not met since the COVID pandemic to spend time together,” he said.

Officials also said it was unclear whether Mr. Modi

would attend a dinner meant for leaders gathered for the SCO meet, who include Mr. Xi and Mr. Sharif.

While government sources declined to comment on whether the possibility of Mr. Modi missing the event indicated any “messaging”, the event was expected to be the first time he would have come face-to-face with the two leaders, neither of whom he has had any direct contact with in the past few years.

On Friday, Mr. Modi will attend the SCO main summit of eight members, who are also expected to induct Iran as the ninth member of the grouping. A second meeting of all the invitee leaders, including the leaders of Turkey, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Mongolia, will take place subsequently, after which all the leaders will hold bilateral meetings on the sidelines.

# 'EWS quota an affront to equal society'

It stops people from freeing themselves from shackles of caste and religion, say petitioners in SC

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
NEW DELHI

The 10% reservation of seats and jobs in government educational institutions and offices for economically weaker forward classes is an affront to the constitutional goal of an egalitarian and casteless society, petitioners argued in the Supreme Court on September 14.

By excluding Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes from claiming benefits under the 10% quota for 'economically weaker sections' or EWS, the government, through its 103rd Constitutional Amendment, has condemned the members of backward classes for belonging to the religions or caste they are born into.

The EWS quota stops peo-



**The EWS quota condemns me to the caste or religion I was born into... People who have stopped identifying themselves with their birthmarks, caste or religion... Are these people to be denied their fundamental right to equal opportunities?**

**RAVI VERMA KUMAR**  
Senior advocate in Supreme Court

ple from freeing themselves from the shackles of their caste and religion. Even people who do not see themselves as SC/ST/OBC are compelled to identify themselves on the basis of their castes and claim quota from within the 50% available to them.

"People who lead a cosmopolitan life are exponen-

tially growing. The Constitution has said that a casteless society should be our goal. The EWS quota condemns me to the caste or religion I was born into. I cannot claim the 10% quota because I am considered to be SC/ST/OBC. I may have never availed benefits, sought reservation or job on the basis of my caste quota... There are highly

evolved people who have stopped identifying themselves with their birthmarks, caste or religion they were born into... Are these people to be denied their fundamental right to equal opportunities?" senior advocate Ravi Verma Kumar asked a Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India U.U. Lalit.

Mr. Kumar said the EWS quota, by doling out 10% reservation to forward classes, took away the 10% from the population.

"The backward classes, who were given the fundamental right to claim reservation, are disqualified from even making an application for admission or applying for a job under the 10% quota," he submitted.

The EWS quota was "ma-

nifestly arbitrary" as it violated the tenet of equal opportunity and equal rights before the laws. "Under the EWS quota, without prescribing any criteria, anyone can be given 10 seats in a medical college," he said.

Senior advocate Salman Khurshid said reservation was affirmative action by the state to address structural inequality.

Senior advocate P. Wilson argued that the concept of reservation was meant to achieve social justice and not economical justice. "Reservation was meant as a cure for historical discrimination impeding access of backward classes to public administration and education... Poverty as an exclusive test cannot be the basis of reservation," he argued.

# ‘Hijab ban amounts to discrimination’

It should not be viewed as a ‘simple case of discipline’, says petitioner

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The prohibition imposed on Muslim students from wearing hijab in classrooms in Karnataka should not be viewed as a “simple case of discipline” but as discrimination on the ground of sex and religion, senior advocate Rajiv Dhavan told the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

Appearing before a Bench led by Justice Hemant Gupta for student-petitioner Aliya Assadi, Mr. Dhavan said his client was a Karate champion who chose to compete “in hijab”.

He said that in certain States, in Kerala, hijab was viewed as *farz*. “Across India, across the world, hijab is recognised as a valid practice,” Mr. Dhavan contended.

Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, on the Bench, asked whether the proscription was limited to one school in Karnataka. “Then it spread to other schools... This is simply poking one aspect of the religion



Members of an Islamic organisation staging a protest near Martyrs' Column in Thiruvananthapuram. ■ FILE PHOTO

and saying ‘let us see if we can get this aspect of religion struck out by the courts’,” Mr. Dhavan replied.

The court asked whether it has to go into the aspect of whether wearing hijab was an essential religious practice in Islam. Mr. Dhavan said if hijab was recognised widely as an established practice, the courts should not act as “high priests” of what was or not an essential religious practice. The courts were simply not equipped to do so.

“But if a dispute arises on

that? Who will then decide?” Justice Gupta asked. Mr. Dhavan referred to the court’s decision in the *Bijoe Emmanuel* case, saying the court had to only see if a practice was prevalent, was established and a *bona fide* one.

“You do not have to examine scholarly books to find out if it was an essential religious practice. That is outside the court’s ambit,” Mr. Dhavan said.

He pointed out that hijab is allowed in public places but banned in classrooms. The onus was on the author-

ities to show that their restriction was reasonable. “What public order is disturbed if a child wears hijab to her classroom?” he asked. He said it was the obligation of the authorities to have an inclusive and the least restrictive approach.

“The campaign ‘hijab must go’ amounts to massive discrimination targeting Muslim women, their right to choose,” Mr. Dhavan said. Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, for another student, said the Constitution enshrined the principle of fraternity. “Fraternity means unity in diversity and not standardisation. It upholds individual human dignity,” Mr. Ahmadi argued.

He questioned the State’s legitimate interest in prohibiting hijab in classroom. “What is the legitimate State interest involved here? It is to encourage education. It is not to encourage restrictions which would increase drop-outs from school,” Mr. Ahmadi submitted.

# Cabinet approves addition of four tribes to ST list

Move will benefit communities in Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh: Tribal Affairs Minister

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved the addition of four tribes to the list of Scheduled Tribes (ST), including those from Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh.

Demands for the inclusion of the communities had been pending for decades, Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

The Hatti tribe in the Trans-Giri area of Sirmour district in Himachal Pradesh, the Narikoravan and Kurivikkaran hill tribes of Tamil Nadu, and the Binjhia tribe in Chhattisgarh, which



Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda and Sports Minister Anurag Thakur at a press meet on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

was listed as ST in Jharkhand and Odisha but not in Chhattisgarh, were the communities added to the list.

The Cabinet also approved a proposal to bring the Gond community, resid-

ing in 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh, under the ST list from the Scheduled Caste list. This includes the five subcategories of the Gond community: Dhuria, Nayak, Ojha, Pathari and Rajgond.

Mr. Munda said the demand for the Binjhia tribe to be added to the ST list in Chhattisgarh had been pending for around 15 years.

Sports Minister Anurag Thakur, who also attended the press briefing, said the Hatti tribe had been seeking their inclusion for around 50 years. Like the Binjhia community, the Hatti tribe had been in the ST list in Uttarakhnad but not in Himachal Pradesh.

## ‘Historic decision’

“It is a historic decision. I thank Prime Minister Modi for this,” Mr. Thakur, who is an MP from the poll-bound Himachal Pradesh, said.

Mr. Munda said the inclusion of the Hatti community

would benefit around 1.6 lakh people of this area-specific tribe in Himachal Pradesh. He said the Cabinet had also approved the inclusion of synonyms for 11 tribes in Chhattisgarh and one tribe in Karnataka so that variations in their spellings and pronunciations do not result in beneficiaries being left out of schemes.

The Cabinet approved ‘Betta-Kuruba’ as a synonym for the Kadu Kuruba tribe in Karnataka. In Chhattisgarh, the Cabinet approved synonyms for tribes like the Bhardia (variations added include Bhumia and Bhuyian), Gadhwia (Gadwa), Dhanwar (Dhanawar, Dhanuwar), Nagesia (Nagasia, Kisan), and Pondh (Pond).

# Set up new regulator for medical devices, says panel

Current organisation is pharma-centric, ineffective, it says

**BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN**  
NEW DELHI

The Central Drugs Standard Organisation (CDSCO) is falling short in effectively regulating the medical devices industry, the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health, headed by Rajya Sabha member Ram Gopal Yadav, has said. The organisation in its existing structure and expertise is more pharma-centric, it says.

Mr. Yadav presented the 138th report on the subject "Medical devices: regulations and control" to the Rajya Sabha earlier this week.

It has recommended more certified medical devices testing laboratories, robust IT-enabled feedback-driven post-market surveillance system and medical device registry, particularly for implants to ensure traceability of patients to assess performance of implants.

The committee has observed that the CDSCO was originally set up to regulate pharma, related segments and medical devices. It has recommended that the new legislation should set up a new regulator at different levels for regulating the medical devices industry.

The country has only 18 certified medical device testing laboratories that have been approved by the CDSCO and that is grossly insufficient keeping in view the size of the country, it

said. The committee is of the considered opinion that having adequate common infrastructure including accredited laboratories in various regions of the country for standard testing will significantly encourage local manufacturers to get their products tested for standards and such measures undertaken will also help in reducing the cost of production which ultimately will improve the availability and affordability of medical devices in the market.

There is a dire need for developing a robust IT-enabled feedback-driven post-market surveillance system for medical devices to evaluate their efficiency.

"The committee recommends the Ministry to work in synergy with State governments and impart the necessary skills to the local medical device officers and also devise a mechanism to regularly designate State Medical

personnel as Medical Device/Medical Device Testing Officers so that the mandate of the legislation can be implemented effectively," said the report.

It has recommended that the Ministry should allow the new regulator to involve institutions such as IISC, CSIR, DRDO and network of IITs to test medical devices for safety and efficacy.

It has highlighted the multiplicity of regulations, and said that a single-window clearing platform for application of licence for manufacturing, export, import shall integrate all these bodies involved in the regulation of medical devices.

"A single-window clearance for all the departments/Ministries would boost investment and would also reduce the time required for obtaining approvals from different Departments/Ministries," the report said.

# BCCI office-bearers can have 2 terms in a row before cool-off

## With SC order, Ganguly, Jay Shah eligible to contest again

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday held that the three-year cooling-off period for BCCI office-bearers will kick in only after they complete two consecutive terms in the apex cricket body.

The relaxation in the cooling-off period has paved the way for BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah to contest elections for a second term in October.

Similarly, office-bearers of State cricket associations need to cool off only after serving two successive terms. However, a State as-

sociation office-bearer need not undergo the three-year hibernation if he or she wants to contest a Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) election. The cooling-off period will not apply to someone who wants to go up a notch and fight the BCCI election immediately after his or her second term in a State association.

That is, the cooling-off period kicks in only at the particular levels. In short, a person who has completed two consecutive terms in the BCCI should cool off before trying for a third in the Board. A person who has finished two back-to-back te-

nures at a State association should take a three-year breather before contesting for a third time there.

Earlier, an office-bearer who had completed a term in a State association and another in the BCCI had to comply with the cooling-off period requirement.

A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Hima Kohli said the modification did not take away the “rationale” behind the court having imposed the cooling-off period, that is, to prevent an office-bearer from growing vested interests.

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# BCCI office-bearers can have two terms

The 'cooling-off period' was a major recommendation made by the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee to reform cricket administration in the country. In its 2018 judgment, the top court had seen eye-to-eye with Justice Lodha's conclusion that "the game will be better off without cricketing oligopolies". For this end, the court had supported the recommendation of the Justice Lodha panel that cricket administrators should undergo a "cooling-off period" before fighting elections to the BCCI or State associations.

On Wednesday, the court accepted other modifications to the BCCI Constitution, including lifting the bar on office-bearers having posts in other sports bodies.

The Bench pointed out that many eminent sport-

spersons patronise other sports and were part of other sports associations. "There is no need to disqualify them for that," Justice Chandrachud said.

The court also removed the disqualification on office-bearers who have been charged with criminal offences. The BCCI had pleaded that disqualification should only kick in after they are convicted and sentenced of the crime.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued that many of these prosecutions could even turn out to be frivolous at the end. The court agreed.

The court also agreed that disqualification from being an office-bearer should be restricted to government Ministers and public servants.

# The future of old times in India

Near-universal social security pensions would be a good start to a radical expansion of public support for the elderly



JEAN DRÈZE & ESTHER DUFLU

Life expectancy in India has more than doubled since Independence – from around 32 years in the late 1940s to 70 years or so today. Many countries have done even better, but this is still a historical achievement. Over the same period, the fertility rate has crashed from about six children per woman to just two, liberating women from the shackles of repeated child-bearing and child care. All this is good news, but it also creates a new challenge – the ageing of the population.

The share of the elderly (persons aged 60 years and above) in India's population, close to 9% in 2011, is growing fast and may reach 18% by 2036 according to the National Commission on Population. If India is to ensure a decent quality of life for the elderly in the near future, planning and providing for it must begin today.

## Pensions help

Recent work on mental health among the elderly in India sheds new light on their dire predicament. Evidence on depression from a collaborative survey of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) and the Government of Tamil Nadu is particularly telling. Among persons aged 60 and above, 30% to 50% (depending on gender and age group) had symptoms that make them likely to be depressed. The proportion with depression symptoms is much higher for women than men, and rises sharply with age. In most cases, depression remains undiagnosed and untreated.

As one might expect, depres-

sion is strongly correlated with poverty and poor health, but also with loneliness. Among the elderly living alone, in the Tamil Nadu sample, 74% had symptoms that would classify them as likely to be mildly depressed or worse on the short-form Geriatric Depression Scale. A large majority of elderly persons living alone are women, mainly widows.

The hardships of old age are not related to poverty alone, but some cash often helps. Cash can certainly help to cope with many health issues, and sometimes to avoid loneliness as well. The first step towards a dignified life for the elderly is to protect them from destitution and all the deprivations that may come with it. That is why old-age pensions are a vital part of social security systems around the world.

India has important schemes of non-contributory pensions for the elderly, widowed women and disabled persons under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), administered by the Ministry of Rural Development. Alas, eligibility for NSAP is restricted to “below poverty line” (BPL) families, based on outdated and unreliable BPL lists, some of them are 20 years old. Further, the central contribution to old-age pensions under NSAP has stagnated at a tiny ₹200 per month since 2006, with a slightly higher but still paltry amount (₹300 per month) for widows.

Many States have enhanced the coverage and/or amount of social-security pensions beyond NSAP norms using their own funds and schemes. Some have even achieved “near-universal” (say 75%-80%) coverage of widows and elderly persons. That is now the norm, for instance, in all the southern States except Tamil Nadu – an odd exception since Tamil Nadu has been a pioneer in the field of social security.



GETTY IMAGES

## Beyond targets

“Targeting” social benefits is always difficult. Restricting them to BPL families has not worked well: there are huge exclusion errors in the BPL lists. When it comes to old-age pensions, targeting is not a good idea in any case. For one thing, targeting tends to be based on household rather than individual indicators. A widow or elderly person, however, may experience major deprivations even in a relatively well-off household. A pension can help them to avoid extreme dependence on relatives who may or may not take good care of them, and it may even lead relatives to be more considerate.

For another, targeting tends to involve complicated formalities such as the submission of BPL certificates and other documents. That has certainly been the experience with NSAP pensions. The formalities can be particularly forbidding for elderly persons with low incomes or little education, who are in greatest need of a pension. In the Tamil Nadu sample, eligible persons who had been left out of pension schemes were found to be much poorer than the pension recipients (by more than just the pension). Moreover, even when lists of left-out, likely-eligible persons were submitted to the local administration, very few were approved for a pension, confirm-

ing that they face resilient barriers in the current scheme of things.

The problem is generally not a lack of effort or goodwill on the part of the government officials. Rather, many have absorbed the idea that their job is to save the government money by making sure that no ineligible person qualifies by mistake. In Tamil Nadu this often means, for example, that if the applicant has an able-bodied son in the city, they may be disqualified, regardless of whether they get any support from their son. In their quest to avoid inclusion errors, many officials are less concerned about exclusion errors.

A better approach is to consider all widows and elderly or disabled persons as eligible, subject to simple and transparent “exclusion criteria”. Eligibility can even be self-declared, with the burden of time-bound verification being placed on the local administration or gram panchayat. Some cheating may happen, but it is unlikely that many privileged households will risk trouble for the sake of a small monthly pension. And it is much preferable to accommodate some inclusion errors than to perpetuate the massive exclusion errors we are seeing today in targeted pension schemes.

## Widening the net

The proposed move from targeted to near-universal pensions is not particularly new. As mentioned earlier, it has already happened in several States. Of course, it requires larger pension budgets, but additional expenditure is easy to justify. India's social assistance schemes have low budgets and make a big difference to large numbers of people (about 40 million under NSAP). They are well worth expanding.

An example may help. In Tamil Nadu, social security pensions (typically ₹1,000 per month) are targeted and cover about a third of

all elderly persons and widowed women, at a cost of around ₹4,000 crore per year. If, instead, 20% were to be excluded and the rest eligible by default, the cost would rise to ₹10,000 crore per year. That would be a modest price to pay to ensure a modicum of economic security in old age to everyone. It would be a fraction of the ₹40,000 crore Tamil Nadu is expected to spend this year on pensions and retirement benefits for government employees – barely 1% of the population. If the transition cannot be made in one go, there is a strong case for starting with women (the widowed or the elderly), who often face special disadvantages. This would also be a step towards the fulfilment of the Tamil Nadu government's promise of a “home grant” of ₹1,000 per month for women.

The southern States are relatively well-off, but even some of India's poorer States (such as Odisha and Rajasthan) have near-universal social security pensions. It would be much easier for all States to do the same if the central government were to revamp the NSAP. The NSAP budget this year is just ₹9,652 crore – more or less the same as 10 years ago in money terms, and much lower in real terms. This is not even 0.05% of India's GDP!

Social security pensions, of course, are just the first step towards a dignified life for the elderly. They also need other support and facilities such as health care, disability aids, assistance with daily tasks, recreation opportunities and a good social life. This is a critical area of research, policy and action for the near future.

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# Tax on the poor

Inflation disproportionately affects the economically weaker sections

The latest retail inflation data from the National Statistical Office is a sobering reminder that accelerating price gains still remain the single biggest challenge to policymakers as they try to steer Asia's third-largest economy to a more durable recovery from the pandemic-induced slump. Inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) quickened in August to a provisional 7%, from 6.7% in July, as the pace of gains in food prices as measured by the Consumer Food Price Index accelerated by a sizeable 93 basis points to 7.62%, from July's 6.69%. And rural consumers bore a disproportionately higher burden: with month-on-month changes in both food prices and overall inflation appreciably greater at 0.88% and 0.57% respectively, compared with the 0.50% and 0.46% rates of urban inflation. Of particular concern is that inflation in the prices of cereals – staple grains in every household – surged to 9.57% from the preceding month's 6.9% rate. Month-on-month the pace was a disconcerting 2.4%. With *kharif* sowing of rice this year undershooting last year's acreage and uneven distribution of rainfall further roiling the crop's production picture, the outlook for inflation in this 'heavyweight' food category remains far from reassuring, the Centre's recent imposition of tariff and other curbs on export of non-Basmati rice notwithstanding. In fact, eight of the 12 food items that combine to constitute the food and beverages category of the CPI saw sequential price upticks, with vegetables (13.2% year-on-year and 2.5% month-on-month) and dairy (6.39% and 0.9%, respectively) being two other vital foods that contributed to the faster inflation.

The Finance Ministry was quick to assert that the increase in headline inflation was "moderate", even as it sought to downplay the significance of food price pressures by terming food and fuel prices as "transient components". It also pointed to the steps by the Government to cool prices, that could help tame inflation in the 'coming weeks'. And it cited oils and fats and pulses as two items where prices had begun to ease in response to the Centre's steps. However, the prices of pulses and products quickened by 1.7% month-on-month, with the pace trailing only that of sequential inflation in spices, cereals and vegetables. Services categories including housing, health, education, recreation and personal care too witnessed sequential increases in price gains as these services saw demand gradually revive. The challenge going forward would be for providers to tread carefully so as not to yet again depress consumption by raising prices too quickly. Policymakers would do well to heed the dictum of a former RBI Governor, who never tired of reiterating that 'containing the build up of price pressures is the best anti-poverty programme' as the poor 'have no hedge against inflation'.

# Exports dip to a 9-month low after growth slows

## Imports jumped 37.3% to \$61.9 billion

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports grew 1.6% in August to \$33.92 billion, still a nine-month low, while imports jumped 37.3% from August 2021 levels to \$61.9 billion.

The trade deficit of \$27.98 billion, while lower than the \$28.7 billion estimated earlier this month, was, however, almost 139% higher than a year earlier and still the second-highest on record after July's \$30 billion.

Imports were above \$60 billion for a sixth straight month, with coal imports more than doubling to exceed \$4.5 billion while petroleum imports almost doubled to \$17.7 billion.

Gold imports shrank 46.7% to \$3.5 billion but silver imports saw an alarming 4,318% jump from a mere \$15.5 million last year to \$684.3 million this August.

On the exports front, engineering goods, one of the fastest growing sectors in recent months, logged a 14.2% dip in shipments to just over \$8.2 billion. Several employment-intensive sectors, including handicrafts and handlooms, carpets, gems and jewellery and ready-made garments reported declines in exports.

Rating firm Crisil said the export growth in July and August reflect 'a steep fall' from the 27% increase in the first quarter and attributed the slide to two reasons.

"One, India's major exports destinations – the United States, United Kingdom and European Union – are battling economic slowdown on account of supply disruptions, high energy prices and monetary tightening. Whereas China's growth is slowing due to tough Covid restrictions and the property market crisis. Two, the low base effect of



the previous year is wearing off," it emphasised in a note.

### 'Rupee not much help'

"Contrary to general perception, the rupee's 8.1% depreciation over the past year (as on September 7) is not providing much competitiveness for exports as currencies of most countries are depreciating more steeply," the Federation of Indian Exporters' Organisations (FIEO) said.

"Therefore, there is a need to provide some other fiscal or non-fiscal support to help exports in this scenario," FIEO emphasised.

"The continued weakness in exports amid heightened risks to global growth prospects is concerning," said Rajani Sinha, chief economist at CARE Ratings.. "The narrowing of trade deficit in August to \$28 billion from a record high of \$30 billion in the previous month is mainly due to a sequential fall in imports rather than the ideal scenario of higher export growth relative to imports," she added.

Earlier this month, Commerce Secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam had said that though exporters' order books were full, there was a growing tendency among global buyers to seek deferrals in shipments. He had also cited the steps taken to rein in inflation, such as export curbs on wheat, rice and atta, as deterrents to outbound trade.

# Wholesale inflation slowed to an 11-month low at 12.4% in Aug.

Primary food article prices harden, other segments report milder inflation

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) eased in August to the slowest pace since last September at 12.4%, from 13.9% in July, with food being the sole segment to report faster price gains at 9.93% as it rebounded from July's three-month low of 9.41%.

August's reading, however, marks the 17th straight month when wholesale inflation has exceeded 10%. Among the WPI constituents, manufactured products inflation eased to 7.5%, while fuel and power inflation corrected from 43.8% in July to 33.7%. Primary arti-



**Pricier food:** Primary food inflation sped to 12.4% led by a sequential uptick in cereals, pulses and spices. ■ KAMAL NARANG

cles inflation slowed slightly to 14.9%, from July's 15%.

Within food items, primary food inflation quickened to 12.4%, from 10.8% in July, led by a broad-based sequential uptick across cereals,

pulses, vegetables, fruits, condiments and spices and other food articles, rating agency ICRA said in a note.

Price rise in vegetables sped to 22.3%, from 18.3% in July, and higher wheat and

rice prices pushed cereals inflation to 11.8%, from 9.8%. Fruits saw inflation of 31.7%.

"Wholesale inflation eased for a third straight month... with an increase in food inflation offset by easing of other commodity prices including crude oil," said Rajani Sinha, chief economist of CARE Ratings.

The Office of the Economic Advisor, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, revised June's WPI inflation to 16.2%, from 15.2% estimated earlier.

"It remains to be seen if firms will pass on the benefit to final consumers. If not, bringing retail inflation within the target range could take even longer," Ms. Sinha said.

# ‘India may ship 5 MT sugar in first tranche’

**REUTERS**

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

India is poised to allow 5 million tonnes (MT) of sugar exports in the first tranche for the new marketing year beginning October, two government sources said on Wednesday.

“The permission to export 5 MT of sugar is expected in the coming weeks and once we have a better sense about next sugar year’s production, we could allow another 3 to 5 MT for exports,” said one of the sources who did not wish to be named.

“Although it is a little early to get a clear idea about next year’s production, early estimates suggest sugar output in 2022-23 would hover around this year’s record 36 MT, the official said.

# Rice shipments may fall as levy turns exports pricier

## Trade sees 5 million-tonne slide

**REUTERS**

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

India's rice exports could fall by about a quarter this year as New Delhi's restrictions force buyers to switch to rival suppliers which are offering the grain at a cheaper price, trade and industry officials said.

Late last week, the world's biggest exporter of the grain banned shipments of broken rice and imposed a 20% duty on exports of various other grades as the country tries to boost supplies and calm prices after below-average monsoon rainfall curtailed planting.

"The duty has made Indian rice expensive," B.V. Krishna Rao, president of The Rice Exporters Association told Reuters.

"Exports would drop by at least 5 million tonnes."



That would leave exports this year at about 16.2 million tonnes. Rice shipments reached a record 21.2 million tonnes in the 2021/22 fiscal year.

"We expect shipments to fall sharply in the coming months due to the recent policy decisions," said Dev Garg, the director of ViExport, a New Delhi-based exporter. Thailand, Vietnam and other suppliers have raised prices of white rice after India imposed curbs the last week.

# Engage with caution

The latest disengagement along the LAC is a welcome step, but the border crisis is not over

India and China on September 13 confirmed the disengagement of their troops from a fifth friction point in Eastern Ladakh along the LAC. With the latest withdrawal of troops from Patrolling Point (PP) 15 in the Gogra-Hot Springs area, buffer zones have now been established by the two sides in five locations, including in Galwan Valley, north and south of Pangong Lake, and at PP17A in Gogra. The arrangements in the four earlier established buffer zones have so far helped keep the peace over the past two years. No patrolling is to be undertaken by either side in the buffer zones, which have been established on territory claimed by both India and China. The latest disengagement came just three days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping are to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Uzbekistan.

Reflecting the current state of relations, the two leaders have not directly spoken in more than two-and-a-half-years, an extraordinary situation for the world's two most populous countries. Whether they meet at the SCO Summit – as of September 14, neither side had confirmed or ruled out a meeting – or at the G20 in Indonesia later this year, India will need to proceed with caution as it inevitably resumes high-level engagement with China. While the buffer zones may serve as a temporary measure to prevent a recurrence of clashes, the reality is that this is an arrangement that has been forced on India. The Indian military, by holding the line and showing its capacity to match China's deployments, has been able to reverse China's multiple territorial ingresses of April 2020 in the five areas. That has, however, come at the cost of India's ability to access patrolling points that it was reaching previously, which, in the view of some military observers, might have been China's game-plan all along, given the favourable logistics and terrain on the Chinese side that enable faster deployments. Moreover, China has neither agreed to resolve stand-offs in Demchok and Depsang, suggesting they pre-dated the current tensions, nor shown any intent to de-escalate, instead continuing to build forward infrastructure aimed at permanently housing a large number of troops closer to the LAC. Indeed, signs are that both sides are in for a prolonged period of uncertainty on the borders thanks to China's decision to mobilise tens of thousands of troops in April 2020, in contravention of past border agreements. Unless Beijing reverses its recent, and still unexplained, moves to militarise the LAC and in the process undo the carefully constructed arrangements that helped keep the peace for 40 years, India will have little incentive to consider a return to relations as they were prior to 2020. The latest disengagement, while certainly a welcome step, by no means implies an end to the crisis on the border.

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

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

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