



VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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Analysing the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan conflict

What are the reasons behind the current clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan? What led to the flare-up between both nations? How can the dispute be resolved? How can the international community help?

EXPLAINER

Rishabh Kachroo

The story so far: Nearly 100 people have been killed and scores injured in violent border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan over the last week. A ceasefire, brokered by Russia, was agreed on Friday. The two landlocked countries share a 1,000-km long border, a large part of which is disputed. There have been flare-ups in the past as well over sharing water and land resources.

What is happening at the border?

The last few weeks have seen constant shelling, violent confrontations by local communities, and active engagement by security forces on either side. The Batken region of Kyrgyzstan is seeing families being moved out and getting relocated. According to the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Kyrgyzstan, close to 1,50,000 people out of the 5,50,000 odd population of the Batken region have either fled the area or have been relocated by the state. The situation in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, is no different. The highly militarised borders also add to tensions.

The clashes are replaying old pre- and post-Soviet era legacies. The borders of the two republics were demarcated under Joseph Stalin's leadership. Historically, the Kyrgyz and Tajik populations enjoyed common rights over natural resources. The issue of the delimitation of the border is a relic of the Soviet era. While regular talks have tried to resolve the issue, one of the crucial points of disagreement remains over the map which should be used for demarcation purposes. Almost half of its close to a 1000 km border is disputed.

The creation of the Soviet Union saw the large-scale redistribution of livestock to collective and state farms, which upset the existing status quo. Unfortunately, there was only so much land to go around. The Tajik territory saw their livestock increase, and with scarce grazing land, agreements were signed between the two



War torn: Kyrgyzstan's refugees arriving from Batken to Boz-Adir in southwestern Kyrgyzstan. AP

populations over the utilisation of Kyrgyz territory by the Tajiks' livestock.

What led to the current flare-up?

The ideological basis of the current set of clashes is reinforced by developmental issues, thus providing a fertile ground for the entire geopolitical space to become a hotbed of multiple minor conflicts and clashes. The environmental trajectory of the conflict can be further highlighted by incidents which saw groups from either side planting trees in disputed areas and engaging in a physical confrontation using agricultural equipment as weapons.

Ferghana valley continues to be a site of struggle and frequent violent outbursts, with the location consisting primarily of Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks, who have historically shared common sociological specificities, economic activities, and religious practices.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the

subsequent dissolution of the then-existing water and land agreements saw the creation of multiple smaller independent farms, which led to a marked increase in water consumption patterns among the farmers. Both countries share multiple water channels with undulating trajectories and flow, which upset equitable access to water on both sides. As a result, small-scale conflicts occur practically every year during the crucial irrigation period.

Both countries, while sharing a closely intertwined historical past, have had differing internal dynamics since coming into statehood. One can trace their instability to transnational challenges and internal ethnic strife. Leaders of both countries have contributed in one way or the other to the continuation of the conflict through the imagination of a particular type of development project, hoping to stabilise the internal dynamics of their respective countries and legitimise their power. This 'de-

velopment project' is similar to how the Soviet Union looked at modernisation – which resulted in the large-scale displacement of nomadic communities, eventually contributing to the 'environment driver' of the current conflict.

What is the road ahead?

The path to resolution of the conflict will require groups to agree upon a common map. The international community will have to make efforts to solve the dispute by involving elders in the communities, as historically, elders have been used to resolve conflicts. The informal small-scale governance mechanisms would also have to be further strengthened through a concerted effort by the respective countries to stabilise the geopolitical dynamics.

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THE GIST

▼ The two landlocked countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, share a 1,000-km long border, a large part of which is disputed. There have been flare-ups in the past as well over sharing water and land resources.

▼ The issue of the delimitation of the border is a relic of the Soviet era. While regular talks have tried to resolve the issue, one of the crucial points of disagreement remains over the map which should be used for demarcation purposes.

▼ The path to resolution of the conflict will require warring groups to agree upon a common map. The international community too will have to make greater efforts to solve the dispute by involving elders in the communities.

The case of nikah halala in India, and a long court battle

What is it and why are women seeking an annulment of halala marriage? How does it affect Muslim women of the country? When is the court going to hear it?

Ziya Us Salam

The story so far: Sameena Begum, a Delhi-based victim of instant triple talaq and a fraud marriage approached the Supreme Court in 2018 seeking a ban on nikah halala. Following her petition, the Court issued notices to the Government of India, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission for Women and the National Minorities Commission. The five-judge Bench headed by Justice Indira Banerjee shall hear the case this October.

Why did Sameena Begum approach the Supreme Court?

Sameena Begum filed a PIL seeking the annulment of halala marriage and polygamy. She requested the court that Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, be

declared arbitrary and in violation of Articles 14, 15, 21 and 25 of the Constitution. She has also requested the court to ensure that provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, apply to all Indian citizens. She contended that nikah halala is rape under IPC Section 375.

She was not alone in seeking annulment of nikah halala. With her was Farzana Parveen who used to live in Noida with her husband Abdul Qadir. Qadir pronounced triple talaq but later put a condition to accept her back: she should undergo halala marriage. Parveen refused to marry another man for the sake of getting back to Qadir. Instead, she sought judicial redress, seeking a ban on nikah halala.

The Koran allows a man to divorce his wife a maximum of two times. On both the occasions, separated by at least one menstrual cycle – instant triple talaq is

not mentioned anywhere in the Koran – he is allowed to cancel the divorce. If the spouses fail to resume cohabitation during this period, they are allowed to remarry without any third-party intervention. This can be done only twice. If the man takes his wife back after the second pronouncement of divorce and then divorces her for the third time, he is not allowed to marry her again. The woman becomes an independent being with full choice over her life.

Halala, the way the Koran speaks of it, empowers women to take independent decisions. It saves women from temperamental husbands who divorce in a fit of anger, then cancel it, then divorce again, unleashing an endless cycle of marriage and divorce.

The Indian reality is way removed from the scriptural injunctions. Often a man pronounces triple talaq in a fit of anger. A

little later, he realises his mistake and approaches a maulana who often tells him that he has exhausted all three chances at divorce; his erstwhile wife is now prohibited to him for reconciliation unless she marries another man, and he either divorces her or dies. For the purpose of going back to the erstwhile husband, sham marriages are enacted wherein a woman marries another man with a pre-decided date and time of divorce. The nikah is conducted with the understanding that the divorce shall take place the next day after consummation of marriage. Usually, nikah halala stems from instant triple talaq and ends with it.

Is nikah halala prevalent across the globe?

In Saudi Arabia, where divorces are on the rise, no cases of halala have been reported. No case has been reported from the UAE, Kuwait and Yemen either. In India, the Muslim Women's Protection of Rights on Marriage, passed after invalidation of triple talaq by the Supreme Court, is silent on nikah halala. The Act made instant triple talaq a criminal offence but steered clear of halala which takes place as a consequence of triple talaq. If the first husband is punished for giving her instant triple talaq, the second for doing likewise to facilitate her return to her former husband, where does that leave the woman?

THE GIST

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Internal democracy

The ECI is right in rejecting the notion of 'leader for life' in political parties

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has rejected the idea of a 'permanent president' for a party, while taking issue with the Yuvajana Shramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), which rules Andhra Pradesh. The party reportedly elected Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as its president for life in July 2022. The ECI says such a step is inherently anti-democratic. The YSRCP's response to the ECI's letters sent earlier, that it will conduct an "internal enquiry", borders on the absurd. There is merit in the ECI's view and its insistence on internal democracy, as no individual should be elected leader for life. Any party that participates in a democratic process, and wants to govern and legislate, should include formal and periodic election of office-bearers as part of the way it functions as an association. Indian political parties are of myriad kinds – some, such as the Bharatiya Janata Party or the Communist parties, are structured, cadre-based organisations that function towards an ideological goal or a principle; others, such as the Congress, are more loosely structured collections of individuals with even different strands of opinion but functioning within an association that has core ideals; some others still reflect social or regional cleavages and so on.

Increasingly, the fragmentation of India's polity into a federalised, multi-party system has also given way to domination by "charismatic" individuals or their families, mainly because of the nature of support that these parties enjoy or due to their financing structures which necessitates centralised control by a single coterie or a family. This is why several political parties today do not insist on thoroughgoing internal elections to secure their leadership; and even if they do conduct polls, they lack sufficient contestation and are done to reaffirm the dominance of the high command. In some cases, with electoral politics being a zero-sum game, political parties are loath to allow internal contest, fearing that this could foster disunity, as opposed to nomination and consensus-building on leadership. The ECI has periodically used guidelines issued for registration of parties under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to remind parties to conduct elections and to ensure that their leadership is renewed, changed or re-elected every five years. But the commission does not have any statutory power to enforce internal democracy in parties or to mandate elections. The lack of such substantive power only leads to parties carrying out the ECI's edicts in a mechanical manner. However, with dynasticism and a lack of internal democracy becoming a matter of public debate, perhaps public pressure would finally bear upon parties to do the right thing.

‘EWS quota claims to be for poorest of poor, but denies most deprived’

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday questioned the logic behind a quota for ‘economically weaker sections’ which claims to cater to the “poorest of the poor” but leaves out deprived communities who have suffered denial for centuries.

Members of the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes are shut out from applying under the 10% quota for economically weaker sections (EWS) introduced through the 103rd Constitutional Amendment. The government justifies the debarment of these communities by arguing that they are already part of the 50% reservation for backward



 40% of the ST population constitute the poorest of the poor. When it comes to economic criteria, they are *ex facie* the poorest of the poor...

S. RAVINDRA BHAT
Supreme Court judge

classes. However, petitioners argue in court that their exclusion leaves only the middle class among the forward castes to reap the benefits of the EWS quota.

“Forty per cent of the Scheduled Tribe population constitute the poorest

of the poor. When it comes to economic criteria, they are *ex facie* the poorest of the poor... But their overall reservation is just 7.5%. So there is a large section of them who are kept out because the share of the pie is only that much... Is it a good idea for an egalitarian Constitution to say ‘yes, you are the poorest of the poor but sorry we have exhausted your quota!’ We will give this [EWS reservation] to neither the ST, SC or OBC or constitutionally backward communities but to the other class,” Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, one of the judges on the Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice U.U. Lalit, asked the Centre, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

The court said the idea of “economic backward-

ness” was nebulous. “Now, social backwardness can be easily discerned from lineage, caste, creed, occupations and from where people come from. There is an element of permanency in social backwardness. On the other hand, economic condition may be temporary,” CJI Lalit said. Justice Dinesh Maheshwari said there were no guidelines to identify economic backwardness. Mr. Mehta countered that there was a certain element of “flexibility” attached to social and educational backwardness. “A community which is socially backward today may not be so 10 years from now,” he argued.

He said the 103rd Amendment had strengthened the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

Should the Election Commission insist on inner-party elections?

PARLEY



S.Y. Quraishi

is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India



Rahul Verma

is a political analyst and fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

The Congress is set for elections for the post of party president. Since 1998, barring her son Rahul Gandhi's two-year term, Sonia Gandhi has been party president. This has revived the debate on whether internal elections should be mandated for all political parties. In a conversation moderated by **Sobhana K. Nair, S.Y. Quraishi and Rahul Verma** discuss the current situation and what can be done.

Edited excerpts:

Is there any legal ground on which elections can be mandated within political parties?

S.Y. Quraishi: Actually, as far as I remember, there is no law. In [the 1990s], when T.N. Seshan was at the helm at the Election Commission of India (ECI), by an executive order political parties were ordered to conduct organisational elections. And because Seshan was a much respected and feared person, political parties complied with it. Since then, elections are held periodically in every recognised party. If they are not able to hold an election for any reason, they seek condonation [for the] delay, which is liberally granted. And the ECI generally has been very soft on this. The ECI does not question the result or the procedure the parties followed. The ECI expects political parties to abide by their constitution, a copy of which is also submitted to the commission when the parties are registered. It is not for the commission to step in or criticise if anyone is elected unopposed.

Rahul Verma: Let me make two points. First, on the legal ground, because there is a great paradox here. India, it seems, is a party-led democracy or democracy based on political parties. But the phrase "political party" [was] nowhere mentioned or described in our Constitution. The definition of a political party for the first time enters through the anti-defection law in 1985. All rules and regulations apply more to candidates than to political parties in India. The courts have made an observation that nothing in Article 324 of the Constitution, or Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 tells us that the ECI can actually regulate internal structures, organisations or elections of the party. Which is why parties, on the left or right, have not been conducting internal elections as you want them to conduct them. In this sense, most political parties in India have become similar, where internal structures and



Staking claim: Congress leader Shashi Tharoor meeting the party's Central Election Authority chairman Madhusudan Mistry in New Delhi. PTI

organisations do not follow their own constitutional norms.

Citing the recent internal elections of the Conservative Party in the U.K., many have claimed that leadership polls within a party diminish its status among the voters because the contestants end up criticising their own party's policies.

SYQ: When we see the U.S. election, for instance, the selection of the candidate to be the presidential nominee is done via debate, in which the contenders condemn and criticise each other. For instance, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton contested and called each other names, but then Mr. Obama won [as President in 2008], and Ms. Clinton was appointed Secretary of State. I don't know how they get over the bad blood created during the campaign. It could be counter-productive. Theoretically democracy is ideal, but could it in the long term weaken the party? These debates could come to haunt the successful candidate. We saw something similar in the U.K. Democracy should be at every level, and political parties are an essential pillar of democracy. And yet, therein lies the contradiction because every election is divisive. In a contrary scenario, if a party follows a single leader, who they worship and stand united behind, it can lead to a high command culture where only the favourite of the said leader gets promoted over the actually popular leaders. We need to establish a balance between both these options.

RV: Any system that you bring in will always come with some positive and negative externalities – there is no perfect rule, there is no perfect law. As Mr. Quraishi also pointed out,



The ECI expects political parties to abide by their constitution. It is not for the commission to step in or criticise if anyone is elected unopposed.

S.Y. QURAISHI

in internal elections, like the U.S. primaries, you are going to have these contests between leaders, and there will be some mudslinging and differences of opinion. But at the end of the day, you have to understand what political parties are. Political parties don't have to be homogeneous in terms of both ideas and leadership. Political parties are aggregations of interests, right? So there are going to be differences within. Having these internal elections, meetings and contests of ideas is important. Second, and as you rightly pointed out, internal elections are key for upward mobility. And that is why what we are witnessing today in India – and South Asia – is problematic for democracy, where all political parties are centralised. They are family-controlled parties, and dynastic politics has become a norm. You won't be able to name more than three or four political parties which have survived 30 years in Indian politics and are today not controlled by a political family, where you can only rise up the ranks in the system depending on the relationship you share with the first family of that party. High command culture is a symptom of the problem which we are witnessing today.

Would state funding of elections bring in more democracy and accountability within political parties?

SYQ: Well, actually, that's a totally different question and debate. I am against state funding for elections, but instead the government must consider state funding of political parties. Currently, they have to beg, borrow and steal to run their outfits. They take money from the corporates and, of course, there are no free lunches. One very objective criterion of this funding could be the votes they get; for example, the state can pay them ₹100 for each vote polled in their favour. The formula I suggest is completely objective: receive money as per the number of votes polled for you. It is very workable. Unfortunately, political parties seem to like the present confusion, so nobody is talking about it.

RV: I completely agree with Mr. Quraishi. There

has been always a conversation on internal regulation of political parties. In fact, the 1999 Law Commission Report strongly recommended that we should have some mechanism for it, and Mr. Quraishi as the CEC in 2011 also submitted a draft on this to the Union Law Ministry. But it was neither accepted, nor did it generate a debate inside or outside Parliament. Obviously, political parties prefer the present situation which is akin to the foxes guarding the henhouse. The formula of how to go about state funding is debatable, but we do have to start thinking about some model of state funding of political parties. I think, going forward, the ECI will have to come up with some innovative ways on how to regulate political parties.

SYQ: The ECI does insist on organisational elections, but only gently. The parties do conduct elections, even if you consider them sham elections, but they do go through the ritual. Also an election can happen only if there are two or more candidates in the fray. Getting elected unopposed is also a valid election. It is not just within the political parties, we have seen in panchayat elections and sometimes even in Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections that candidates have got elected unopposed. As I keep saying, the people are the final arbiters. If voters think that the organisational elections were only an exercise in tokenism, then they should throw out such leaders.

RV: I don't think we need a law. I think we need a new interpretation and some bold moves from the ECI re-interpreting the existing laws, as happened in the 1990s. I slightly disagree with Mr. Quraishi. You can't leave everything to the people's choice. The reason is, as a voter, I'm basically choosing the best among the worst options. And that's why the ECI has to imagine its role as a regulator of these political parties. And in some ways they have to try out milder options. As Mr. Quraishi pointed out, they are required to hold organisational elections regularly. The parties are required to inform the ECI about changes in their office-bearers. They are required to submit a document of expenditure incurred during elections and in the non-election period. But there is no cost attached to non-compliance. At the same time, I think threats to de-register [a party] are bad. We'll have to find some middle ground.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

A census is not about counting sheep

Among the best uses of a census anywhere in the world was perhaps what happened in the United States when, in 1850 and 1860, anti-slavery campaigners used numbers from two consecutive national censuses to build support for the abolition of slavery. They showed the number of enslaved people in the U.S. to be rising – contrary to arguments made by pro-slavery politicians. There have been numerous instances of such revelations using the census.

A case of the missing census

India's first Census was held in 1872, conducted non-synchronously in different parts of the country. After that, India has held its decadal censuses regularly from 1881 to 2011, despite diseases, world wars, Partition and other instances of turmoil. Citing COVID-19 as an excuse for its postponement now runs thin, as the Government thought it fit to allow large election rallies in the middle of a deadly second wave of the pandemic, that was criminally mismanaged. But there is no tradition of anyone being answerable and explaining why the largest democracy, once held in awe for its ability to make its people count regularly, is not doing so now. As there is no official reassurance that India will not skip its decadal Census, we can declare that we have a case of the missing census.

The best of sample surveys find it impossible to beat a census. It carries the promise of counting each and every Indian. The Government could junk, for the first time, a survey recording falling consumption expenditures in 2017-18, and get away with it. A census is when the state connects to every individual and it will find it hard to hide or duck from the data. Finding out age, gender, economic status, religion and languages spoken yields information of another order, making it a treasure trove of findings and providing pathways for planning and resolving problems, and fixing deficiencies.

Censuses in India – well before the term Big Data became commonplace – have provided great amounts of reliable numbers over time. They enable neat, inter-temporal comparability to where India stands *vis-à-vis* its own record. Important metrics such as the sharp decline in



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The Census in India is about many things – it must be made a priority and used to affirm a sense of comradeship

the gender ratio in India between the Censuses of 1961 and 1971 alerted Indians to how pre and post-natal factors were reflecting the 'son bias' and leading people to murder girls, born and unborn.

Some unfounded ideas, flowing from bigotry and prejudice, have been slayed by Census headcounts. Consider the data-free assertion that India is heading for a population explosion due to Muslim reproductive rates. This has been systematically taken down due to census data. The Census established that the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is coming down at a very rapid pace and is well on its way to stabilisation. The fall in TFR among Muslims is faster than in any community. The differences in TFR across India have more to do with region and socio-economic indicators, and not religion or caste. The 2011 Census also dispelled the notion of divorce rate differentials between city and rural India. The urban divorce rate (0.89%) is almost equal to the rural rate (0.82%).

Contentious issues

Well before the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Census was entangled in a battle when thousands took to the streets and bitter protests broke out. The turning of the Census into a gateway for a nation-wide, contentious National Register of Citizens (NRC), with the names of 'genuine citizens' of India made a headcount issue to be one of attempting to revisit who was an Indian and who was not. The Census, if conducted along with the preparation of a National Population Register, a register of all the usual residents which includes citizens and non-citizens, suddenly began to be seen "as the first step towards [the] creation of [a] National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) by verifying the citizenship status of every usual resident" – this is exactly what the Union government said in an official release on November 26, 2014. Along with large sections of the citizenry insecure about their ability to provide the right paperwork, several State Assemblies issued resolutions that they would not conduct a census loaded with questions not asked before. The experience of the NRC in Assam severely damaged trust in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) nationwide. Despite its completion, the NRC has been deemed by the BJP as not being the 'right' list. That it would be a bad faith exercise till some idea of a right list is eventually arrived at is a valid concern.

The BJP has been wary of assertive demands for a caste census. The Census has often been key to the formation and affirmation of identities over time. But there is now official squeamishness about recording identities that want to be counted and identified. India had its last caste census in 1931. In 2011, after the last general census, a socio-economic and caste census was conducted. But while other data were finalised and published, it conveniently excluded the caste data citing several reasons. It is clear that the disparity between caste groups and the privileges they enjoy versus their numbers in the population may be so stark that it may upend the BJP's Hindutva appellation which talks of adjustment but wants a complete abandonment

of the social justice plank.

Relentless data gathering

The Democratic Republic of the Congo completed the second census in its history this year, the previous census having taken place in 1984. The ability to hold a census peacefully, and not coercively, has been the hallmark of a civilised state and state of affairs. It would speak volumes if India were to join the ranks of some other countries which have been without a census since 1990; they include Afghanistan (1979), Lebanon (1932), Somalia (1985), Uzbekistan (1989), and the Western Sahara (1970). Pakistan took nearly 20 years to conduct a census after the one in 1998. It managed one in 2017. The gap spoke of its dysfunction and inabilities, and also of no desire to hear the truth that the facts thrown up would convey.

The census is vital and precious as it is a repository of complete data about the country which is gathered openly, voluntarily, and with the use of public money, making it a social good. It is not as if the Government of India does not want data. Even as it has made the future of the Census a state secret, its drive to gather and vacuum the data of its citizens for its own purposes has been on and without a framework of rules and rights to govern the process of sucking up citizen data.

A law now allows electoral rolls to be linked with Aadhaar. It may not be compulsory but it potentially allows very sensitive data of citizens to be available to the state. The drive to gather data has been relentless. The Ministry of Home Affairs has just notified the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Rules, 2022, even as two High courts are hearing the challenge to the Act. Controversial, these rules outline the procedure for taking of body measurements (it enables enforcement agencies to collect biological samples, retina scan, biometrics and behavioural attributes of convicted, arrested or detained persons). This data hunger sits in perfect contrast to events surrounding the Personal Data Protection Bill 2019. The right to privacy was declared a fundamental right by the Supreme Court of India in 2017. But, ironically, the fifth anniversary of this landmark ruling was marked more by delays to a data protection law for citizens, as the draft Bill was abruptly withdrawn. That too, after hours of deliberation and suggestions for 81 changes. All in all, the missing Census is accompanied by extensive desire to mine the data of citizens, not in a way that offers them any benefits or security, but just goes onto make their relationship with the government more asymmetrical.

The Census is about many things. But, fundamentally, it is a way in which the state, by knocking at all doors, displays its desire to connect with the people who ultimately comprise the nation. It is no wonder that Vikram Seth's classic, *A Suitable Boy*, set in 1951, makes space for the census enumerator. It must be made a priority and used to affirm a sense of comradeship. A census is not about counting sheep and the Government cannot be allowed to sleep at the wheel.



K.K. MUSTAFAH

Managing sports

Administrators seem reluctant to accept the National Sports Code

When sports administrators make news, it is often not for the right reasons. These past few months, India's sports administrators have been in the news far too frequently. Rarely does a day end before one of them is pulled up by the court, another is forced to resign or yet another stakes claim to a post. In the latest instance, the sports official to hit the headlines has been Anil Khanna, who resigned on Wednesday as the acting-president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). He had assumed charge after Narinder Batra was forced to quit in July. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has made it clear that it would not recognise any acting/interim president of the IOA. The IOC is not pleased that the long-pending elections to the IOA have not been held and has even threatened India with serious consequences. The IOC could ban India if the elections are not held by December. Then, Indian athletes would not be able to represent the country in events, including the Olympic Games, and India would not be able to receive funds from the IOC. Only a month ago, the Gokulam Kerala football team found out what happens when such a ban is enforced. The players had to return from Uzbekistan, where they had gone to take part in the AFC Women's Club Championship. That was because the world football governing body FIFA had banned the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

The ban has since been lifted and the AIFF has conducted its elections. But there are other sports, such as hockey and table tennis, that continue to be run by the court-appointed committees of administrators. The main reason behind the messy state of affairs in India's sports administration at the moment is the reluctance of the officials, across sports bodies, to accept the National Sports Development Code of India, introduced by the central government in 2011. Its intention was noble. By putting a limit to the tenure and age of an administrator, it had the potential to stop sports federations from remaining as the personal fiefdoms of a few, many of them politicians. At a time when Indian sport is showing more promise than it ever did before – the Tokyo Olympics, the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, the Thomas Cup and the Chess Olympiad have shown that the country has more to offer than just cricket – the administration needs to get its act together. The incumbents should gracefully make way for new administrators with fresh ideas and also allow more former international sportspersons in key administrative posts.

Focus on vaccination, return to normalcy: China's CDC scientists

While China has double-vaccinated most of its population, the booster campaign has only covered around two-thirds of them, and the country is still following a 'zero-COVID' strategy with mass testing and lockdowns

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BEIJING

Scientists and researchers at China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have made a rare call urging Beijing to focus on a booster vaccination campaign and consider an exit strategy out of President Xi Jinping's "zero-COVID" approach.

The briefing paper published last week by four scientists said, "The pathway forward is clear. Vaccinate with confidence and finish strong."

While China has double-vaccinated most of its population, the booster campaign has only covered around two-thirds of the population. Many health experts say vaccinations have lagged with health-care personnel and resources currently devoted to enforcing the rigid zero-COVID approach, which calls for regular mass testing, lockdowns and quarantines.

There are as yet no signs of a change in approach from zero-COVID to a new vaccination campaign, particularly with an upcoming



Exit strategy: A display showing mock-ups of COVID-19 and Omicron variant vaccines from Chinese drugmaker Sinopharm at the China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing. FILE PHOTO

once-in-five-year Party Congress, where Mr. Xi will begin a third term, likely to trumpet the success of "zero-COVID".

Harsh lockdowns

As of early September, more than 65 million people in 33 cities were in some form of lockdown in China, media outlet Caixin reported, with signs of people's patience for the approach, three years into the pandemic, beginning to wane as more transmis-

sible variants bring harsher lockdowns and challenge what was a successful strategy in 2020. Beijing has also lagged behind the rest of the world in opening up.

The CDC paper acknowledged those concerns. "Everyone wants to return to normal life," the four scientists, Dan Wu, Zundong Yin, Zijiang Feng, and Lance Rodewald, affiliated with the CDC's National Immunization Program and the Chinese Preventive

Medicine Association, wrote. "Vaccination is the key, and time will run out for the vaccination campaign."

"Sustaining optimised protection for a safe, long-term exit of the pandemic will almost certainly require well-timed second booster doses," the paper said. "The last 10% in any vaccination campaign is the most difficult to reach, and in our case, the last 10% is also a critically important group to protect

because the last 10% has an enrichment of people with comorbidities, many of whom are elderly and will suffer the most from COVID-19 if infected."

Vaccine effectiveness

It added that "real-world evidence" from outbreaks in Jilin, Shanghai and Hong Kong had shown Chinese vaccines had shown clear "effectiveness where it is needed the most – prevention of serious, critical, and fatal COVID-19 among people of all ages and regardless of co-morbidities."

It said zero-COVID had brought China "a rare commodity – tranquil time" and helped avoid mass deaths, but suggested it was time to consider an exit, which would require a second booster.

This will likely mean several months of a sustained campaign before China can open. But so far, there has been no suggestion of a focused booster campaign with the focus still very much on zero-COVID testing and lockdowns, indicating that a return to normalcy for China could be at least a year away, at a minimum.

Lancet panel criticises WHO for acting ‘too slowly’ during pandemic

Ramya Kannan

CHENNAI

The Lancet Commission on lessons for the future from the COVID-19 pandemic published in the journal on September 14, has issued a set of recommendations for future plans and has also castigated the World Health Organization (WHO) for acting “too cautiously and too slowly” on several important matters.

The report is bluntly critical of not just the WHO, but also the role of governments across the world: “As of May 31, 2022, there were 6.9 million reported deaths and 17.2 million estimated deaths from COVID-19, as reported by the Institute for Health Me-

trics and Evaluation. This staggering death toll is both a profound tragedy and a massive global failure at multiple levels.”

The WHO comes in for criticism for acting slowly on multiple issues – including in warning about the human transmissibility of the virus, declaring a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, supporting international travel protocols designed to slow the spread of the virus, endorsing the public use of face masks as protection and recognising airborne transmission of the virus. The commissioners recorded that it was the countries in the WHO’s western Pacific region which had a rich experience of dealing with



A health worker taking a nasal swab sample of a woman to test for COVID-19. FILE PHOTO

SARS that reacted with urgency to the outbreak and pursued a suppression strategy conducive to low mortality.

The report further talks of inadequate coordination among governments to contain the pandemic, including travel protocols,

testing strategies, public health and social measures, commodity supply chains, data standards and reporting systems, and advice to the public, despite the very high interdependence among countries.

They did record that epidemic control was indeed seriously hindered by public opposition to routine public health and social measures, masking and getting vaccinated, indicating low confidence in the government and low health literacy.

The report makes a strong case for sustaining high rates of vaccination coverage, indicating that economic recovery depends on this, and low rates of new, clinically significant COVID infections.

Maoist movement is now on the ebb along the Andhra-Odisha boundary

SPECIAL

Sumit Bhattacharjee

VISAKHAPATNAM

The Maoist movement is on the ebb on the Andhra Pradesh-Odisha boundary, with its cadre and militia strength heavily depleted.

On Monday, the Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee (AOBSZC) of the banned CPI (Maoist) released a letter urging the tribal people to join and revive the movement. The



Vehicles being checked in Alluri Sitaramaraju district, A.P., on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

letter, released on the eve of the 18th Foundation Day of the CPI (Maoist), clearly indicated the desperation to keep the movement afloat.

ABOSZC secretary Ganesh said in the letter that the security forces of both Andhra and Odisha were trying to wean away the tribals from the Maoist fold by filing false cases on them and projecting them as surrendered members of the party.

Recent events indicate there is a huge leadership crisis, as almost all remaining top leaders, including Gajarla Ravi, alias Uday, alias Ganesh, and Aruna have fled to Chhattisgarh.

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Maoist movement at an ebb in Andhra-Odisha

Major operations – including the Ramaguda encounter in October 2016, in which about 30 Maoists were killed and, in Teegalametla in June 2020, when six top leaders were killed in an encounter with the elite anti-naxal force of Andhra Pradesh – has left the movement depleted of strength. A number of top leaders have either died in encounters (Azad and Jambri) or surrendered (Jalandhar Reddy and Sudheer) or have been arrested (Ashok and Dubasi Shankar). The Maoists, then called Naxalites belonging to the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War or the People's War Group (PWG), entered the Andhra-Odisha border region some time in the mid-1980s.

But the movement grew in strength only after foundation of the present party – the CPI (Maoist). It was on September 21, 2004, that two major left wing extremist groups – the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War or People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) – merged to form the Communist Party of India- Maoist or CPI (Maoist).

Though both the parties, controlling different geographical areas, shared similar ideologies and goals, they differed on a number of counts till the merger. But after a prolonged discussion from 2002, the parties finally merged to form the biggest LWE group in the country, as well as in south-east Asia. With Muppala Lakshmana Rao alias Ganapathi heading it, the combined military strength of the party grew to over 7,000 armed members overnight. The weapons stockpile shot up to over 6,500 items of various makes and calibres that ranged from the AK series to SLRs and from .303 Lee Enfield rifles to locally made double- and single barrel shotguns. The cadre also grew in strength and expertise in manufacturing and using improvised explosive devices (IED) effectively. Till date, IEDs are their mainstay.

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

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

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