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Azadi Ka
Amrit Mahotsav



काशी तमिळु संगमम्
काशी तमिल संगमम्
KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM

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VARANASI, KASHI



VEDHIK
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The New Learning Mantra

VEDHIK DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

17 - DEC - 2022

FOREWORD

We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - "Vedhik - Daily News Analysis (DNA)_The Hindu" compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - "Vedhik - Daily News Analysis (DNA)_The Hindu " would help students, especially beginners save time and streamline their preparations with regard to Current Affairs. A content page and an Appendix has been added segregating and mapping the content to the syllabus. It is an appreciable efforts by Vedhik IAS Academy helping aspirants of UPSC Civil Services Examinations. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Babu Sebastian, former VC - MG University in extending all support to this endeavour. Finally I also extend my thanks to thank Ms. Shilpa Sasidharan and Mr. Shahul Hameed for their assistance in the preparing the compilations.

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

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Kashi Tamil Sangamam will unite the country, connect different languages, says Amit Shah

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Kashi Tamil Sangamam is an attempt to bring a cultural renaissance that will unite the country and connect different languages, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday. He was addressing the closing ceremony of the 30-day event, during which nearly 2,500 visitors from Tamil Nadu arrived in Varanasi.

The Home Minister shared the dais with Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Bharatiya Janata Party's Tamil Nadu unit president K. Annamalai.



Cultural bridge: Home Minister Amit Shah at the valedictory of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam on Friday. TWITTER/KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM

“Kashi Tamil Sangamam is an attempt to revive the country’s cultural unity. Though India has multiple cultures, languages and art forms, its soul is one,” Mr. Shah said.

The Union Home Minister called the event a bridge and an attempt to join languages of not just

Kashi (or Varanasi) and Tamil Nadu or south and north, but of the entire country. He likened Prime Minister Narendra Modi to sage Adi Shankaracharya for trying to bring together two great cultures of Kashi and Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Shah also spoke about the National Educa-

tion Policy, 2020, and said the Prime Minister had ensured that through the medium of education and languages, the country’s spiritual pride and the knowledge system found a place on the global stage.

Appeal to Tamil Nadu

“The soul of the National Education Policy is our languages. That is why Modi ji has said mother tongue should be the medium of instruction. Gradually, the NEP has percolated deep down. I appeal once again to Tamil Nadu to impart medical, technical and legal education in Tamil, so that it is further strengthened,” said Mr. Shah.

FORGING A CONNECT

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Dangerous gamble

Turkey should not use its geopolitical advantage to crush Syrian Kurds

Turkey's recent attacks on Syria's Kurdish towns and its threat of a ground invasion could destabilise the border region, which has yet to recover from the scars of a long civil war and the violence by the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group. The trigger was the November 13 blast in Istanbul that claimed six lives. Turkey has blamed the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Kurdish militant group operating in its southeastern parts, and the People's Protection Units (YPG), a Syrian-Kurdish militia, for the blast (they have denied the allegations) and has carried out air strikes in Syria's Kurdish towns. Turkey has reportedly asked the YPG to withdraw from key towns on the border – Manbij, Tal Rifaat and Kobane – soon and has threatened to launch another cross-border incursion into Syria if the YPG failed to do so. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan wants to create a buffer zone between the YPG-controlled towns in Syria and Turkey's own Kurdish territories, where the state has been fighting the PKK. Ankara sees the YPG as an ideological and organisational brother of the PKK, which it has designated, along with the U.S. and European countries, as a terrorist organisation.

Turkey has carried out several incursions in the past into Syria, gobbling up territories now manned by the Syrian National Army, a rebel umbrella group that is opposed to Damascus and backed by Ankara. But, Turkey had also come under pressure from the U.S., its NATO partner that backs a YPG-led militia group, and Russia, an ally of the Syrian regime, which placed constraints on its operations. However, Russia's Ukraine war seems to have altered the geopolitical reality in the region in Turkey's favour. A preoccupied Russia would not like to antagonise Turkey, which despite being a NATO member has not joined the U.S.-led sanctions, and the U.S. would want Ankara's support for the inclusion of Sweden and Finland into NATO. This opens space for Mr. Erdoğan to up the ante in Syria. But this could be a dangerous bet. The IS had captured most of these border towns in 2014-15. The YPG, with U.S. help, had fought hard against the IS to liberate the region. Now under attack, the YPG has already said it would end patrolling of many towns on the border. A Turkish incursion could trigger further chaos, which could help Islamist militants to regroup and push the Kurdish population, already victims of years of wars, into further misery. Instead of taking the military path, Mr. Erdoğan should hold talks with Russia and the U.S., which have better ties with the Syrian Kurds, to find a workable solution to stabilise the border.

Japan shakes up its defence policy, warns of China threat

Government has vowed to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2027, reshape its military command, and acquire new missiles that can strike far-flung enemy launch sites

Agence France-Presse
TOKYO

Japan's government approved a major defence policy overhaul on Friday, including a significant spending hike, as it warned China poses the "greatest strategic challenge ever" to its security.

In its largest defence shake-up in decades, Japan vowed to increase security spending to 2% of GDP by 2027, reshape its military command, and acquire new missiles that can strike far-flung enemy launch sites.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told a news conference he was "determined to remain resolute in our



Arsenal revamp: The new policy will fund projects including the acquisition of what Japan calls 'counterstrike capacity'. AP

mission to protect and defend the nation and its people, at this turning point in history".

"In our neighbouring countries and regions, the

strengthening of nuclear missile capabilities, rapid military build-up and attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force have become even

more pronounced," he said, evoking Russia's invasion of Ukraine as an example of the changing times.

Polls suggest Japan's public largely backs the shift, but the changes could still be controversial because Japan's post-war Constitution does not officially recognise the military and limits it to nominally self-defensive capabilities.

The moves are outlined in three defence and security documents approved by the cabinet on Friday.

They describe Beijing as "the greatest strategic challenge ever to securing the peace and stability of Japan", as well as a "serious concern" for Japan and the international community.

PM emphasises need for peace, dialogue in phone call with Putin

The leaders discuss investment, agriculture, energy, transport and defence cooperation as part of bilateral ties between India and Russia

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

P rime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin and reiterated the requirement for “peace and diplomacy” to tide over the crisis in Ukraine.

“Following up on their meeting in Samarkand on the sidelines of the SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation] Summit, the two leaders reviewed several aspects of the bilateral relationship, including energy cooperation, trade and investments, defence and security cooperation. In the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Prime Minister reiterated his call for dialogue and diplomacy as the only way forward,” stated an official press note issued by Delhi after the telephone conversation between the two leaders.

A readout of the interaction given by the Russian side stated that President Putin gave “fundamental assessments of Russia’s line” on the war in Ukraine after being requested by Mr. Modi.

The Russian side in-



Friendly talks: Narendra Modi (right) greets Vladimir Putin before a meeting at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on December 7. AFP

formed that the two leaders discussed multiple issues, including “mutual investment” and areas such as energy cooperation, agriculture, transport and logistics.

The phone call has come days after speculation began about Mr. Modi not travelling to Moscow for the annual summit with Russia. President Putin had visited Delhi on December 6, 2021, for the annual summit and it was the turn of Mr. Modi to travel to Moscow. A diplomatic source said “not a word” was discussed about the annual summit by the two leaders but the Russian President’s press secretary Dmitry Peskov had said

earlier that “no contacts (summits)” were planned this year.

India-Russia relations have received a great deal of Western attention in 2022, especially after Russia emerged as the topmost supplier of energy to India in the backdrop of the war in Ukraine. The Russian readout, however, indicated that the cooperation in that direction is expected to strengthen in the coming months.

The two leaders also discussed “close coordination” regarding the Indian presidency of G-20 and the upcoming chairship of India at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

SC exists to protect personal liberty and rights, says CJI

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud on Friday said the Supreme Court exists to hear every cry for personal liberty and fundamental rights. The main purpose of the court is the “exercise of its jurisdiction as a protector of the fundamental right to life and personal liberty inhering in every citizen,” the CJI said in a judgment.

“The history indicates that it is in the seemingly small and routine matters involving grievances of citizens that issues of moment, both in jurisprudential and constitutional terms, emerge.... The right to personal liberty is a precious and inalienable right recognised by the Constitution. In attending to such grievances, the Supreme Court performs a plain constitutional duty, obligation and function,” the judgment said.

CJI Chandrachud said the court could not afford to ignore even the faintest plea for personal liberty.

The court was hearing the plea of Iqram, who would spend 18 years in jail for electricity theft

“If we do not act in matters of personal liberty and grant relief then what are we doing here?” the CJI asked in court.

Electricity theft

The court was hearing the plea of a man, Iqram, who would spend a total of 18 years in jail for electricity theft. He was convicted in nine separate cases of electricity theft for a period of two years each. His sentence was ordered to run concurrently. However, the prison authorities treated his sentence in each case to run consecutively, one after the other, for a total of 18 years. The Allahabad High Court had confirmed the view of the jail authorities.

The apex court set aside the High Court judgment and said Iqram’s sentence would run concurrently.

SC to examine A.P. govt.'s plea seeking division of properties


The assets valued at ₹1,42,601 crore include 245 institutions and corporations specified under the Ninth and Tenth Schedules of Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, says State government

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

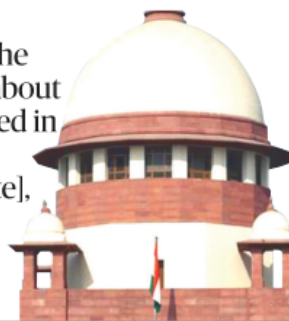
The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to examine a petition filed by the Andhra Pradesh government seeking a “fair, equitable, and expeditious” division of assets and liabilities with Telangana.

A Bench led by Sanjiv Khanna asked senior advocate K.V. Vishwanathan and advocate Mahfooz Nazki, for Andhra Pradesh, to serve copies of the petition to the Union and Telangana governments.

The court said it would take up the case after the winter vacations. The State said the assets include 245

 Non-division of the assets is clearly to the benefit of Telangana, since about 91% of these assets are situated in Hyderabad [the capital of the erstwhile combined State], which is now in Telangana

GOVERNMENT OF
ANDHRA PRADESH



institutions and corporations specified under the Ninth and Tenth Schedules of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.

“The total value of the fixed assets of the 245 institutions to be divided is about ₹1,42,601 crore. Non-division of the assets is clearly to the benefit of Te-

langana since about 91% of these assets are situated in Hyderabad [the capital of the erstwhile combined State] which is now in Telangana,” Andhra Pradesh government submitted.

The State said despite the bifurcation on June 2, 2014, the actual division of assets and liabilities has

not even commenced till date despite repeated efforts by the Government of Andhra Pradesh seeking a speedy resolution.

“Despite a lapse of more than 8 years, Andhra Bhawan situated in Delhi has not been formally bifurcated,” the petition said.

It said Hyderabad, now a part of Telangana, was the capital of the combined State of Andhra Pradesh. The non-apportionment of the assets has led to a multitude of issues adversely affecting and violating the fundamental and other constitutional rights of the people of the State of Andhra Pradesh, including over 1.59 lakh government employees.

LS clears Bill to add Himachal's Hattee community in ST list

Abhinay Lakshman

NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Third Amendment) Bill, 2022 to include the Hattee community in the Trans-Giri region of Sirmaur district in Himachal Pradesh in the Scheduled Tribes list of the State after Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda moved a motion to have the Bill passed.

The Minister moved the motion after his concluding remarks on the discussion on the Bill, which had gone on for two days.

Mr. Munda said the Hattee people of the region had been deprived of the ST status for decades, despite their family members living across the border in

Uttarakhand being categorised as such.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has consistently promised in election manifestos to include the Hattee community in the ST list, including in that of the recent Assembly election, where it lost the State to the Indian National Congress (INC).

The Union Cabinet had announced its approval for the addition just weeks before the Himachal Pradesh poll dates were announced. Interestingly, the BJP won three of the five Assembly seats in Sirmaur district this election.

The Bill received support from across party lines during the discussion and was passed in the Lower House through a voice vote.

RS sees adjournment as Congress demands debate on Chinese incursion issue

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha faced an adjournment on Friday as the Congress party insisted for a debate on the “Chinese incursion” in Arunachal Pradesh.

On Friday, the party MPs pressed for acceptance of their notices under Rule 267 that sought to set aside the business of the day to take up a debate on the issue, but the Chair did not permit it. The members shouted slogans and later trooped into the well of the House, following which Deputy Chairman Harivansh adjourned the proceedings for 25 minutes.

Earlier, when the House met for the day at 11 a.m., Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge said his party and other opposition parties have been trying to raise a very serious issue of national security.



Questions raised: Congress members protest after trooping into the Well of the Rajya Sabha on Friday. PTI

“For the past few days, members have been trying to raise the matter of Chinese incursion in Arunachal Pradesh. On December 14, I intervened and the Chair told me that I cannot raise the issue since I have not given any notice... Discussions sought by opposition parties are not being allowed,” Mr. Kharge said.

Mr. Harivansh, in reply, said allegations should not be levelled against the Chair and cited last week’s ruling of Chairman Jag-

deep Dhankhar expressing inability to accept notices under Rule 267 in the absence of such pleas not specifying the particular rule that was being sought to be set aside. He added that the notices were under consideration of the Chairman.

The reply, however, did not satisfy the opposition MPs, who continued to raise the issue and trooped into the Well of the House, forcing adjournment of proceedings till 12 p.m.

No Supreme Court Benches will be available during winter vacation, says CJI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India D. Y. Chandrachud said on Friday that no Vacation Benches will be available in the Supreme Court during the winter break.

The oral announcement came a day after Law Minister Kiren Rijiju reportedly criticised the “long vacations” of the court and the inconvenience it caused to litigants.

However, according to a circular issued by the SC on September 29, a senior Supreme Court Registry official is specially deputed as a ‘Vacation Officer’. This officer could be approached by any advocate seeking urgent relief either on court holidays or during after-court hours. In such instances, a Bench would be constituted, if required.

Friday is the last working day before the court

This comes a day after Rijiju criticised ‘long vacations’ of the court and problems they pose for litigants

goes into winter recess. The Supreme Court will re-open only next year, on January 2.

69,598 cases pending

The calendar for the year 2023 shows the court would not be fully functional for nearly 180 days, including weekends and holidays. The court’s pendency as on December 1 is 69,598 cases. There are currently six judicial vacancies in the court.

The past year had seen the court come out of hard days of the pandemic and take on the increased pendency. Judges have been hearing 80 cases, on some days, up to 100 cases a day. Many Constitution Bench-

es have reserved their judgments and would use the winter holidays to author them.

Vacation Benches are Special Benches which the Chief Justice of India may designate during summer and winter holidays to hear ‘urgent matters’, which include pleas concerning bail, habeas corpus and other fundamental rights issues.

Rule 6 of Order II of The Supreme Court Rules, 2013, provide that the “Chief Justice may appoint one or more Judges to hear during summer vacation or winter holidays all matters of an urgent nature which under these rules may be heard by a Judge sitting singly, and, whenever necessary, he may likewise appoint a Division Court for the hearing of urgent cases during the vacation which require to be heard by a Bench of Judges”.

Linking of Aadhaar and electoral ID is voluntary, says Rijiju

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Terming the exercise to link Aadhaar with election photo identity card (EPIC) as 'voluntary,' Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday told the Lok Sabha that people who don't link their Aadhaar with EPIC will not be struck off from the voters' list.

In response to another question on whether the government would consider banning opinion polls after the announcement of election schedule, the Law Minister replied in the negative.

Replying to a written question on linking of Aadhaar with EPIC, Mr. Rijiju said, "The Election Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021, allows electoral registration officers to require the existing or prospective elector to provide the Aadhaar number for the purpose of establishing identity on a voluntary basis."

He was responding to a question by Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi, BSP's Ritesh Pandey and AIMIM's Syed Imtiaz Jaleel on the linkage of Aadhaar with electoral rolls.

Over 54 crore of the nearly 95 crore voters have opted to link their Aadhaar details with voter ID

Asked whether the name of the voters whose voter IDs are not linked with Aadhaar will be struck off from the list, the Minister said, "No". However, he made it clear that "there is no provision for withdrawing the consent to share Aadhaar details".

On Thursday, Mr. Rijiju had informed the Rajya Sabha that more than 54 crore of the nearly 95 crore total voters have opted to link their Aadhaar details with voter ID. He said linking of Aadhaar is "process driven" and "no targets have been given" for linking Aadhaar with EPIC.

"The Election Commission does not store the Aadhaar numbers in its database. The Aadhaar number is used only for authentication and EC does not retrieve any personal information from the UIDAI Aadhaar database," Mr. Rijiju noted.

Crude oil imports rose 52.6% to \$147 bn in April-November

Commerce Ministry data shows coal and coke imports almost doubled in the period to \$37.25 bn; in exports, shipments of petroleum grew by 58.9% to \$62.65 bn, gems & jewellery increased by 2%

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India's imports of crude oil rose by 52.6% to \$146.57 billion during April-November period, according to Commerce Ministry data.

Coal and coke imports increased by 97.7% to \$37.25 billion in the same period, the data showed.

Gold imports, however, dipped by 18.1% to \$27.21 billion during the eight-month period.

Other products which recorded double digit growth in imports include elec-

Energy appetite

Trade data shows while crude oil imports surged 52.6% in the first eight months of the fiscal, coal and coke imports jumped 97.7%



■ Gold imports fell by 18.1% to \$27.21 billion, while electronics, chemicals and vegetable oil posted double-digit growth

■ Exports of engineering goods, plastics and cotton yarn/fabrics/made-ups logged negative growth of -2%, -9.66% and -25.8%

■ India's trade deficit widened in November to \$23.89 billion

tronics, chemicals, transport equipment and vegetable oil. Vegetable oil imports rose by 16.7% to \$14.28 billion.

In exports, sectors which recorded negative growth in the period include engineering goods (-2%), cotton yarn/fabrics/

made-ups (-25.8%) and plastic (-9.66%).

Petroleum exports grew by 58.9% to \$62.65 billion, while gems and jewellery shipments increased by 2% to \$26.45 billion.

India's exports posted marginal growth of 0.59% to \$31.99 billion in November, even as the trade deficit widened to \$23.89 billion during the month.

Briefing reporters on trade data, Additional Secretary in the Commerce Ministry L. Satya Srinivas said the government was regularly monitoring the export performance.

Government cuts windfall tax on crude oil output

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The Centre slashed the windfall profit tax levied on domestically-produced crude oil as well as on export of diesel and ATF, following a decline in global oil prices, according to an official order.

The levy on crude oil output by companies has been cut to ₹1,700 per tonne from ₹4,900, according to the order.

The government has also cut the tax on export of diesel to ₹5 per litre from ₹8; and on overseas shipments of ATF to ₹1.5 a litre from ₹5. The rates take effect on December 16.

'Lower commodity prices to help narrow trade deficit, aid rupee'

Reuters
MUMBAI

The fall in commodity prices could help narrow India's trade deficit in the coming months, aiding the rupee, analysts said on Friday. The trade deficit narrowed to \$23.9 billion in November from \$26.9 billion in the previous month, data released on Thursday showed. It was the lowest deficit reading since May.

On a month-on-month basis, exports expanded by 7.4% in November, while imports retreated 1.4%, helping narrow the trade deficit, Barclays Bank said

Trade deficit, lowest since May, narrowed to \$23.9 bn in Nov. from \$26.9 bn in the previous month

in a note. "The fall in imports remains a key emerging trend," Rahul Bajoria, chief India economist at Barclays Bank, wrote.

Imports fell to their lowest level in 10 months in November, on lower international commodity prices and weaker domestic demand, Mr. Bajoria said.

"We expect this trend to continue and any further

decline in commodity prices will only help in a faster consolidation of imports, providing more support to the exchange rate."

Lower commodity prices, especially oil, bode well for India's import bill, reducing the burden on trade deficit, said Swati Arora, economist at HDFC Bank. "This will eventually be positive for the rupee."

If India's economy continues to outgrow most of its key trading partners, then trade deficit could continue to remain "somewhat elevated," Vivek Kumar, economist at QuantEco Research, said.

Rupee settlement options draw interest from 4 more nations

Reuters

India's rupee trade settlement mechanism, a means of using rupees instead of dollars and other currencies for international transactions, is attracting interest from more countries.

Tajikistan, Cuba, Luxembourg and Sudan have begun talking to India about using the mechanism, according to two sources and an official document reviewed by Reuters. It has already been used by Russia following the imposition of sanctions

on Moscow over the Ukraine war. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) set up the mechanism in July. The Centre is looking to bring countries short of dollars into the mechanism, said a government official and an industry source aware of the development.

The four nations have shown interest in opening special rupee, or vostro, accounts, but partner banks in India have not yet provided the facilities, documents showed. Opening these accounts needs Reserve Bank approval.

Five agricultural products of Kerala get GI tag, taking the total count to 17

The Hindu Bureau
THRISSUR

Five agricultural products of Kerala have been granted Geographical Indication (GI) status.

Attappady Attukombu Avara (beans), *Attappady Thuvara* (red gram), *Onattukara Ellu* (sesame), *Kanthalloor-Vattavada Veluthulli* (garlic), and *Kodungalloor Pottuvellari* (snap melon) are the latest Geographical Indications that have been registered.

The unique features of the products, imparted by the agro-climatic conditions of the geographical area of their production, are the basis for getting Geographical Indication tag.

Attappady Attukombu Avara, cultivated in the At-



Exclusive club: (clockwise from top left) Onattukara Ellu, Kodungalloor Pottuvellari, Attappady Attukombu Avara, Attappady Thuvara and Kanthalloor-Vattavada Veluthulli.

tappady region of Palakkad, is curved like a goat's horn as its name indicates. Its higher anthocyanin content, compared to other dolichos beans, imparts violet colour in the stem and fruits.

Attappady Thuvara has seeds with white coat. These are bigger and have higher seed weight than the regular variety.

Compared to the garlic produced in other areas, the garlic from the Kanthal-

loor-Vattavada area of Devikulam block panchayat in Idukki contains higher amount of sulphides, flavonoids, and proteins.

Onattukara Ellu and its oil are famous for its unique health benefits. Relatively higher antioxidant content in *Onattukara Ellu* helps in fighting the free radicals which destroy the body cells.

Kodungalloor Pottuvellari cultivated in Kodungalloor and parts of Ernakulam is consumed as juice and in other forms. This snap melon, which is harvested in summer, is excellent for quenching thirst.

With the latest five GIs, 17 agricultural products of Kerala facilitated by Kerala Agricultural University have received the GI status.

Wayanad rice festival promotes climate-resilient crops

SPECIAL

E.M. Manoj
KALPETTA

At a time when climate vagaries are posing a serious threat to farming in the country, a Kerala-based organisation named *Thanal* has embarked on a unique conservation experiment, planting 300 climate-resilient varieties of traditional rice on 1.5 acre of land at its agroecology centre in Panavally in the Wayanad district.

On December 12, *Tha-*

nal gave the public an opportunity to experience their initiative by launching *Ikki Jathre*, or the Festival of Rice in tribal parlance. Throngs of farmers, researchers, environmentalists and students have been arriving at Panavally to take part in the festival, which concludes on Sunday.

The initiative aims to sensitise people to the significance of conserving traditional crops that have the ability to withstand harsh climatic conditions. *Thanal* has been organising annual "rice field weeks"



Learning ground: An aerial view of the Rice Diversity Block at Panavally in Wayanad district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

since 2012.

The festival also sets the stage for knowledge sharing and co-creation of

knowledge between tribal farmers and experts. "We launched the Rice Diversity Block (RDB) at Panavally

under the Save Our Rice campaign in 2009, with a collection of 30 varieties of rice," *Thanal* director S. Usha told *The Hindu*. It has now expanded to 300 varieties.

"Many farmers had stopped cultivating traditional rice seeds after hybrid rice varieties became popular, under the misconception that the former has low productivity. But this is not true. The *Thondy* variety, a traditional and popular rice among the people in Wayanad a few decades ago, could compete with any hybrid

rice in terms of productivity," she said. Moreover, the input cost of traditional rice cultivation is very low owing to its inherent resistance to pests and diseases. Also, its nutritional value is high, though studies are yet to be conducted.

Though many traditional rice varieties, especially black rice varieties, are already rich in minerals like zinc, iron and other nutrients, the government is now trying to supply fortified rice by artificially adding minerals and nutrients to hybrid rice varieties.

'1.3 terabyte data encrypted and five servers affected in AIIMS ransomware attack'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Based on current analysis by stakeholders concerned, about 1.3 terabyte data were encrypted in the recent ransomware attack on the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences' (AIIMS) information technology network by unknown threat actors, according to the government.

In a written response to the question of Rajya Sabha member John Brittas, Minister of State For Electronics And Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Friday said upon being informed about the cybersecurity incident, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) had done

CERT-In did an evaluation after being informed about the incident involving AIIMS

an evaluation.

"As per the analysis, servers were compromised in the information technology network of the AIIMS by unknown threat actors due to improper network segmentation, which caused operational disruption due to non-functionality of critical applications. CERT-In and other stakeholder entities have advised necessary remedial measures," said the reply.

"Based on current analysis by concerned stakeholders, five servers of the

AIIMS were affected and approximately 1.3 terabytes of data were encrypted," it said.

Mr. Chandrasekhar said CERT-In, which is mandated to track and monitor cybersecurity incidents in India, had issued a special advisory on security practices to enhance resilience of health sector entities, which had been communicated to the Health Ministry for sensitising health sector entities regarding the latest cybersecurity threats.

Replying to another question, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Bharati Pravin Pawar said all the data for e-Hospital had been retrieved from a backup server and restored on new servers.

Coordinated effort on to curb Chinese loan apps, says FM

12,903 complaints have been received against digital lending apps and against recovery agents between April 1, 2021 and November 30, 2022

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman informed the Rajya Sabha on Friday that there is a coordinated effort within the government to contain Chinese digital loan apps, and ensure that the common man is not being cheated by them. Action is being initiated against those who are misusing such apps, she added.

Ms. Sitharaman was making a *suo motu* response to Trinamool Congress MP Nadimul Haque who raised the issue of the unethical practices of digital lending apps inflicting financial harm on the economically weaker borrowers of the country.

“The issue that the member has raised about Chinese apps and how common people are being harassed and cheated by some of these apps and,



 Action from the RBI's side and our side, including the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, has been initiated in this

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
Finance Minister

therefore, some action has to be taken up seriously,” said the Finance Minister.

“In the last 6-7 months, I have had personal meetings with the representatives of the RBI [Reserve Bank of India] and also with my Secretaries in the Ministry. Action from the RBI's side and our side, including the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, has been initiated in this. A lot of such apps which are badly misusing have also been brought to the attention of MeitY [the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology]. So, there is a coordinated effort to contain such apps and also to

take action against those who are misusing them,” she said.

Many complaints

Mr. Haque said that there were a huge number of complaints received against banks and Non Banking Financial Companies related to digital lending apps.

According to an answer given in the Lok Sabha, as many as 12,903 complaints have been received against such digital lending apps and against recovery agents under the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, between April 1, 2021 and November 30, 2022.

'China is expanding model villages in strategic areas'

A new village, spread in two clusters, is coming up near Siliguri corridor; construction of two villages is nearing completion in Churup area opposite to Uttarakhand, according to sources

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

China is expanding its chain of model villages or *Xiaokang* (moderately prosperous) villages close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC), opposite Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, including in the Chumbi Valley which faces the strategically crucial Siliguri corridor, according to defence sources. This is in addition to continuing its infrastructure development and additional deployments along the LAC.

At Pangda in the Chumbi Valley, where a *Xiaokang* village was set up earlier, a new village is coming up spread in two clusters. "While the presence of vehicles in the main cluster reveals its possible occupation, in the other cluster also there is increased vehicle activity and it is likely to be occupied soon," one source stated, citing intelligence inputs and satellite



imagery. In November, land clearing activity was observed close to an existing village about seven kilometres from Bum La, the source stated.

Similarly, opposite Uttarakhand, the construction of two such villages in the Churup area, located 11 km from the LAC, is nearing completion. Another model village comprising 35-36 dwellings is under construction in Qangze, about 52 km from the LAC, also opposite the middle sector.

Drawing a connection between the Yangtse face-off and *Xiaokang* villages, former Adjutant General and 14 Corps Commander

The PLA patrol had transgressed, which was contested very firmly and resolutely by our forces and led to some physical violence

LT. GEN R.P. KALITA
Eastern Army Commander

Lt. Gen. Rakesh Sharma (Retd) said on Twitter, "Did the PLA [People's Liberation Army] troops avail of *Xiaokang* village in proximity as base for build up for clash at Yangtse? This will give the dual-use nature of these 628 villages established all along the LAC. Then these villages are staging areas for build up."

Commenting on the situation at Yangtse, Eastern Army Commander Lt. Gen. R.P. Kalita said on Friday that presently the border areas along the northern frontier are "stable and we are firmly in control."

Speaking on the occasion of Vijay Diwas, com-

memorating the 1971 liberation war of Bangladesh, Lt. Gen. Kalita said, "It is one of those areas where there is a different perception of the LAC. The PLA patrol had transgressed, which was contested very firmly and resolutely by our forces on ground which led to some amount of physical violence. But it was contained at the local level." Citing intelligence inputs, another source said that, in the last three to four months, a large PLA deployment had been observed around the Tsethang camp, which is south east of Lhasa and about 150 km from the LAC opposite Arunachal Pradesh, facing the Army's 4 Corps area.

Also, a number of tunnels are under construction near the Pangta air field, which are believed to be part of a railway line there, sources said. This is about 160 km from the LAC opposite eastern Arunachal or Rest of Arunachal Pradesh (RALP).

Countering terror

All nations must come together
against groups targeting civilians

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's listing of four hurdles to better counterterrorism cooperation, i.e., state support for financing terror; multilateral mechanisms that are opaque and agenda driven; double standards and politicisation of countering terrorism according to where terror groups belong, and the "next frontier" (the use of emerging technologies such as drones and virtual currency by terrorists), needs attention. The focus of the UNSC special briefing on Thursday, 'Global Counterterrorism Approach', that was convened by India, is well-timed given that the "Global War on Terrorism" and the sanctions regimes launched after 9/11 are in disarray. In their haste to exit Afghanistan in 2021, for example, the UNSC's permanent members, the U.S. and the U.K. struck the biggest blow to the sanctions regime by holding talks with the Taliban, easing their path to power in Kabul and letting their handlers in Pakistan off the hook. Second, as Mr. Jaishankar has pointed out, a P-5 country (China) continues to block the designations of Pakistan-based terrorists, including five named this year, from the LeT and the JeM. Finally, instead of uniting to accept India's proposal, of 1996, of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terror to institute global practices on countering terror, the P-5 countries are hopelessly polarised, and irrevocably so, over Russia's war in Ukraine. Given the scenario, New Delhi's attempt at highlighting the issues during the last few weeks of its two-year UNSC tenure was apt, as it built up to the briefing with conferences in India including a UN Counter-Terrorism Committee meeting, the No Money For Terror conference, and an Interpol conference.

It is unfortunate, however, that the briefing appears to have been overshadowed by heated words outside the Council between Mr. Jaishankar and his Pakistani counterpart Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. In response to Mr. Jaishankar's comments on Pakistan being the "epicentre of terrorism", Mr. Bhutto chose to launch a personal tirade against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the 2002 Gujarat riots. That Pakistan's "dossier" on what it claims is an Indian hand behind a blast in Lahore essentially pertains to an attack on the 26/11 terrorist strikes mastermind and LeT chief Hafiz Saeed is equally telling about the Pakistan government's regard for him, as well as its desire to muddy the global narrative on terrorism. The Government would be better served by not taking the bait, and focusing instead on the task at hand: "re-invigorating" the global agenda and counter-terrorism architecture by emphasising the need for unity on the issue, and for all countries to provide resources to the battle against those driven by a radical ideology who continue to threaten civilian populations worldwide.

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.