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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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Pilgrim rush to Char Dham yatra creates new record this year

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

The Char Dham yatra in Uttarakhand witnessed the highest-ever footfall this year with over 40 lakh people travelling to the four Himalayan shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri so far.

The yatra began on May 3 this year, followed by the opening of the portals of Kedarnath temple on May 6 and Badrinath on May 8. The yatra will end with the closing of the Badrinath temple, scheduled for November 19.

According to data provided by the State Tourism Department, 40,44,205 people took part in the Char Dham yatra this year (till October 12). Besides the Char Dham, 1,90,264 people visited Hemkund Sahib in Chamoli district, one of the famous Sikh pilgrimage sites.

According to Tourism Department officials, this year has seen a 35% rise in the number of Char Dham pilgrims compared to the pre-COVID season in 2019.

Of the 40,36,357 pilgrims who visited the Char Dham, the maximum 15,25,183 went to Badrinath followed by 14,25,078 to Kedarnath, 6,12,719 to Gangotri and 4,73,395 to Yamunotri. With a month still left for the six-month pilgrimage to end, the State is expecting at least another two to three lakh pilgrims.

The State's Finance Department officials said the yatra is a massive revenue and employment genera-

Chief Minister Pushkar Dhama credits Prime Minister for boosting footfall to the pilgrimage sites

tor in Uttarakhand. It provides direct and indirect employment to over 10 lakh people in the hotel industry, restaurants/eatery joints, taxi-cabs, priests, mule operators, porters, travel operators and handicraft industry, among others.

"The Char Dham yatra brings approximately ₹7,500 crore to the State annually, a major contribution to our economy," said the officials.

Deluge and after

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama said because of the interest shown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his frequent visits to the Badri-Kedar temples, the State has achieved record footfall this year. "The Prime Minister's vision and faith have helped the pilgrim centres flourish even after the 2013 disaster [the Kedarnath deluge]. The PM, on several occasions, has also mentioned the construction of Char Dham and Hemkund Sahib all-weather road and rail connectivity routes," he said.

In 2021, 5,09,503 pilgrims visited Uttarakhand amid COVID-19 restrictions, as against 3,21,906 people in 2020. With 32,40,882 pilgrims, 2019 saw the second highest footfall till date.

Does India need a population policy?

PARLEY

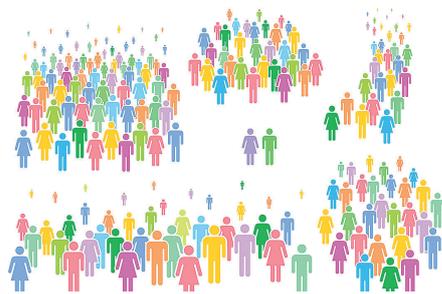
Earlier this year, the United Nations published data to show that India would surpass China as the world's most populous country by 2023. According to the 2018-19 Economic Survey, India's demographic dividend will peak around 2041, when the share of the working age population is expected to hit 59%. In this context, does India need a population policy? Poonam Muttreja and Sonalde Desai discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Sreeparna Chakrabarty. Edited excerpts:

The world's population is expected to hit a peak and then drop by the end of the century. Is this good or bad?

Poonam Muttreja: We need to move from a family planning approach to a family welfare approach. We should be focusing on empowering men and women in being able to make informed choices about their fertility, health and well-being. As fertility drops and lifespans rise globally, the world is ageing at a significant pace. Can increasing automation counteract the negative effects of an ageing population or will an ageing population inevitably end up causing a slowdown in economic growth? We need to look at all of that. We are where we are, so let's plan for the well-being of our population instead of hiding behind the excuse that we don't have good schooling or health because there are too many people. That mindset is counterproductive.

Sonalde Desai: It is not about whether the population is large or small; it is about whether it is healthy, skilled and productive. Let me focus on the productive part of it. Thomas Malthus had said as the population grows, productivity will not be able to keep pace with this growth, and we will see famines, higher mortality, wars, etc. Luckily, he proved to be wrong. We need to take a lesson out of this and think about how to make our present population productive. Skills are important, but so is economic planning that ensures good jobs, agricultural productivity, etc.

You had mentioned China. The lesson we can take from China is that making sharp changes in public policy to manage the population ended up having unexpected consequences there. China's one-child policy led to a sharp reduction in the population growth rate. But now the Chinese have a rapidly rising population of the elderly. China also tried to relax these policies and is now encouraging people to have two or even three children but the men and women are not ready to comply. And China's fertility



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTO

continues to decline. So, we should focus not on fertility rate, but on creating a situation in which slow changes in the family size take place in the context of a growing economy.

Can increasing automation effectively counteract the negative economic effects of an ageing population?

SD: Automation makes a big difference to the productivity of individuals, sometimes to the detriment of employment. But in any case, it really is an important contribution of the modern world. However, it doesn't replace human nature and human touch. For example, I heard that the Chinese families are now groaning under the burden of taking care of elderly parents. Automation doesn't help you take your mother to a doctor or provide the emotional warmth and security that family members provide to each other. So, in that sense, ageing is going to be an issue for us. We need to figure out how to address ageing in the context of changing families and the nature of state support in India and create conditions in which the elderly population can have a healthy and happy life.

Does India possess the institutional capability to tap into its huge youth population? Or will an ageing population turn out to be a liability in the absence of adequate institutional or state capacity?

PM: Let me first touch upon the elderly population and China. If China hadn't invested in literacy and good health systems, it would not have been able to lower its fertility rates. In any case, I think we have much to learn from China about what not to do. And especially in the case of the elderly, where the estimates show that 12% of India's total population by 2025 is going to be the elderly. Every fifth Indian by 2050 will be over the age of 65. So planning for this



It is not about whether the population is large or small; it is about whether it is healthy, skilled and productive.

SONALDE DESAI

segment merits equal consideration.

Coming back to the young, we have the capacity to tap into the potential of our youth population. There is a brief window of opportunity, which is only there for the next few decades. We need to invest in adolescent well-being right away, if we want to reap the benefits. Otherwise, our demographic dividend could turn easily into a demographic disaster.

SD: India certainly has the capacity to invest in its youth population. But we don't recognise the gender dimension of some of these challenges. Fertility decline has tremendous gender implications. What it means is that women have lower burden on them. But it also has a flip side. Ageing is also a gender issue as two-thirds of the elderly are women, because women tend to live longer than men do. Unless we recognise the gender dimension, it will be very difficult for us to tap into these changes. So, what do we need to do? India has done a good job of ensuring educational opportunities to girls. Next, we need to improve employment opportunities for young women and increase the female employment rate. Elderly women need economic and social support networks.

India's total fertility rate has dropped below the replacement rate of 2.1 births per woman. What could be the economic implications of this declining fertility rate?

PM: As I said, the numbers are going to be only important if you see them in the right way. Economic policy should be geared towards the skilling and education of our large adolescent population with a special focus on gender, as Sonal said. As we look ahead, addressing the unmet needs of the young people should become a priority. We cannot allow the huge advances we have made in accelerating education, delaying child marriage, addressing sexual and reproductive health needs and building agency be wasted. Special attention must be given to addressing ways in which the pandemic may have affected the lives of our adolescent and youth. If the country does not address the rights and well-being of adolescents immediately, it will set us back by many years.

SD: I think it's not just the economic implications that we need to think about but

also the implications of the political economy. India's fertility fell below 2.1 births for certain States 10 years ago. In four other States, it's just declining. So, not only is the fertility falling, the proportion of the population that will be living in various States is also changing. The future of India lies in the youth living in U.P., Bihar, M.P. If we don't support these States in ensuring that their young people are well educated, poised to enter the labour market and have sufficient skills, they will become an economic liability.

Do we need a population policy?

PM: India has a very good population policy, which was designed in 2000. And States also have their population policies. We just need to tweak these and add ageing to our population policy focus. But otherwise, the national population policy is the right policy. We keep talking about population as the biggest problem in India, but nobody talks about the poor investments in family planning or about investments in population more broadly.

SD: What we need is a policy that supports reproductive health for individuals. We also need to start focusing on other challenges that go along with enhancing reproductive health, which is not just the provision of family planning services. I also think we need to change our discourse around the population policy. Although we use the term population policy, population control still remains a part of our dialogue. We need to maybe call it a policy that enhances population as resources for India's development, and change the mindset to focus on ensuring that the population is a happy, healthy, productive. Perhaps it is time to think about getting rid of some of the archaic notions around population control, which continue to persist... you know, people with larger families not being allowed to participate in elections or get maternity leave, and so on.

PM: Our arguments and discussions have not gone beyond the two-child norm. The two-child norm indicates a coercive approach to primarily one community. And there are too many myths and misconceptions around population issues, which lead to this discourse, which takes away attention from doing all the things Sonal and I suggested through this conversation. We need to move away from the focus on the two-child norm.



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

At Kazakhstan meeting, India terms Pakistan epicentre of terrorism

Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi reacts to Pak. PM Sharif's statement on the Kashmir issue, saying his country should set its house in order before giving lectures to others

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India desires “normal” relations with Pakistan, but it must take “credible, verifiable and irreversible actions” to end cross-border terrorism, said Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi, slamming India's neighbour for supporting terror groups and for attacks on minorities, in response to a speech made by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, at a conference in Kazakhstan.

Speaking at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) held in Astana, Ms. Lekhi also announced that India would host a number of high-profile conferences on countering terror this year, indicating that the government intends to keep its focus on stopping terror financing from Pakistan, even as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is due to meet next week on October 18-21 to discuss taking Pakistan off its “greylist”.

“Pakistan is the global epicentre of terrorism and continues to be the source of terrorist activities. Pakistan continues to make no investment in human deve-



Paying tribute: Meenakshi Lekhi unveiling the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Kazakhstan on Thursday. TWITTER/@M_LEKHI

lopment but provides their resources for creating and sustaining infrastructure of terrorism,” said Ms. Lekhi, taking exception to Mr. Sharif's speech.

Mr. Sharif had in his speech said India had “trampled the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir”. “India today is a threat towards minorities, to its neighbours, and to this region,” Mr. Sharif continued. He said Pakistan still hoped for peace with India, adding “however, until India brings its atrocities in Kashmir to a grinding halt, a just and lasting peace will remain elusive.”

In her intervention, Ms.

Lekhi slammed Pakistan for raising Jammu and Kashmir and referred to Pakistan's human rights violations in Pakistan-Occupied Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh (PoJKL).

“With its own record of the dismal treatment of minority communities, Pakistan would be well advised to set its house in order instead of lecturing the world community,” she added, referring to reports on attacks on places of worship, forced conversions and the abduction of women from minority communities in Pakistan.

India, that is a founder of the 27-nation CICA

peace and confidence-building grouping of Asian countries, became its coordinator for counter-terrorism this year, and Ms. Lekhi said India would soon host a workshop with members.

Third conference

Next month, New Delhi will also host the third “No Money for Terrorism” Ministerial conference with more than 100 countries expected to attend. The two-day conference on November 18-19 would be addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, and would include sessions on terror financing in South Asia, new cyber financing trends and global cooperation mechanisms.

On October 28-29, India will also host a special meeting of the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee, ambassadors and representatives of all countries in the Security Council, including the P-5 members the U.S., Russia, China, the U.K. and France. The group will travel to Mumbai and lay wreaths at a memorial for victims of the Mumbai 26/11 terror attacks, and also hold meetings in Delhi, officials told *The Hindu*.

India abstains on UNGA resolution against Russia

Press Trust of India

UNITED NATIONS

India abstained in the UN General Assembly on a draft resolution on Wednesday that condemned Russia's "illegal" referenda and attempts to annex parts of Ukraine, saying New Delhi's decision is "consistent" with its "well thought out national position" and the country is ready to support efforts at de-escalation while insisting on finding peaceful solution through diplomacy.

India abstains on UNGA resolution against Russia

The 193-member general assembly voted on Wednesday to condemn Russia's "illegal referendums in regions within the internationally recognised borders of Ukraine and the attempted illegal annexation of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine".

The resolution 'Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations' was adopted with 143 nations voting in favour, Russia, Belarus, North Korea, Syria, and Nicaragua voting against, and 35, including India, abstaining.

In the explanation of the vote, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said India urged that all efforts be made for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an urgent return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy.

Split over hijab

SC verdict on the head-scarf case should not lead to denial of education rights

A two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court has been unable to resolve the conflict between a girl student's freedom to wear a head-scarf and the state's interest in keeping schools a place of equality and secularism. It is unfortunate that a clear verdict did not emerge from the elaborate arguments advanced before the Court for and against the Karnataka government's bar on the wearing of the hijab. The split verdict perhaps reflects the division in the wider society on issues concerning secularism and the minorities. Justice Hemant Gupta, rejecting the idea that hijab could be worn in addition to the uniform, has held that permitting one community to wear religious symbols to class will be the antithesis of secularism. Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, on the other hand, has ruled that asking to remove the head-scarf at an institution's gates is an invasion of their privacy and dignity. The issue is why a head-scarf that does not interfere with the uniform cannot be a matter of choice without being a target of hostile discrimination; and whether the hijab is going to be used to deny girl students their right to education. Justice Dhulia represents this viewpoint when he asserts that discipline should not be at the cost of freedom, when he wonders why a girl child wearing a hijab should be a public order problem and declares that 'reasonable accommodation' of this practice will be a sign of a mature society. He also empathises with the position of girl students who have to overcome greater odds than boys to get an education.

Justice Gupta, on the other hand, has foregrounded equality and discipline as the essential hallmarks of a secular institution in a diverse country, and rules that the Government violates no constitutional principle when enforcing a prescribed uniform. He goes to the extent of saying the constitutional goal of fraternity would be defeated if students are permitted to carry their apparent religious symbols with them to the classroom. The split verdict has given rise to the question of whether matters on which opinions could be sharply divided and have significant political implications should be placed before Division Benches of even number. In the prevailing political climate, the Karnataka government mandating either a prescribed uniform or any dress that was "in the interest of unity, equality and public order" was seen as majoritarian assertion in the garb of enforcing secular norms, equality and discipline in educational institutions. A verdict that legitimises this non-inclusive approach to education and a policy that may lead to denial of opportunity to Muslim women will not be in the country's interest. Reasonable accommodation should be the course as long as the hijab or any wear, religious or otherwise, does not detract from the uniform.

'Hijab ban will continue in Karnataka schools, colleges'

Welcoming the order, State Minister said for now there is no provision for religious practices inside classrooms and students must abide by rules; petitioners remain hopeful of victory in court

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU/MANGALURU

Following a split verdict in the Supreme Court on the issue of hijab in classrooms, Karnataka's Minister for School Education and Literacy B.C. Nagesh said the ban on headscarf in government schools and pre-university colleges will continue for now, as the apex court had not stayed the Karnataka High Court order that had earlier upheld the State government's decision.

Meanwhile, the girl students whose demand that they be allowed to wear hijab inside classrooms at a college in Udupi sparked the row and are petitioners before the court, are hopeful that they will win the legal fight eventually.

Speaking in Bengaluru, Mr. Nagesh said they had hoped that the apex court would rule unanimously in their favour, but he wel-



Voicing dissent: Women protesting against the hijab ban in Bengaluru on February 26. K. MURALI KUMAR

comed the order. "Women have been raising their voice against hijab across the globe and I hope that the student community here too will. For now, under Karnataka Education Act, 1983, there is no provision for religious practices inside classrooms and the students should abide by the rules," he said.

Following the row, the State government had authorised the College Development Committees to

impose a ban on hijab and the girl students had challenged this order in the Karnataka High Court, which dismissed their pleas on March 15.

Speaking on behalf of student-petitioners from Udupi, Hussain Kodibengre, District President of Association for Protection of Civil Rights, said the split verdict by the Bench has "given optimism of a positive order" from a larger Bench.

SC delivers split verdict on Karnataka hijab ban

The two judges on the Bench had divergent opinions on the ideas of secularity, freedom of expression and effect of the ban on education of girls; case will now be heard by a larger Bench

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday delivered a split verdict on whether Muslim students should shed their hijabs at their school gates.

Justice Hemant Gupta upheld Karnataka's prohibitive government order of February 5, saying "apparent symbols of religious belief cannot be worn to secular schools maintained from State funds".

Justice Gupta said 'secularity' meant uniformity, manifested by parity among students in terms of uniform.

Justice Gupta held that adherence to uniform was a reasonable restriction to free expression. The discipline reinforced equality. The State had never forced students out of State schools by restricting hijab. The decision to stay out was a "voluntary act" of the student.

Differing views



The right to express herself by wearing a hijab, stops at the school gate... Freedom of expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) does not extend to the wearing of headscarf

JUSTICE HEMANT GUPTA

In his divergent opinion, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia said secularity meant tolerance to "diversity". Wearing or not wearing a hijab to school was "ultimately a matter of choice". For girls



Wearing a hijab should be simply a matter of choice. It may be the only way her conservative family will permit her to go to school, and in those cases, her hijab is her ticket to education

JUSTICE SUDHANSHU DHULIA

from conservative families, "her hijab is her ticket to education".

"Asking the girls to take off their hijab before they enter the school gates, is first, an invasion of their

privacy, then it is an attack on their dignity, and then ultimately it is a denial to them of secular education... There shall be no restriction on the wearing of hijab anywhere in schools and colleges in Karnataka," Justice Dhulia held.

He further remarked that one of the best sights in India was a girl going to school like her brother.

"Are we making the life of a girl child any better by denying her education, merely because she wears a hijab! All the petitioners (students) want is to wear a hijab! Is it too much to ask in a democracy? How is it against public order, morality or health or even decency?" Justice Dhulia asked.

The case would now be re-heard by a larger Bench.

SC delivers split verdict on Karnataka hijab ban

Justice Gupta, in his opinion, said students need to follow the discipline of wearing the school uniform without any “addition, subtraction or modification”. A student cannot claim the right to wear a headscarf to a secular school as a matter of right. “A girl’s right to express herself by wearing a hijab stopped at the school gate”.

But Justice Dhulia countered that school was a public place. It was not correct to draw a parallel between a school and a jail or a military camp.

“It is necessary to have discipline in schools. But discipline not at the cost of freedom or dignity... She carries her dignity and privacy in her person, even inside her school gate or classroom,” Justice Dhulia observed.

He said the fallout of the hijab ban had been that some girl students were not able to appear for their Board exams and others were forced to seek transfer, most likely to *madrasas*, where they may not get the same standard of education.

“This is for a girl child, for whom it was never easy, in the first place, to reach her school gate,” Justice Dhulia underscored.

Justice Gupta, agreed with the government that the “ethic of fraternity is best served by complete erasure of all differences”, especially religious. Wearing hijabs in secular schools “would stand out and overtly appear differently.

But Justice Dhulia disagreed with the idea of forced homogeneity. He said schools and pre-university colleges were the “perfect institutions” for children to learn the rich diversity of India and imbibe values of tolerance and accommodation.

Tharoor to chair House panel on chemicals

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has been appointed as chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers, according to a notification issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat. His appointment as chairperson of the parliamentary panel came after the Congress leadership suggested his name.

Mr. Tharoor, who was earlier chairing the parliamentary panel on Information Technology, was also replaced as the member of the committee. In the latest rejig, Congress was not allotted the panel on IT.

Falling reserves and the bogey of the RBI's role

There is a widespread misconception that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been depleting India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves to defend the rupee.

The RBI cannot simply fritter away India's forex reserves, held mostly in dollars, by charging its "nostro" account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, New York. The RBI is the custodian of India's forex reserves and is responsible for managing their investments economically. The central bank may not have been adventurous in switching currencies to boost the value of reserves. But to suggest that the RBI has depleted India's forex reserves from \$642 billion to \$537 billion, i.e., from September 8, 2021 to September 30, 2022, by intervening (selling dollars) in India's inter-bank forex market is manifestly erroneous.

Central bank as regulator, player and jury

The RBI's intervention and dollar/rupee exchange rate are surely linked, but the question is of depletion of forex reserves. To grasp this concept, we need to know who the market players are and how the RBI regulates them.

The market players are only banks licensed by the RBI, and the RBI. Individuals and corporates cannot enter the market. They can deal only with their respective banks. Therefore, the RBI dominates the market, being the regulator, a player and the jury. Thus, it is facile to argue that the dollar/rupee rate is "market determined" and that the RBI has no role in it. Section 40 of the RBI Act, 1934 ("Transactions in foreign exchange") stipulates that the Central Government orders the "rate" at which the RBI shall buy or sell forex to banks (authorised persons). This "rate", in turn, will be governed by India's "obligations to the International Monetary Fund [IMF]". The dollar/rupee rate has thus been subjugated to the United States from British India



Bishwajit Bhattacharjya

is Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India; a former Additional Solicitor General of India, and a former country manager, international banking, in a foreign bank

The disinformation campaign that the Reserve Bank of India has depleted India's foreign exchange reserves must stop

days. It is little wonder then that the rupee fell from ₹8/dollar to about ₹82/dollar (in 2022), from November 1981, when the IMF approved the biggest ever \$5 billion Special Drawing Rights (about \$6.25 billion dollars) loan to India. Although ₹100/dollar is *Door Ast* ('far away'), the target is achievable. Such is the hegemony of dollar holders to slam poor rupee holders to make them poorer still.

The forex market is regulated by the RBI with impregnable exchange control regulations. All the player (banks) are required to be square or near square in their forex positions (spot or forward) at the close of business hours each day. This "overnight limit" is prescribed for each bank by the RBI. Even during the day, the prescribed "daylight limit" cannot be breached. The RBI enforces these limits strictly.

Assume that on a particular day the RBI sells (intervenes) one billion dollars in the market and one bank buys these dollars to remit them abroad for an importer (goods/services) customer. If that be so, then the funds would have gone abroad anyway since the importer, holding an import licence, can remit funds abroad as a matter of right. So, one billion of forex reserves depletion is caused not because of the RBI's intervention but because of the import licence granted by the Ministry of Commerce.

On speculation

The second possibility could be of the purchasing bank wishing to speculate. This possibility is impermissible since the RBI does not permit a bank to purchase dollars from the RBI and speculate in the interbank market. Selling these dollars in the overseas cross currency market is also prohibited by the central bank. So, unless there is demand from a bank's customers to remit dollars abroad, the RBI will just not be able to sell the dollars in the interbank market due its own

regulations.

Sometimes the RBI intervenes (sells dollars) on the basis of a tacit understanding with another bank to calm dollar/rupee volatility. If such a bank buys \$1 billion without any merchant base to effect remittances abroad, then that bank would try to sell these dollars to other banks which need to remit funds abroad for their own customers. Before the close of business hours, the bank has to offload excess dollars to the RBI to remain within the "overnight limit".

Therefore, the RBI's intervention cannot deplete forex reserves. Instead, the cause of forex reserves depletion is an unimaginative import/export policy of the Ministry of Commerce without keeping the RBI in the loop. If the diagnosis by the spin doctors is wrong, then the condition of the patient (i.e., the health of the economy) can only worsen.

The RBI needs this cell

India's twin deficits, trade and current accounts, are matters of concern. It is imperative that trade control regulations (flow of goods/services) and exchange control regulations (flow of funds in exactly an equal and opposite direction) are administered rigorously by enmeshing the two, preferably, by a separate cell within the RBI. "Control" may not be a popular word, but India remained unscathed after the Lehman Brothers crisis in 2008 only by deft handling of exchange control regulations by the RBI. The future is surely not dark, but uncertain.

The bogey of the "RBI depleting forex reserves to defend the rupee" has been let loose. The disinformation campaign continues. The rupee's free fall has been bleeding the economy with inflation, a flight of capital and escalating import costs.

Finally, policymakers deserve better inputs on the sensitive matters impacting India's economy.

ICRA flags fiscal space of ₹7.4 lakh cr. for 13 States' capex

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

As many as 13 major States have massive fiscal space of ₹7.4 lakh crore for capital spending in the current fiscal, 81% higher than the last fiscal, ICRA said.

The 13 States, having almost 85% share in India's GDP in 2020-21, had made a capital expenditure of ₹4.1 lakh crore last fiscal. Their Budget estimate for capex spending this fiscal is ₹5.8 lakh crore, the rating agency added.

The agency's analysis is based on the 13 States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

"While the availability of funds doesn't appear to be a constraint in FY23, the actual outgo incurred by these State governments in the early months of this fiscal has been rather muted," ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said.

Zoomcar to list in U.S. via \$456 million SPAC deal

Reuters

Indian car rental platform Zoomcar said on Thursday it would go public in the United States after being acquired by blank-check firm Innovative International Acquisition Corp.

The deal will value the combined company at \$456 million, including debt, Zoomcar said.

The firm said proceeds from a trust account that contains about \$235 million will provide the capital for general working purposes.

'Food prices seen staying sticky, may keep inflation at about 7% in Q3 too'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The poor are facing a higher inflation burden due to the surge in food prices especially for items like cereals and vegetables, which are unlikely to cool soon owing to unseasonal rainfall and lower Kharif crop sowing, opine economists.

Urban India's poorest households – those in the bottom 20% income bracket – faced as much as 8.1% inflation in September,



while those in the top 20% income segment experienced a far lower 7.2% inflation, Crisil Ratings estimated on Thursday. Similarly, those in the low-

est income bracket in rural areas faced 7.8% inflation last month, compared with 7.3% for the top 20% income households.

Food inflation soared to a 22-month high of 8.4% in September, lifting retail inflation to a five-month high of 7.4%. Cereals inflation hit a 108-month high at 11.5%, mainly due to wheat, which has clocked double-digit inflation since June and hit 17.4% in September, and rice – which rose to 9.2%, from 6.9% in August. And vegetable in-

flation quickened to 18.1%.

“Essential items, such as food and fuel, occupy a greater share in the consumption basket of lower-income classes,” Crisil economists pointed out. “Across rural and urban areas, the poor continued to face effectively higher inflation than their richer counterparts (top 20%), as inflation for food and fuel items remained higher than for core items.” Economists at SBI said food prices would likely spur inflation to average 7% in Q3.

Centre to help set up paddy straw pellet units to arrest stubble burning

Environment Ministry's ₹50-crore incentive scheme is aimed at stopping farmers in Punjab and Haryana from burning crop residue, a major cause of pollution in New Delhi

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

With winter approaching and instances of stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana rising, the Union Environment Ministry announced a ₹50 crore scheme on Thursday to incentivise industrialists and entrepreneurs to set up paddy straw pelletisation and torrefaction plants.

Paddy straw made into pellets or torrefied can be mixed with coal in thermal power plants. This saves coal as well as reduces carbon emissions that would otherwise have been emitted were the straw burnt in the fields, as is the regular practice of most farmers in Punjab and Haryana.

New units set up after Thursday would be eligible for government funding in the form of capital to set up such plants. The estimated cost of setting up a regular pelletisation plant, which can process a tonne per hour, is ₹35 lakh. Un-



Solution is at hand: A farmer burning stubble near Amritsar. AFP

der the scheme, the Centre will fund such plants to a maximum of ₹70 lakh subject to capacity.

Similarly, the cost of establishing a torrefaction plant is ₹70 lakh. Under the scheme, it is eligible for a maximum funding of ₹1.4 crore. Torrefaction is costlier but can deliver a product whose energy content is much higher and theo-

retically substitute for more coal in a power plant.

One-time measure

The Centre has underlined that this would be a “one-time only” scheme and regular pellet plants would be eligible for ₹40 crore of the overall pie.

Every year, about 27 million tonne of paddy straw is generated in Punjab and

Haryana. The problem is that about 75% or 20 million tonne is from non-basmati rice that cannot be fed to cattle because of its high silica content. “About 11 million tonne can be managed in the field and the rest is usually burnt which adds to the air pollution crisis in Delhi,” said MM Kutty, Chairman, Commission Air Quality Management (CAQM), at an event here to announce the scheme.

Through the years the government has attempted to dissuade farmers from burning straw through penalising them as well as incentivising them.

“The Environment Ministry has so far been seen as an organisation that stops everyone. But I’d like to congratulate the Central Pollution Control Board for devising this scheme that will help convert waste to wealth and provide job opportunities to our rural youth in Punjab and Haryana,” said Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav.

ISRO proposes dedicated satellites for supporting agricultural sector: Somanath

The Hindu Bureau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has proposed dedicated satellites for supporting the country's agriculture sector, the Chairman of the space agency S. Somanath said here on Thursday.

Discussions have been held with the Union Department of Agriculture on the proposed Bharat Krishi Satellite programme, Mr. Somanath said on the sidelines of the Engineers Conclave 2022 which is on at the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), Valiyamala here.

Mr. Somanath said a minimum of two satellites

will be needed to guarantee adequate coverage of the entire agricultural area of the country. They will aid a gamut of farm-related activities related to crop forecasting, pesticide application, irrigation, soil data, and generation of critical data related to drought.

"Crop yield doesn't happen over a week, it happens over a period of a few months. So you need continuous observation. Our satellites today are just not enough. So you need to put additional satellites which have a high revisit capability. We proposed we will do that," Mr. Somanath said.

The satellites will be owned by the Department

of Agriculture and not by ISRO, he said, adding the ISRO will provide the technical support.

Mr. Somanath suggested that an 'Earth Observation Council' be created for addressing the current deficiencies in earth observation capabilities and data utilisation. Such a council can tackle shortcomings in this area in a centralised manner. Current deficiencies include a discontinuity in earth observation missions, low utilisation of available remote sensing data, technology gaps and absence of a streamlined mechanism for data processing and dissemination as required by the industry, he said.

ISRO's own Next-Gen Launch Vehicle may assume PSLV's role

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is developing a Next-Gen Launch Vehicle (NGLV), which will one day replace operational systems like the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), ISRO Chairman S. Somanath has said.

PSLV, often dubbed the 'trusted workhorse', "will have to retire" one day, Mr. Somanath said during a three-day Engineers Conclave 2022, which opened at the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre, Valiyamala, on Thursday.

In NGLV, ISRO is under-



ISRO's existing PSLV will continue to be used in operations as long as there is a demand for it, said Mr. Somanath. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

stood to be looking at a cost-efficient, three-stage, reusable heavy-lift vehicle with a payload capability of 10 tonnes to Geostationary Transfer Orbit. NGLV will feature semi-cryogenic

propulsion for the booster stages which is cheaper and efficient, he said.

"We believe at least 10 tonne capability to GTO is needed. Correspondingly, the Low Earth Orbit (LEO)

capability will be twice that. However, payload capability will be lower when the rocket is reusable," he said.

Simple, robust design

NGLV will feature a simple, robust design that allows bulk manufacturing, modularity in systems, sub-systems and stages, and minimal turnaround time.

Potential uses will be in the areas of launching communication satellites, deep space missions, future human spaceflight and cargo missions.

ISRO's Next-Gen LV may assume PSLV's role

On PSLV's future, Mr. Somanath said it will be operated as long as there is a commercial demand for it.

“The technologies, the manufacturing and cost associated with the systems, all go through changes. Same is the case with the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV). But GSLV Mk-III (LVM3) is just a few years old. If you look at launch vehicles, technology induction at the appropriate time is essential,” he said.

Mr. Somanath said it is also important to develop a “business model” for NGLV so that it serves its aims. This will include launching commercial satellites and national missions as well as ensuring industry participation from the start. “With the backing of ISRO's knowledge, it is possible for industries to support and create this rocket as a national asset,” he said.

A quest for the 'ghost' cat based on lore

Wildlife officials in Arunachal Pradesh await results of a survey to ascertain the presence of the elusive snow leopard in the Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

A big cat's skin that no one saw is behind the survey of the 'ghost of the mountains' in India's eastern-most tiger reserve.

The snow leopard has never been spotted nor recorded in the Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The 1,985 sq. km reserve bordering Myanmar has an elevation varying from 200 metres to 4,571 metres above sea level.

However, wildlife officials in the State are eagerly awaiting the analysis of the data of a survey conducted in 2021 to ascertain the presence of the elusive snow leopard, often referred to as a mountain ghost because of its coat that helps it blend in a snow-



The snow leopard is often referred to as a mountain ghost because of its coat that helps it blend in a snowy environment. GETTY IMAGES

wy-rocky environment.

"We provided all the data of the survey to the World Wide Fund for Nature earlier this year. We expect the results by November," Milo Tassar, the deputy conservator of forest (Wildlife) told *The Hindu* on Thursday. The data was collected from a high-altitude Himalayan belt across 11 wildlife divisions

from Tawang in the west and Anini to the east.

Namdapha is the known home of three other large cats – tiger, leopard and clouded leopard. The belief that the national park is also the habitat of the snow leopard is based on the claim of a hunter from the Lisu ethnic community that he possessed the skin of the carnivore.

"A person in Vijaynagar (close to Myanmar border, in Changlang district) had described having a skin that could have been of a snow leopard. He called it Lamaphu, which is possibly the local name for a snow leopard. The tiger is called Lama in the Lisu dialect," Aparajita Datta of Nature Conservation Foundation-India said.

"But that person did not have the skin as it was destroyed when his house caught fire," she added. The Namdapha National Park authorities have a checklist that mentions "reports of skin with Lisu". "I believe the presence of a snow leopard is uncertain in the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh but more intensive scientific surveys may yield some result," a researcher associated with the State Forest Department said.

Heavy downpour brings Hyderabad to its knees

Wednesday's rainfall wreaked havoc on Telangana's capital with several roads getting submerged and leaving vehicle users stranded; flood water entered several homes in many localities

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Incessant downpour for the major part of Wednesday evening left Hyderabad gasping, with roads and streets under water and motorists stranded on road for hours. The after-effects on Thursday were no less taxing, with several areas grappling with inundation.

Balanagar received the highest rainfall of over 10 cm, followed by Alwal at 9.6 cm. Drains overflowed everywhere, turning roads into streams.

For dozens of vehicles on the Suchitra-Kompally Road of NH-44, the downpour and its aftermath



Harrowing experience: People had a tough time as vehicles were stranded in many areas due to rain in Hyderabad. G. RAMAKRISHNA

were nothing short of a hellish experience on Wednesday night. It was bumper-to-bumper traffic on the road with little relief from the heavy downpour.

On the Begumpet-Paradise-Secunderabad stretch, traffic jam was witnessed for more than a km, as flood water prevented free flow of traffic.

The airport flyover was the only available road as the road adjacent to it leading to the airport disappeared under the flood water.

Rain in Anantapur

Heavy rainfall in Anantapur, Rayadurg, and Bukkarayasamudram mandals of Andhra Pradesh in 24 hours ending Thursday morning led to water inflow into Pandameru, Thadakeru, and Nadimivanika that kept many houses inundated. The SDRF teams along with the police and fire service personnel rescued 1,200 people from six colonies. *(With inputs from Anantapur)*

The Interpol General Assembly meeting in Delhi

What are the roles and functions of the International Criminal Police Organisation? What is the significance of a Red notice? Will the upcoming meeting in Delhi bring about major changes?

R. K. Raghavan

The story so far:

The General Assembly of the International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol) is meeting in Delhi for four days from October 18. This is the second time since 1997 the 195 member-strong body is holding such a large conference in India.

What is the Interpol?

Set up in 1923, the Interpol is a secure information-sharing platform that facilitates criminal investigation of police forces across the globe through collection and dissemination of information received from various police forces. It keeps track of the movements of criminals and those under the police radar in various regions and tips off police forces which had either sought the

Interpol's assistance or which in its opinion will benefit from the particulars available with it. Aided by state-of-the-art databases and computer analytics, the Interpol operates round the clock and employs some of the best minds in the area of crime analysis and technology. It aims to promote the widest-possible mutual assistance between criminal police forces.

How is the Interpol organised?

The head of Interpol is the President who is elected by the General Assembly. He comes from one of the member-nations and holds office for four years. The day-to-day activities are overseen by a full-time Secretary General elected by the General Assembly, who holds office for five years. The General Assembly lays down the policy for execution by its Secretariat which has several specialised

directorates for cybercrime, terrorism, drug trafficking, financial crime, environmental crime, human trafficking, etc. Every member-country is the Interpol's face in that country.

All contact of a country's law enforcement agency with Interpol is through the highest investigating body of the land. The CBI assumes this role in India with one of its senior officers heading its exclusive Interwing (the National Central Bureaus) for collation of information and liaison with the world body.

What is the Red notice?

It is a structured communication issued by the Interpol to all member-nations notifying the name(s) of persons against whom an arrest warrant is pending in a particular country. The notice issued requests all member nations that if the

named individual(s) is located in their country an immediate communication should be sent to the nation that wants him in connection with a criminal investigation.

What does one expect from the Delhi meeting?

The entire global police leadership will be in Delhi for this session. Smuggling of arms and drugs continue to worry those who desire to see a stable world order. The session is also expected to throw up a few tricky questions involving protection given to deviance by the establishment itself in some regions of the world on grounds of dubious economic and sovereign considerations.

What are Interpol's future challenges?

The rising spectre of transnational, cyber and organised crime requires a globally coordinated law enforcement response. Interpol has a legacy of trust and reliability. It needs to acquire powers of sanction against a country which refuses to cooperate in implementing a Red notice. It is however highly unlikely that member-nations will ever agree to dilute their sovereignty and invest the Interpol with such authority.

R. K. Raghavan is a former CBI Director. He currently teaches at the Jindal Global University, Sonapat

THE GIST

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General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 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.