



VEDHIK DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

SEPTEMBER 16, 2022

## 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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# Modi and Sharif spar over transit trade access

In his speech, Mr. Sharif, who focused on Afghanistan and the flood situation in Pakistan for most part, responded to Mr. Modi's remarks, calling for a more "structured" SCO approach to connectivity in the region, adding that "if there is connectivity, transit rights will automatically come".

India has developed Iran's Chabahar port as an alternative to Pakistan for the land route to Central Asia and Russia.

At present, delays by Pakistan have meant that even India's plan to send 50,000 tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan by the land route has not been completed over several months, as permissions for the last tranche of 10,000 tonnes to be transported have not been granted.

Briefing the media, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said Mr. Modi also raised the issue of terrorism during the "restricted" meeting between the SCO leaders, and that all the SCO countries had agreed to prepare a consolidated list of terrorist entities and individuals in their respective countries.

The SCO summit declaration ended with an expansion

of the group of eight countries – four Central Asian states, China, Russia, India and Pakistan – by inducting Iran as a full member, as President Ebrahim Raisi signed an MoU acceding membership. Among other membership hopefuls are Belarus, indicating that the grouping in future would have a larger number of countries facing Western sanctions. The group also adopted more than 40 documents, including an agreement on cooperation and good neighbourliness and a joint statement on climate change.

Mr. Modi said that among the other problems the world was facing was ensuring "food security", an issue that Mr. Mirziyoyev referred to in his opening remarks, pointing out that the SCO countries made up a majority of the world's grain exporting nations. "SCO member countries contribute about 30% of global GDP, and 40% of the world's population also lives in SCO countries," Mr. Modi said, adding that one possible solution to this problem was to promote the "cultivation and consumption of millets".

# Sri Lanka set to revive and upgrade FTA with India: Ranil

## It seeks a comprehensive economic and tech partnership

**MEERA SRINIVASAN**  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka will revive its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India and upgrade it to a “a comprehensive economic and technological partnership”, President Ranil Wickremesinghe has said, signalling Colombo’s willingness to revisit a stalled pact.

Addressing the Sri Lanka India Society on Thursday, Mr. Wickremesinghe said his government would take steps for better trade integration with India.

“We will revive and upgrade the Free Trade Agreement into a comprehensive economic and technological partnership. We started that in 2018 and 2019,” he said, referring to the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that was later known as the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (ETCA). Both versions of the proposed deal sparked stiff resistance within Sri Lanka, as critics feared it would impact Sri Lankans’ job prospects with more competition from Indians.

“We look forward to trade



Ranil Wickremesinghe

integration in many areas with the RCEP [the China-led Regional Cooperation Economic Partnership], with the EU, but the cornerstone of this is to achieve trade integration with India,” Mr. Wickremesinghe noted.

The current Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) came into effect in 2000 and several rounds of bilateral discussions later, Colombo and New Delhi are yet to reach an agreement on its upgraded version. Mr. Wickremesinghe, as Prime Minister between 2015 and 2019, attempted to sign an upgraded trade pact with India, but was unsuccessful.

He reiterated that his government is looking into In-

dia’s bilateral development cooperation projects in Sri Lanka and set up an international trade office for negotiations. The “slow” pace of the projects has remained a concern for New Delhi.

### Focus on energy

Speaking of areas with potential for bilateral cooperation, Mr. Wickremesinghe referred to the “long-term energy solution”, the power grid connection between India and Sri Lanka, offshore wind energy, the solar power plant at Sampur and the renewable energy projects on three islands of Jaffna Peninsula. “We have a tremendous scope of potential renewable energy, and India has stepped in first,” he said. Citing the Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm project, being developed with Indian assistance, as having “big potential”, he said Sri Lanka would further develop itself as a logistics hub. “Together with India, Adani Group has already taken over part of the West terminal [at the Colombo Port,” he said, underscoring the scope for private investment both ways.

# At SCO meet, Modi and Sharif spar over transit trade access

PM flags energy, food crises due to COVID-19 and war

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
SAMARKAND

Better regional connectivity is only possible if members grant each other “full transit rights”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday, referring to the refusal by Pakistan to give India transit trade access by land to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Mr. Modi was speaking at the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State here.

In a speech that was otherwise free from references to India’s regional issues on terrorism with Pakistan and on territorial sovereignty with China, Mr. Modi called for greater cooperation in the Eurasian region and pointed to the “unprecedented” energy and food crisis arising from the twin issues of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine conflict. He also focused on the initiatives on manufacturing that India is willing to pilot in the next year, when New



**Clear stance:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending an SCO meeting at Samarkand in Uzbekistan on Friday. ■ REUTERS

Delhi assumes the chair of the SCO and hosts the summit in mid-2023.

“SCO has an important role in developing reliable, resilient and diversified supply chains. For this, better connectivity is necessary, but along with that, it is also important that we give each other full transit rights,” Mr. Modi said at the SCO plenary session that also marked the first time he shared a forum in person with Chinese President Xi Jinping since the 2020 LAC stand-off and Pakistan’s new Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

While Mr. Modi did not exchange words with Mr. Sharif or Mr. Xi at the public broadcast sessions, he

stood next to the Chinese President during one of the photo ops for the SCO and observer and dialogue partners.

Later, all the leaders attended a lunch together hosted by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, which was closed to media.

Speaking at the meet, Mr. Xi congratulated India for taking over the chair of the grouping and promised “China’s support” to India in hosting the event next year. Both Mr. Xi and Mr. Sharif referred to the issue of terrorism, and the need to collectively fight the “menace” and “monster”.

# Oppose external interference: Xi to SCO

China's leader calls upon member countries to work together to make a more just international order

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
BEIJING

China's President Xi Jinping on Friday called upon members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) grouping, which includes India and Russia, to "guard against attempts by external forces" to instigate "colour revolutions" or interfere in their affairs, in a veiled criticism of the West.

Addressing the SCO summit in Samarkand, Mr. Xi hit out at "obsession with forming a small circle" – the U.S., India, Australia, Japan Quad is among groups labelled as such by Beijing – and called on the SCO group to work together to make a more just international order.

The Chinese President also offered to train 2,000 security personnel from SCO countries and host a China-SCO base for training counterterrorism personnel.

Mr. Xi's remarks did not



**United front:** Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Samarkand. ■ AP

directly mention the West, but underlined how both Beijing and Moscow see the SCO as a key vehicle to push back against western countries.

"The world today is not a peaceful place," he said. "Rivalry between two sets of policy choices – unity or division, cooperation or confrontation – is getting more

acute.... The SCO should seize the opportunity and step up its work to expand the ranks of cooperation and augment the effective force for international equity and justice."

He said that "obsession with forming a small circle can only push the world toward division and confrontation" and the SCO members

"should remain firm in safeguarding the UN-centred international system and the international order based on international law, practice the common values of humanity and reject zero-sum game and bloc politics."

"We should guard against attempts by external forces to instigate 'colour revolution', jointly oppose interference in other countries' internal affairs under any pretext, and hold our future firmly in our own hands," the Chinese leader said.

## Economic front

On the economic front, Mr. Xi said China would provide developing countries humanitarian assistance in grain and other supplies worth 1.5 billion RMB (\$105 million). He also called for implementing the roadmap for SCO member states to expand shares of local currency settlement as well as set

up an SCO Development Bank, which would likely follow the examples of the BRICS New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which are headquartered in Shanghai and Beijing respectively.

Meeting with Russia's Vladimir Putin on Thursday, Mr. Xi said China would "work with Russia to fulfil their responsibilities as major countries and play a leading role in injecting stability into a world of change and disorder." He also extended "strong mutual support on issues concerning each other's core interests".

Mr. Xi, who also attended a China-Russia-Mongolia trilateral and several other bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the SCO, announced Beijing would push for the early operation of a China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) railway project.

SHANXAY HAMKORLIK TASHKILOTIGA A'ZO DAVLATLAR  
RAHBARLARI KENGASHI YIG'ILISHI  
2022-yil 15-16 sentabr, Samarqand

ЗАСЕДАНИЕ СОВЕТА ГЛАВ ГОСУДАРСТВ-ЧЛЕНОВ  
ШАНХАЙСКОЙ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА  
15-16 сентября 2022 года, Самарканд



上海合作组织成员国元首理事会会议  
(2022年9月15-16日, 撒马尔罕)  
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF HEADS  
OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION MEMBER STATES  
15-16 September 2022, Samarkand



**Vital meeting:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with participants of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Samarkand of Uzbekistan on Friday; and (right) the Prime Minister with Russian President Vladimir Putin at a meeting on the sidelines of the summit. • REUTERS

# ‘Today’s era is not of war,’ Modi tells Putin

On the sidelines of the SCO summit in Samarkand, Russian President replies that he understands India’s concerns

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
SAMARKAND

Russia understands India’s “concerns” over its war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin told Prime Minister Narendra Modi, promising to try and end the nine-month-old conflict and blaming the Ukrainian government for prolonging it, in the first meeting between the two leaders on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit here.

Mr. Modi began his comments by telling Mr. Putin that the “era of war” is over, indicating India’s discomfort with Russia’s attack on Ukraine for the first time in public, although New Delhi has not criticised Russia for its action thus far.

“I know that today’s era is not of war and we have spoken to you many times on the phone that democracy, diplomacy and dialogue are such things that touch the

world,” the Prime Minister said.

“We want all of this to end as soon as possible. We will keep you abreast of what is happening there,” Mr. Putin said in remarks that were televised.

“However, unfortunately, the opposing side, the leadership of Ukraine, announced its refusal to continue negotiations and declared that they wanted to achieve their goals by military means, as they say ‘on the battlefield,’” Mr. Putin told Mr. Modi during the conversation. Officials said the two leaders also spoke about the “derivative” issues of the conflict such as the impact on food, fertilizer and energy security.

On Thursday, Mr. Putin had also told Chinese President Xi Jinping that he understood his “questions and concerns” about the Ukraine conflict.

Briefing presspersons, In-

dia’s Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said New Delhi’s position was that “hostilities should cease and the path to resolution is through diplomacy and dialogue”.

The meeting with Mr. Putin was one of the four bilateral meetings Mr. Modi held on the sidelines of the SCO summit, which included a meeting with host Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, as well as a previously unannounced meeting with Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Turkey. India has had tense ties over Turkey’s criticism over the Kashmir issue.

## Meeting with Turkey

“The leaders reviewed bilateral relations and appreciated recent gains in bilateral trade. Also exchanged views on regional & global developments,” External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted after

**We have spoken to you many times on the phone that democracy, diplomacy and dialogue are such things that touch the world**

NARENDRA MODI  
Prime Minister

the meeting. “Met President @RTErdogan and reviewed the full range of bilateral relations between India and Turkey including ways to deepen economic linkages for the benefit of our people,” Mr. Modi said in a tweet.

In his meeting with Mr. Raisi, Mr. Modi discussed connectivity through Chabahar and energy cooperation, Mr. Kwatra said but did not confirm whether India intended to restore oil imports that were cancelled in 2018-19 due to the threat of U.S. sanctions.

Mr. Modi also discussed developing the Chabahar

trade route to Central Asia in his meeting with Mr. Mirziyoyev.

“They stressed the need to make concerted efforts to diversify the trade basket and enter into long-term arrangements to promote trade and investment. Connectivity was considered key to unlock the potential in this regard, including greater usage of the Chabahar port and the International North-South Transport Corridor,” said a statement issued by the Ministry before Mr. Modi’s departure from Uzbekistan.

## Visa-free travel

Mr. Putin also batted for a visa-free travel deal between India and Russia during his talks with Mr. Modi.

The Russian President said that India’s rich history and ancient culture were traditionally of great interest to the Russian people.

Against this backdrop,

“we propose accelerating the process of negotiations towards an agreement on visa-free tourist travel,” Mr. Putin was quoted as saying by Russia’s official news agency TASS.

Mr. Putin wished “all the best” to his “dear friend” Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of his birthday on Saturday.

“I would like to wish India all the best. I also know that tomorrow, my dear friend, you are about to celebrate your birthday. As per the Russian tradition, we never offer congratulations in advance. So, I cannot do that right now,” Mr. Putin said.

“But I would like you to know that we know about that. And we wish you all the best. We wish all the best to the friendly Indian nation and we wish prosperity to India under your leadership,” the 69-year-old Russian President said.

(With PTI inputs)

# SC seeks Centre's reply on issue of marital rape

## It seeks govt. stand on criminalisation

**KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from the government on appeals to criminalise marital rape.

A Bench led by Justice Ajay Rastogi indicated that several similar petitions were pending in the court and they would be listed together for hearing in February next year.

The appeals follow a split decision from the Delhi High Court on whether or not to prosecute husbands for non-consensual sex with their wives.

During the brief hearing, the All India Democratic Women's Association, represented by advocate Karuna Nundy, said both judges in the Bench in the Delhi High Court had agreed that the case raised a substantial question of law which required an authoritative ruling from the Supreme Court.

The issue focuses on the exception in rape law in the Indian Penal Code which dismisses the idea of rape within marriage. The ques-

tions raised include whether or not a married woman has bodily autonomy. In short, whether a husband should accept that his wife's "no means no", and any transgression would amount to rape.

Justice Rajeev Shakdher, the lead judge on the Delhi High Court Bench which delivered a split opinion in May, had favoured striking down the marital rape exception for being "unconstitutional".

He had said it would be "tragic if a married woman's call for justice is not heard even after 162 years" since the enactment of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Justice C. Hari Shankar, the other judge on the Bench, had however disagreed and said the exception under the rape law was based on an "intelligible differentia".

The petitioners had challenged the constitutionality of the marital rape exception under Section 375 (rape) of the IPC on grounds that it discriminated against married women.

# Eat and learn

Tamil Nadu's breakfast scheme is a good model for other States to follow

Sometimes the ability of a government to find resources for a good scheme is only limited by its intent. The Tamil Nadu government's launch of the free breakfast scheme for schoolchildren is an instance of a policy initiative with far-reaching consequences for school education and public health. As Chief Minister M.K. Stalin himself said at the launch of the scheme, provision of free breakfast is not a freebie, but the foremost duty of a government to ensure no child goes hungry. Mr. Stalin framed his words and deeds from the promontory of the progressive Dravidian model, which promises inclusive growth for all segments of the population. A key element is the welfare of children, which explains Tamil Nadu's early emphasis on feeding children in schools. The importance of a daily breakfast as the most important meal of the day is widely acknowledged. Multiple studies across the globe indicate that eating breakfast regularly confers positive outcomes on students, affecting their ability to focus, learn and retain information positively. School performance improves, as do behaviour and cognition, but a regular breakfast also takes care of diet quality, micronutrient sufficiency, anaemia and height and weight issues in children, and is even believed to sculpt BMI scores for the future. The government has targeted providing schoolchildren an average of 293 calories and an average protein input of 9.85 gm per day. The mid-day meal that is already being provided to students in schools comes up to an average of 553 calories and 18 gm of protein, giving every student who takes the food supplied in school about 846 cal and nearly 28 gm of protein a day. The Centre's midday meal guidelines prescribe between 450-700 cal per child per day, and a protein intake of 12-20 gm per day.

While the proposed menu for the Tamil Nadu government's breakfast scheme will take care of hunger, the calorific, energy and micronutrient requirements of the children, with a diet rich in local preparations and vegetables, it also has to provide adequate attention to taste and quality parameters. The government, rich with its experience of dealing with the mid-day meal scheme over several decades, must avoid the errors of omission and commission – including pilferage, poor quality of food, delays in sanctioning funds, and caste-related disruptions – that have been hurdles in its path earlier. Other State governments would also do well to be inspired by Tamil Nadu, which has allowed its intent to triumph over the state of its finances, finding money to fund this very crucial aspect of nation building – ensuring the growth and development of children.

# The consequences of declining fertility are many

A below replacement level fertility rate would mean a smaller dividend window than expected



SANTOSH KUMAR DASH & SIDHARTH R.

Though the global population, in terms of numbers, has been steadily increasing – some reports suggest that it could grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030 – there is an interesting aspect to this: average global fertility has been consistently declining over the past 70 years. The average number of children per woman in the reproductive age group has declined by 50%, from an average of five children per woman in 1951 to 2.4 children in 2020, according to the World Population Prospects 2022 by the United Nations population estimates and projections, and prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

This is the result of speeding up the social phenomenon of demographic transition. Poorer countries seem to be speeding up the transition ladder a lot faster than the richer ones. Britain took 130 years to transition from a fertility rate of five per woman in 1800 to two in 1930, whereas South Korea took 20 years from 1965 to 1985 to achieve the same. The newly released World Population Prospects notes that the global fertility rate fell from three in 1990 to 2.3 in 2021. Sub-Saharan African countries are expected to contribute more than half the population growth after 2050 and grow through 2100. Most advanced economies have their fertility rate below the replacement rate of 2.1, with South Korea reporting the lowest at 1.05 children per woman.

The Indian setting is no different, with its fertility rate falling

below the replacement level for the first time to 2.0 in 2021, according to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS). The rate has dipped 10% in just five years.

At the time of Independence, India's fertility rate was six per woman, and it had taken 25 years to reach five, with the government launching the first ever family planning programme in the world in 1952. India's fertility further declined to four in the 1990s when Kerala became the first State in India to have a fertility rate below replacement level; slowly, other States followed suit. As reported by the NFHS 2021, only five States have a fertility rate above the replacement rate: Bihar (3), Meghalaya (2.9), Uttar Pradesh (2.4), Jharkhand (2.3), and Manipur (2.2). The steady dip in fertility rates has been explained as an effect of increased use of contraception, more years of average schooling, better health care, and an increase in the mean marriage age of women.

## Many economic implications

Countries in the earlier stages of demographic transition find positive effects of lower fertility on income as a major portion of the workforce moves to modern sectors of the economy with fertility dipping. Lower fertility rates can be viewed as both a cause and consequence of economic development. Lower fertility impacts women's education positively, which in turn lowers the fertility of the next generations. With better infrastructure development, better health care, and education, fertility drops and income rises. The spiral of lower fertility leads to a window of time when the ratio of the working-age population is higher than that of the dependent age groups. This high proportion of people in the workforce boosts income and investment, given the higher level of saving due to lower



S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

dependence.

The falling fertility rate will also lead to lower pressure on land, water and other resources and would also contribute to achieving environmental goals. After the window where a country reaps the benefits of the demographic dividend, the huge working age population moves to old age, supported by fewer workers.

Japan was the first country to experience the implications of falling fertility rates. The increasing dependency ratio has led to near zero GDP growth since the 1990s, and the country is facing fiscal challenges to meet rising social security costs. Other Asian countries such as South Korea are now reporting lower fertility than Japan which is now optimistic about having managed the lower fertility without moving to an utter demographic collapse.

A fall in fertility rate beyond replacement level would have a negative effect on the proportion of the working population, which in turn will affect output in an economy. A rise in education and independence among women would enhance their labour participation, which could arrest the fall in labour participation up to a limit. An influx of immigrants from countries with higher population growth could also play a positive part.

The impact of fertility drop on productivity is also highly debated. While a higher level of education and technological advancement in areas including artificial intelligence could increase the

productivity of the lower working age population, a paper, "The End of Economic Growth? Unintended Consequences of a Declining Population", by Stanford economist Charles Jones argues that falling fertility could diminish the creative capacity of humankind. He points to the need for ideas in technological advancement and productivity boost, which even artificial intelligence is still not capable of.

An ageing population will also affect global interest rates negatively as the share of people over 50 years will form almost 40% of the population by 2100. In their book *The Great Demographic Reversal: Ageing Societies, Waning Inequality and an Inflation Revival*, economists Charles Goodhart and Manoj Pradhan explain how falling fertility will have a positive effect on inflation through higher wages due to lower labour supply and a change in the nature of unemployment inflation trade-off, as now low inflation can be maintained even with low unemployment.

The book also takes a different view on the impact of lower fertility on public finance. Popular theory suggests increased pressure on governments due to a high dependency ratio. The book puts up an alternate narrative of the fall in government debt due to lower savings of households and corporates due to higher dependency and the government thus running on surplus than deficit banking on the logic of accounting and higher inflation.

## Dealing with fertility decline

The fall in fertility around the globe has been a result of decades of demographic process, and hence needs scientific and sustainable policies for mitigation. Even though there is looming pessimism about a lower fertility rate, there are ways to get the most out of it and diminish its negative effects. The advancement in health

care and better nutrition around the world have increased the life expectancy and productivity of older citizens. Reforms in the labour market to induce more flexibility in the labour market would encourage working women to have more children and non-working mothers to enter the labour market.

Countries across the globe are experimenting with policies to boost fertility. Germany found success in boosting births through liberal labour laws, allowing more parental leave and benefits. Denmark offers state-funded IVF for women below 40 years, and Hungary recently nationalised IVF clinics. Poland gives out monthly cash payments to parents having more than two children, whereas Russia makes a one-time payment to parents when their second child is born. Russia also reinstated the Soviet-era 'Mother Heroine' title, who bore and raised more than 10 children amounting to almost a one-time payment of ₹13 lakh.

## In perspective

Though the benefits of demographic dividend are being reaped, the below replacement level fertility rate would mean a smaller dividend window than expected. Although India's working-age population will continue to grow for many more decades, it would need to keep an eye on fertility dips. Liberal labour reforms, encouraging higher female labour force participation rate, and a higher focus on nutrition and health would ensure sustained labour supply and output despite lower fertility. India, like other countries in the globe, would need to be equipped to aid the patter of more tiny feet sooner or later.

Santosh Kumar Dash is an Assistant Professor at the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT), Thiruvananthapuram. Sidharth R. is a postgraduate student in Economics at the University of Kerala

# FM urges banks to use tech to detect fraud, warning signals

‘Use Web3, data analytics and AI in coordination with IBA’

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
MUMBAI

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday asked banks to be more digital savvy and give immediate priority to use Web3 and artificial intelligence technology in fraud detection and to generate early warning signs in case of an unforeseen event.

She was addressing the 75th Annual General Meeting of Indian Banks’ Association in Mumbai.

“Use of Web3, data analysis, Artificial Intelligence, deep dive into data – all of these should have some coordination by the IBA. Leveraging Web3 and AI



**Banks must ensure their systems ‘speak’ to each other so that the institutions can serve clients better**

should be an immediate priority for the banks, especially in fraud detection and generating early warning signs about something going wrong,” she said. The Minister added such technologies also brought in benefits such as detecting fraud, tracking of money, detecting unusual transactions and alerting financial institutions and the government in case of suspicious changes.

Highlighting the importance of cyber-protection,

she asked banks whether they were geared to have adequate firewalls. “Are you protected against hacking and Black Swan events which bring down your systems?”

She also urged banks to ensure that their systems spoke to each other so that they are able to ‘serve customers in a better way’.

Nudging banks to appoint staff who must speak the local language, she said, “Show inclusivity in your staff, in the way you speak to your customers. When you have staff who do not talk the regional language and who demand citizens to speak in a particular language, you have a problem.”

# Front-loaded rate hikes needed to tame inflation: RBI officials

'Anchoring inflation expectations can reduce medium-term growth sacrifice'

REUTERS  
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India will have to front-load its monetary policy to fight stubborn inflation and shield medium-term growth, RBI officials wrote in an article in the bank's monthly bulletin.

Inflation has remained above the RBI's tolerance level since January, prompting it to raise interest rates by a total of 140 basis points in the current cycle. The bank is widely expected to raise by another 25 to 50 basis points at its next meeting at the end of this month.

"At this critical juncture, monetary policy has to perform the role of nominal an-



**Pain before gain:** Inflation momentum should ease in Q3 and turn mildly negative in Q4, RBI officials say. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

chor for the economy as it charts a new growth trajectory," the officials led by Deputy Governor Michael D. Patra wrote in the article on the 'State of the Economy'. "Front-loading of monetary

policy actions can keep inflation expectations firmly anchored and reduce the medium-term growth sacrifice."

The officials said the August inflation reading of 7% was in line with its prognosis

that inflation had peaked in April and would grudgingly edge down over time.

There was, however, a resurgence of food price pressures, mainly from cereals, even as fuel and core components such as transport and manufacturing provided a modest measure of respite.

"We maintain our view that inflation momentum should ease in Q3 and turn mildly negative in Q4. With base effects being favourable in the second half... inflation should moderate, although upside risks are in the air."

Aggregate demand was firm and poised to expand further as the festival season sets in, they added.

# Sitharaman asks private firms to clear MSME dues in 45 days

## Small firms' thresholds tweaked to help ease compliance

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

**MUMBAI**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday asked the private sector to clear dues of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within 45 days.

Conceding that the Centre, State governments, and state-owned enterprises had outstanding dues to the MSME sector, Ms. Sitharaman said the private sector also has dues to such small businesses from where it avails of goods and services.

Ms. Sitharaman said that in her meeting with big businesses two days ago, she had appealed to them to ensure that the dues of smaller businesses – who are the back-



Nirmala Sitharaman

bone of the economy – were cleared in time.

“The private sector and industry should commit to making the payments in 45 days along with the books of accounts filed with the Registrar of Companies which make mention of outstand-

ing dues,” the Minister said at an event organised by Laghu Udyog Bharati, the RSS affiliate devoted to small businesses.

She said the Centre too would ensure that departments and central public sector enterprises make payments to small businesses within 90 days.

Separately, the Centre revised the threshold for small firms' paid-up capital to ₹4 crore from ₹2 crore.

The turnover threshold has also been revised to “not exceeding ₹40 crore” from ₹20 crore, the Ministry said in a release on Friday. The revisions will allow more entities to come under the category of small companies.

# IAF to fly AN-32 on blended biodiesel for 200 hours

Performance very satisfactory, says Air Vice-Marshal

**DINAKAR PERI**  
NEW DELHI

As part of efforts to reduce its carbon footprint, the Indian Air Force (IAF) is looking to fly an AN-32 transport aircraft modified to operate on 10% blended biodiesel for 200 flight hours in the next six months, Air Vice Marshal S. K. Jain, Assistant Chief of the Air Force (Maintenance Plans), said on Friday.

The aircraft took flight on biodiesel blended with aviation turbine fuel (ATF) for the first time in December 2018. “So far, an AN-32 has flown 65 hours with a 10% blend of biofuel and the performance has been very sa-



**Going green:** An AN-32 took flight on blended biodiesel for the first time in 2018.

tisfactory,” he said at a seminar on sustainable aviation biofuels organised by the Aeronautical Society of India.

A second aircraft, a Dornier, was now undergoing

ground tests after it had been cleared by the original manufacturer of the engine, Honeywell, for use of 50% biofuel, he said.

The global aviation industry is one of the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases that cause global warming. The fuel consumption of the IAF for 2021-22 was 6.2 lakh kilolitres, which contributed 15 lakh tonnes of carbon dioxide.

On the civil aviation front, an official from aircraft manufacturer Airbus said it had plans to offer 100% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) compatibility on its commercial aircraft latest by 2030.

# Kedarnath temple to get a 'golden' makeover

## Gold plating of sanctum sanctorum to be funded by Mumbai diamond merchant

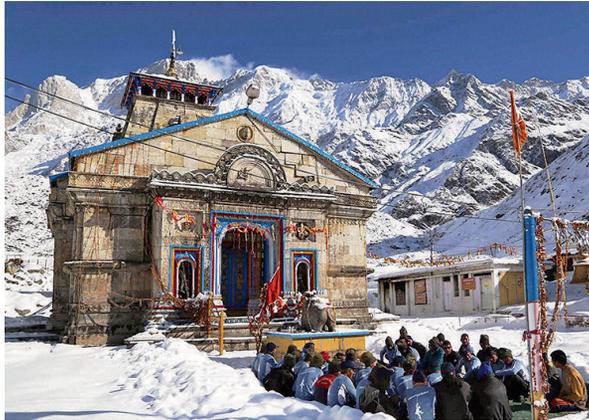
ISHITA MISHRA  
NEW DELHI

A Mumbai-based businessman will fund the facelift of Kedarnath temple's sanctum sanctorum, which will now be gold-plated. Currently the sanctum sanctorum of one of the famous Char Dham temples is covered with 230 kilograms of silver.

Ajendra Ajay, chairman of the Badrinath-Kedarnath temple committee, told *The Hindu* that the firm which has done the gold plating of sanctums of the Kashi Vishwanath and many temples in south India has been given the task of the replacing the silver inside Kedarnath temple's sanctum with gold plating. The silver plating of the temple was done in 2017.

### Work begins

"We have already started removing silver from the sanctum of the temple. Then the



**Renewed sheen:** The sanctum sanctorum of the Kedarnath temple is currently covered in 230 kg of silver. ■PTI

copper plates will be placed on the walls and four pillars inside the sanctum. This will be done to take measurements. Once the measurements are done, they will replace the same with gold plating," Mr. Ajay added.

The work inside the temple began earlier this week

and will be completed before Deepavali, said the chairman who claimed that the gold donation made by the businessman is a '*gupt daan*' (secret donation).

The gold plating will be done on walls, pillars and on the shed (*chatra*) above the deity.

Badrinath-Kedarnath temple committee members said the secret donor is a diamond merchant who has not shared what would be the amount of gold he would be donating.

### Dream project

"His permission was approved last month and we still don't know what amount of gold would go in the task. Around 230 kg silver has been removed from the walls of the sanctum," the chairman said.

Renovation of the 8th century Kedarnath temple, which was at the epicentre of the disaster in 2013, is one of the dream projects of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Over ₹200 crore has already been collectively spent by the Uttarakhand and Central governments on the project that has been going on for a decade now.

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.
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F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.