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DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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The Assam-Meghalaya border firing

What is the boundary dispute between the two States? Does the current incident have bearing on this dispute? What has been the response from the governments of the two States? Have there been political ramifications in Meghalaya considering its bound for elections next year?

EXPLAINER

Rahul Karmakar

The story so far:

A bid by the Assam police and forest personnel to catch alleged timber smugglers from Meghalaya led to the killing of six people at a place claimed by each State to be within its territory. Apart from heightening tensions along a stretch of the interstate boundary, the incident sparked protests and stray cases of violence in Meghalaya's capital Shillong and a temporary suspension of vehicular movement between the two States. It also led to a delay in the process of resolving the Assam-Meghalaya boundary dispute.

What led to the firing?

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma agreed with his Meghalaya counterpart Conrad K. Sangma that the firing at about 3 am on November 22 was unprovoked. But the Assam government has insisted the incident had nothing to do with the boundary dispute and was the fallout of its crusade against the smuggling of timber by miscreants who operate on either side of the undefined sections of the 884.9 km boundary between the two States. But the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), taking note of a memorandum by Mr. Sangma, attributed the firing to the border dispute, "a larger issue pending for long". Had the dispute been settled, such type of incidents would have been averted, the commission said on November 29. The commission further said the incident allegedly happened after the detention of a timber-laden truck, chased by the Assam police and forest personnel, at Mukroh village. The villagers became agitated upon the entry of Assam police and forest personnel and surrounded them, leading to the firing. Five villagers and an Assam Forest guard were killed, the NHRC said.

What was the immediate fallout?

What seemed to be a local incident from far became fodder for pressure groups in



Tensions soar: Security personnel stand guard near a forest office after it was vandalised following violence at the disputed Assam-Meghalaya border. PTI

poll-bound Meghalaya to rail against the Sangma-led coalition government for failing to protect border residents. Stray cases of arson, vandalism of Assam-registered vehicles, and attacks on security personnel and civilians – mostly non-tribals – marked the protests in Shillong. For six days after the incident, Assam police restricted the movement of vehicles to Shillong and other parts of eastern Meghalaya for security reasons. Assam-based taxi operators also prevented Meghalaya-registered vehicles to enter the State. Tourism in Meghalaya was hit hard in a year it had recorded the highest number of footfalls with many tourists cancelling their trips and some cutting short their stay to get out of uncertainty. The complications arising out of the Mukroh incident also delayed the process of resolving the boundary dispute between the two States in the remaining six of the 12 sectors. "We may not be able to go for talks immediately," Mr. Sangma said on November 29. The dispute in the other six sectors was resolved through

an agreement on March 29.

How is the boundary dispute linked to the incident?

Although the Assam government claims to the contrary, the fact that the two governments refer to the place of the incident by two names makes it apparent that the boundary dispute is intertwined. While Meghalaya says the place is Mukroh in West Jaintia Hills District, Assam claims it is Mukhrow or Moikrang in West Karbi Anglong district. The village is also very close to Block 1, one of the six dispute sectors that remain to be resolved. Whatsoever may be the dispute between the two States, the NHRC said the police have to use restraint in such situations and examine the standard operating procedure for firing by the armed forces in areas of a border dispute. It also asked the Union Home Secretary and the Assam Chief Secretary to examine and evolve mechanisms or suggest measures to prevent such type of incidents.

How did the boundary dispute start?

Meghalaya, carved out of Assam as an autonomous State in 1970, became a full-fledged State in 1972. The creation of the new State was based on the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969, which the Meghalaya government refused to accept. This was because the Act followed the recommendations of a 1951 committee to define the boundary of Meghalaya. On that panel's recommendations, areas of the present-day East Jaintia Hills, Ri-Bhoi and West Khasi Hills districts of Meghalaya were transferred to the Karbi Anglong, Kamrup (metro) and Kamrup districts of Assam. Meghalaya contested these transfers after statehood, claiming that they belonged to its tribal chieftains. Assam said the Meghalaya government could neither provide documents nor archival materials to prove its claim over these areas.

After claims and counter-claims, the dispute was narrowed down to 12 sectors on the basis of an official claim by Meghalaya in 2011.

THE GIST

▼ A bid by the Assam police and forest personnel to catch alleged timber smugglers from Meghalaya led to the killing of six people at a place claimed by each State to be within its territory.

▼ Although the Assam government claims that the incident wasn't about the boundary issue, the fact that the two governments refer to the place of the incident by two names makes it apparent that the boundary dispute is intertwined. While Meghalaya says the place is Mukroh in West Jaintia Hills District, Assam claims it is Mukhrow or Moikrang in West Karbi Anglong district.

▼ The incident has become fodder for pressure groups in poll-bound Meghalaya to rail against the Sangma-led coalition government for failing to protect border residents. There have been reportings of stray cases of arson, vandalism of Assam-registered vehicles, and attacks on security personnel and civilians.

Party Congress over, understanding the China puzzle

In recent weeks, world leaders have put out dire warnings on the import of certain events. The 20th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), that was held in October 2022, is among the more prominent of these events. Depending on individual predilections, countries in the region have been stating their own views on current developments. Meanwhile, the jury is still out on what is to be expected.

References to the unpredictable nature of the global situation, and that in the Indo-Pacific in particular, are not new. What is possibly adding grist to this are certain recent assertions by Chinese President Xi Jinping following the Party Congress. His *démarche* to his Generals, made in the Joint Operations Command Centre of the Central Military Commission, “to enhance troop training and combat preparedness” has attracted much attention. Mr. Xi also warned of “dangerous storms ahead” and about external ‘interference’ in Taiwan. All this seemed to convince the West that China is preparing to go to war over Taiwan. Meanwhile, Japan is understood to have already decided to double its defence budget to 2% of its GDP.

Statements by western leaders, including the Joint Declaration following the recent G-20 Summit in Indonesia, have not helped to douse fears about an imminent conflict. Elliptical statements, *viz.*, that “it was essential to uphold international law and the multilateral system, as today’s era must not be of war” have only increased such concerns. Likewise, a stalemate in the recent Biden-Xi talks, have added to existing concerns, with Mr. Xi reiterating that Taiwan “was the first red line” that must not be crossed, and Mr. Biden telling Mr. Xi that the U.S. would enhance its security position in Asia.

Clues after a careful reading

Hence, it has become important to read the tea leaves correctly. Worth considering again is whether the 20th Party Congress deliberations provide some clues to China’s current thought processes and, more importantly, whether China is indeed preparing for a major conflict aiming at world conquest.

A careful reading of the Congress confirms only that under Mr. Xi, it is ideology that drives policy most of the time. Also, that it reinforces Mr. Xi’s Marxist inspired belief that ‘history is irreversibly on China’s side’. Mr. Xi’s view on ‘historical materialism’ again, is indicative of the general thrust of his thought processes. By itself it does not connote that Mr. Xi is preparing for war or readying himself for a major conflict.

China has indeed become more doctrinaire. The Party Congress confirms this. A shift to



M.K. Narayanan

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It appears, red lines apart, that the priority for Xi Jinping and the CCP is not to embark on new conflicts but on how best to protect the ideological purity and integrity of the Party

Marxist orthodoxy in the political realm, but perhaps less so in the area of economic policy, does mark a retreat from the Deng era of ‘caution and risk aversion’. References made to changes in the ‘international balance of forces’ and that China has entered the ‘leading ranks of the world’ must be read against this backdrop.

Mr. Xi’s deepest political convictions, as evident from the discussions at the Congress, appear to be on preventing the ideological decay of the CCP and avoiding the kind of situation that led to the collapse of Soviet Communism. Safeguarding the Party from pernicious ideas creeping into the system and ensuring that the West did not succeed in fomenting ‘ideological divisions within China’ appear to be the prime concern. The objective, it would seem, is to turn the CCP into the ‘highest church of a revitalised secular faith’ and the main citadel of Chinese Communist Orthodoxy. If this reading is correct, then the priority for Mr. Xi and the CCP at present is not embarking on new conflicts but on protecting the ideological purity and integrity of the Party. This notwithstanding, China has certain clear red lines which cannot be breached; and if this were to happen, it would lead to a major conflict.

There is, moreover, no hard evidence that China is about to embark on a series of steps towards what it perceives as a ‘more just’ world. Though asserting that China today is much more powerful than it ever was, there is nowhere any clear evidence that China is about to use this power to change the course of history. On the other hand, it could be surmised that under the cloak of ‘evaluating international circumstances through the prism of dialectical analysis’, China may want to assess the situation and the circumstances before embarking on a conflict, including against strategic entities such as the Quad and AUKUS, both of which are seen to be intrinsically hostile to China’s growing role and authority across the Pacific region.

All this only points to the need for a better understanding of China’s real intentions. This is a need to avoid past mistakes, such as those in the 1950s – when the West seems to have overestimated China’s capabilities, as also those made by India in the late 1950s, when it failed to correctly read China and Chinese intentions. No two situations are identical, however, and while the West might still exult at the success it achieved in bringing down the Soviet Union at the end of the 20th century, there are many other aspects today.

And several refinements may be needed to apply this to present conditions. Also, a belief that military and economic strengths automatically translate into a conflict matrix, may

need more refinements.

What it means for India

All this has a great deal of relevance for India and its policymakers. Neither the deliberations in the Party Congress nor any of the post-Congress fulminations by China’s leaders, appear directed at India. Repeated charges by western sources about China’s designs on countries in the Indo-Pacific, hence, should not provoke India into taking any rash steps, as both situations and events tend to change rapidly. For instance, after a constant barrage of charges against China of having aggressive designs on Taiwan, the latest turn of events is that Mr. Biden has implied that the situation has not changed for the worse, and that there is no ‘new Cold War in the offing’, involving the U.S. and China. Subsequently, the U.S. Defence Secretary and his Chinese counterpart have held meetings in Cambodia. The media readout of the talks has been that they were ‘productive and professional’ and ‘that competition does not lead to conflict’.

For India, border incursions are, no doubt, a continuing cause for concern. Undoubtedly, the incursions are not random, and tend to rise and fall, but, *ipso facto*, they should not be mistaken as precursors to war. The situation at present does not merit the view that India is about to face a wider conflict in the Himalayas. A careful study of the border hotspots indicates that China’s concerns are largely regarding Aksai Chin; its importance, in China’s eyes, lies in its proximity to China’s Tibet and Xinjiang.

This does not mean that relations between China and India will remain smooth, as their conflict is more civilisational than territorial in nature. India’s growing closeness to the U.S. and the West certainly irks China, and as is evident from the Party Congress deliberations, China sees the U.S.-led West as its principal antagonist. Hence, China’s excessive concerns about strategic entities such as the Quad, as also about other common approaches that give an impression of closer strategic alignment between India and the U.S. or India and the West. These will be perceived as indicative of hostile intentions towards China. The recent flurry of statements between Indian and western leaders on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Cambodia, the ASEAN Heads of States meeting also in Cambodia, and the G-20 Summit in Indonesia, can, for instance, be expected to add grist to China’s suspicion of a strengthening of the coalition of forces ranged against it. Notwithstanding its claims about being stronger than ever before, China thus continues to nurse serious concerns about its strategic vulnerabilities.

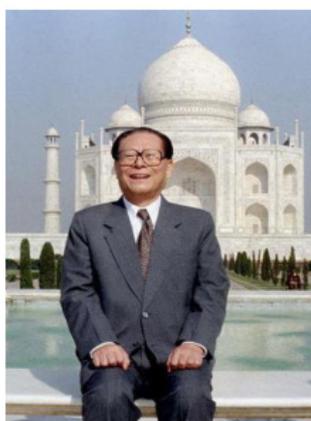
Jiang Zemin, who oversaw China's economic transformation, passes away

Ananth Krishnan
BEIJING

Former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin, who led China during a decade of extraordinary economic growth, passed away in Shanghai on Wednesday, aged 96.

Mr. Jiang's death comes at an extraordinary time for Chinese politics, and days after protests in many Chinese cities on a scale not seen since 1989, a year when the death of a pro-reform leader, Hu Yaobang, catalysed a pro-democracy student moment.

For many in China, the decade until 2002 under



India diaries: Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin in Agra on November 30, 1996. REUTERS

Mr. Jiang and former Premier Zhu Rongji is still remembered as an era of relative openness and of

unprecedented economic opportunity. Mr. Jiang took over amid the chaos of 1989 and the brutal crackdown of the pro-democracy movement, handpicked by then leader Deng Xiaoping as the man to guide China out of a sensitive moment.

Crucial role

Mr. Jiang's biggest legacy will be his shepherding of China's economic reforms and growth. The economy grew five-fold during this time, from \$347 billion in 1989 to \$1.47 trillion in 2002. The return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 and its entry into the World

Trade Organisation in 2001 were two landmark moments of the Jiang era.

"This period is sometimes treated as an interregnum between two really tall leaders, Deng Xiaoping on the one hand and Xi Jinping on the other, who dominate the landscape, but these were in fact the most productive years of Communist China's history," Vijay Gokhale, former Foreign Secretary, envoy to China, and author of *After Tiananmen: The Rise of China*, told *The Hindu*.

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Former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin dies

“This was in no small measure due to the leadership of the people who ruled China at the time – Mr. Jiang, Zhu Rongji, Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao,” Mr. Gokhale said. “We cannot understand China’s great power ambitions if we don’t understand this period when they laid all the building blocks for it, whether the modernisation of the People’s Liberation Army, a multidimensional foreign policy, attracting Foreign Direct Investment into China, or technology leapfrogging.”

The Jiang period saw a transformation of China’s place in the world – and marked both its rise as a global trading superpower and a period of extraordinary dependency between China and the West. This was a time when China also saw value in stability in its periphery, including in relations with India. In 1993 and 1996, India and China signed their first-ever border agreements to maintain peace along the Line of Actual Control, with the latter agreement signed during Mr. Jiang’s visit to India, the first ever by a Chinese head of state.

Paving way for capitalism

His biggest legacy at home was reshaping Chinese politics to the needs of the economic reform era. Mr. Jiang worked to overcome the political opposition to officially Communist China’s embrace of capitalism, captured in his official ideology which is called the “Three Represents” and was added to the Party Constitution. It stated that the Party would not only represent workers, farmers and Communists, but also all of China’s “advanced productive forces”, cultural elements, and the “fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people”.

It paved the way for businesspeople and entrepreneurs to join the Party’s ranks and to de-emphasise the role of ideology in the party, a trend that carried on in the Hu Jintao era. The current leader, Mr. Xi, has in the eyes of many observers in Beijing reversed that trend by once again re-emphasising the centrality of the Party.

The retreat of the Party from the lives of people saw an era of relative openness, although Mr. Jiang, like his predecessor Deng, cracked down on any and all spaces that were seen as challenging its rule, such as the once popular Falun Gong movement, which was crushed in 1999.

Mr. Jiang, who retired in 2002, remained influential behind the scenes in the Hu Jintao years, with many of his political appointees occupying top party positions. After Mr. Xi came to power in 2012, he stayed out of the public spotlight, largely due to ill health. State media reported he passed away due to leukemia and multiple organ failure.

In recent years, Mr. Jiang garnered somewhat of a cult status for some on Chinese social media, remembered as the last of charismatic and relatively open leaders, and a contrast to his successors. He often broke into song or English, and memorably conducted an orchestra in the presence of Bill Clinton, a video that went viral after his passing. His death could not have come at a more sensitive time for China’s current leader, Mr. Xi, who has in recent days been confronting the biggest challenge to his rule with protests against lockdowns and the “zero-Covid” policy over the weekend. Chinese cities have this week seen a stepped up deployment of police to thwart further protests and public gatherings, as well as increased online censorship. As online tributes to Mr. Jiang flooded social media on November 30, the leadership faces a delicate task of organising a state tribute to bid farewell to the leader at a heated political moment in China.

India's G-20 agenda will be inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented

The previous 17 Presidencies of the G-20 delivered significant results – for ensuring macro-economic stability, rationalising international taxation, relieving debt-burden on countries, among many other outcomes. We will benefit from these achievements, and build further upon them.

However, as India assumes this important mantle, I ask myself – can the G-20 go further still? Can we catalyse a fundamental mindset shift, to benefit humanity as a whole?

I believe we can.

Our mindsets are shaped by our circumstances. Through all of history, humanity lived in scarcity. We fought for limited resources, because our survival depended on denying them to others. Confrontation and competition – between ideas, ideologies and identities – became the norm.

Unfortunately, we remain trapped in the same zero-sum mindset even today. We see it when countries fight over territory or resources. We see it when supplies of essential goods are hoarded by a few, even as billions remain vulnerable.

Some may argue that confrontation and greed are just human nature. I



Narendra Modi

disagree. If humans were inherently selfish, what would explain the lasting appeal of so many spiritual traditions that advocate the fundamental oneness of us all?

One such tradition, popular in India, sees all living beings, and even inanimate things, as composed of the same five basic elements – the *panch tatra* of earth, water, fire, air and space. Harmony among these elements – within us and between us – is essential for our physical, social and environmental well-being.

India's G-20 Presidency will work to promote this universal sense of oneness. Hence our theme – “One

Earth, One Family, One Future”.

This is not just a slogan. It takes into account recent changes in human circumstances, which we have collectively failed to appreciate.

Today, we have the means to produce enough to meet the basic needs of all people in the world.

Today, we do not need to fight for our survival – our era need not be one of war. Indeed, it must not be one!

Today, the greatest challenges we face – climate change, terrorism, and pandemics – can be solved not by fighting each other, but only by acting together.

Fortunately, today's technology also gives us the means to address problems on a humanity-wide scale. The massive virtual worlds that we inhabit today demonstrate the scalability of digital technologies.

Housing one-sixth of humanity, and with its immense diversity of languages, religions, customs and beliefs, India is a microcosm of the world.

With the oldest-known traditions of collective decision-making, India contributes to the foundational DNA of democracy. As the mother of democracy, India's national consensus is forged not by diktat but by blending millions of free voices into one

harmonious melody.

Today, India is the fastest-growing large economy. Our citizen-centric governance model takes care of even our most marginalised citizens, while nurturing the creative genius of our talented youth.

We have tried to make national development not an exercise in top-down governance, but rather a citizen-led “people's movement”.

Digital public goods

We have leveraged technology to create digital public goods that are open, inclusive and interoperable. These have delivered revolutionary progress in fields as varied as social protection, financial inclusion, and electronic payments.

For all these reasons, India's experiences can provide insights for possible global solutions.

During our G-20 Presidency, we shall present India's experiences, learnings and models as possible templates for others, particularly the developing world.

Our G-20 priorities will be shaped in consultation with not just our G-20 partners, but also our fellow-travellers in the global South, whose voice often goes unheard.

Our priorities will focus on healing our “One Earth”, creating harmony within our “One Family” and giving hope for our “One Future”.

For healing our planet, we will encourage sustainable and environment-friendly lifestyles, based on India's tradition of trusteeship towards nature.

For promoting harmony within the human family, we will seek to depoliticise the global supply of food, fertilizers and medical products, so that geopolitical tensions do not lead to humanitarian crises. As in our own families, those whose needs are the greatest must always be our first concern.

For imbuing hope in our future generations, we will encourage an honest conversation among the most powerful countries – on mitigating risks posed by weapons of mass destruction and enhancing global security.

India's G-20 agenda will be inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive.

Let us join together to make India's G-20 Presidency a Presidency of healing, harmony and hope.

Let us work together to shape a new paradigm – of human-centric globalisation.



In unison: Flags of G-20 countries at the summit venue of the grouping in Bali on November 12. The Prime Minister says priorities of India's G-20 Presidency will be shaped in consultation with not just the member states but also fellow-travellers in the global South. AP

Layoffs by IT firms in the U.S. will greatly impact H-1B workers

Indians are most worried as the waiting time to get an appointment in U.S. embassies back home is over a year

DATA POINT

Rebecca Rose Varghese

In 2020, the number of people employed by Meta was about 58,000. Despite two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the employee count increased to 87,000 in 2022. Tech giants Amazon, Microsoft and Apple also recorded a similar increase. The idea was to cash in on the increased online presence of Internet users due to COVID-19-related movement restrictions by widening operations.

However, as the intensity of the pandemic declined, the time spent online also reduced. Dependence on online platforms especially reduced for activities such as shopping and studying. Also, over 95% of people were already using social media and messaging platforms, according to GWI, an audience research company, so the potential for growth for companies was minimal. As the expectation that online usage will continue to grow did not materialise, the net incomes of tech companies fell resulting in layoffs. Meta co-founder Mark Zuckerberg acknowledged this failure when he said that he had predicted, like many others, that the surge of e-commerce at the start of COVID-19 would continue after the pandemic ended. "Unfortunately, this did not play out the way I expected," he said.

Indian workers who have been laid-off have a big worry. If they are unable to find a new employer within 60 days, they are faced with the prospect of leaving the U.S. and re-entering later. But the average waiting time for an interview appointment at the U.S. Embassy in cities in India is over a year (as on November 29). This is a problem that only Indian workers face, as the waiting time in other countries is less by at least 100 days; in a majority of them, it is less than 15 days. To make matters worse, the prospects of these Indian workers back home are also

weak. Most Indian IT companies have frozen or slowed down hiring, as recessionary fears in the U.S. and high inflation in Europe have kept demand low.

Chart 1 shows the average time spent each day on the Internet by users aged between 16 and 64 worldwide, according to GWI. The time spent spiked during the pandemic and declined as movement restrictions eased.

Table 2 shows the share of Internet users who visited or used a digital service in the preceding 30-day period. While the share who visited banking, messaging and social media sites remained mostly the same, the share of those who used educational and commercial sites declined.

Table 3 shows the net income in \$ million for select U.S. tech giants. After recording significant increases during the pandemic peaks, which gave hope to them to deepen investments, the companies saw poor returns in the last three quarters and were forced to lay-off employees.

Table 4 shows the employee headcount. The staff strength surged in the pandemic period. But according to recent news reports, Meta has fired more than 11,000 employees, Amazon is planning to lay off over 10,000 workers, Microsoft is expected to send home about 1,000 workers, and Apple is not hiring for now. A fair share of the affected employees are Indians as they form a lion's share of the H-1B hirings.

Chart 5 shows the estimated waiting time to receive an interview appointment at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate for temporary workers with visa types H, L, O, P and Q, as on November 29. Five Indian cities stand out with a wait time close to a year.

Table 6 shows the year-on-year change in employee count for select IT firms in India. The numbers have fallen drastically in the latest quarter.

With inputs from Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Between a rock and a hard place

Decreased Internet usage after the pandemic along with recession fears and inflation have led to a hiring freeze and layoffs in large tech companies. The data are sourced from GWI, Travel.State.Gov and the annual/quarterly reports of companies



Chart 1: The chart shows the average time spent each day on the Internet by users aged between 16 and 64 worldwide

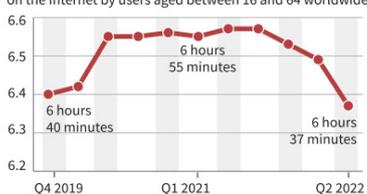


Table 2: The table shows the share of Internet users who used a digital service in the preceding 30 days

Website type	2021			2022	
	July	Oct.	Apr.	July	Oct.
Banking	28.8	28.5	28.9	29	28.5
Messaging	95.2	95.5	95.7	95.5	95.2
Social media	95.7	95.8	95.2	95.2	94.9
Search	84.1	83.4	82.4	82.6	82.2
Shopping	59.7	58.2	57.1	56.1	55.8
Education	27.3	26.6	26.6	25.6	24.7

Table 3: The table shows the net income in \$ million for select U.S. technology companies

Quarters	Meta	Amazon	Microsoft	Apple
Q3 2022	4,395	2,872	17,556	20,721
Q2 2022	6,687	2,028	16,740	19,442
Q1 2022	7,465	3,844	16,728	25,010
Q4 2021	10,285	14,323	18,765	34,630
Q3 2021	9,194	3,156	20,505	20,551
Q2 2021	10,394	7,778	16,458	21,744
Q1 2021	9,497	8,107	15,457	23,630
Q4 2020	11,219	7,222	15,463	28,755
Q3 2020	7,846	6,331	13,893	12,673

Table continued...

Quarters	Meta	Amazon	Microsoft	Apple
Q2 2020	5,178	5,243	11,202	11,253
Q1 2020	4,902	2,535	10,752	11,249
Q4 2019	7,349	3,268	11,649	22,236
Q3 2019	6,091	2,134	10,678	13,686

Table 4: The table shows employee headcount of select U.S. technology companies * till 3rd quarter

Year	Meta	Amazon	Microsoft	Apple
2022	87,000	1,335,000*	2,21,000	1,64,000
2021	71,970	1,622,000	1,81,000	1,54,000
2020	58,604	1,298,000	1,63,000	1,47,000
2019	44,942	7,98,000	1,44,000	1,37,000
2018	35,587	6,47,500	1,31,000	
2017	25,105	3,41,400		

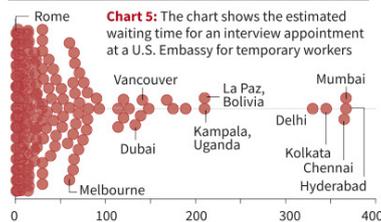


Table 6: The table shows the year-on-year change in employee count for select IT companies in India *sales/ support staff

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China warns U.S. not to interfere in its relations with India

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

China seeks to “prevent” tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) from pushing India “to partner more closely” with the U.S. and has warned American officials “not to interfere” with its relationship with India, the U.S. Department of Defence said in its latest report.

“Throughout the stand-off [which began in 2020], PRC [People’s Republic of China] officials sought to downplay the severity of the crisis, emphasising Beijing’s intent to preserve border stability and prevent the stand-off from harming other areas of its bilateral relationship with India,” the China military power report 2022, which was submitted to the U.S. Congress, said.

The report said that over the course of 2021, and as seen in 2022, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) increasingly turned to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) as “an instrument of statecraft in support of its national strategy and global ambitions”,

while also highlighting that the PLA had “adopted more dangerous, coercive and aggressive actions” in the Indo-Pacific region.

“Differing perceptions of border demarcations along the LAC combined with recent infrastructure construction, led to multiple unarmed clashes, an ongoing stand-off, and military build-ups on both sides of the India-China border,” it said.

Further, referring to the violent Galwan Valley clash of June 2020, which resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese personnel, the report said the Western Theatre Command conducted large-scale mobilisation and deployment of PLA forces. “Due to the sustained military development along the LAC, the Western Theatre Command’s deployment will likely continue through 2022,” it added. The report said that each country demanded the withdrawal of the other’s forces and a return to the pre-stand-off conditions, but neither China nor India agreed to the conditions.

Russian, Chinese bombers fly joint patrols over Pacific

Drills show increasingly close defence ties between the two countries; in September, Beijing had sent 2,000 troops for exercises with Russia

Associated Press

MOSCOW

Russian and Chinese strategic bombers on Wednesday flew a joint patrol over the western Pacific in a show of increasingly close defence ties between the two countries.

The Russian Defence Ministry said the Tu-95 bombers of the Russian Air Force and the Chinese H-6K bombers flew over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea during an eight-hour mission.

As part of the drills, the Russian bombers for the first time landed in China and the Chinese bombers flew to an air base in Russia, the Ministry said in a statement. It noted that the joint patrols weren't directed against any other country.

The exercise follows a series of joint drills intended to showcase a growing military cooperation between Moscow and Beijing



Show of strength: A Tu-95 strategic bomber of the Russian air force flies as part of a joint patrol over the Pacific. AP

as they both face tensions with the U.S.

In September, Beijing sent more than 2,000 troops along with more than 300 military vehicles, 21 combat aircraft and three warships to take part in a sweeping joint exercise with Russia. The manoeuvres marked the first time that China has sent forces from three branches of its military to take part in a single Russian drill, in what was described as a show of the breadth and

depth of China-Russia military cooperation and mutual trust.

Defence cooperation between Moscow and Beijing has grown stronger since Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his troops into Ukraine on February 24.

China has pointedly refused to criticise Russia's actions, blaming the U.S. and NATO for provoking Moscow, and has blasted the punishing sanctions imposed on Moscow.

The way Jallikattu is being held in Tamil Nadu might be cruel, says SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said the sport of Jallikattu as such now might not be brutal but the “form” in which it was being held in Tamil Nadu might be cruel.

A Constitution Bench led by Justice K.M. Joseph said the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act of 2017 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Con-

duct of Jallikattu) Rules of 2017 had laid down procedures to protect the bulls from brutality. Violation of these rules would attract penal action.

Justice Ajay Rastogi asked whether the act of Jallikattu, once the protective mechanism was in place, could be termed cruel. “Suppose Jallikattu is the only way traditionally for a poor man to get married to the local landlord’s daughter. He has to get at the trinkets on the

horns of the bull. This is a tradition which has been going for time immemorial... consider the cruelty shown to that young man?”, asked Justice Hrishikesh Roy. “It is not cruelty. It is just the deprivation of an opportunity for the young man to advance his position... Cruelty is to the animal who is forced without choice to be part of it,” senior advocate Shyam Divan responded.

Mr. Divan said it was not whether Jallikattu was per-

formed following a set of rules or not. He said the basic issue here was that Jallikattu was antithetical to the very nature and body structure of the bull, a bovine animal. He said it was cruelty pure to compel a frightened, choiceless animal to suffer pain.

Justice Rastogi said the court should confine itself to the rules and not ground realities. The senior advocate, however, responded that the court should also test the efficacy of the law.

Why constitutional validity of J&K Reorganisation Act clause went unchallenged: SC

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday quizzed petitioners about the reason for not challenging the constitutional validity of a specific provision in the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act which gives the Delimitation Commission the power to “carry out” the readjustment of constituencies in the Union Territory formed after the dilution of Article 370 in the erstwhile State.

A Bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and A.S. Oka said the petition filed by Srinagar residents Haji Abdul Gani Khan and Mohammad Ayub Mattoo was limited to a challenge of the notification issued by the Centre in March 2020 establishing the Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission and a second one in March 2021 extending its term for the purpose of conducting delimitation only for Jammu and Kashmir.

Justice Oka said the notifications drew their power specifically from Section



 Notifications issued by the Centre drew their power specifically from Section 62(2) of the J&K Reorganisation 2019 Act

JUSTICE A.S. OKA
Supreme Court

62(2) of the 2019 Act. Section 62(2) provides for the readjustment of constituencies to be carried out by the Delimitation Commission.

The court asked why the petitioners without challenging the source of the government’s notifications, that is Section 62(2), had confined their challenge solely to the notifications.

The petitioners, represented by senior advocate Ravi Shankar Jandhyala and advocates Sriram Parakkat and M.S. Vishnu Shankar, argued that only the Election Commission (EC), under Section 60 of the 2019 Act, was empowered to conduct the delimitation exercise. They further argued before the Bench that Article 170 of

the Constitution barred delimitation exercise on the basis of the 2011 census. It had to either happen on the basis of 2001 census or await “the first census after the year 2026”, they argued.

The petitioners alleged that Sections 60 and 61 of the 2019 Act, which defined the role of the EC in the process of delimitation, were in contradiction to Section 62.

The government has countered that there were two alternative mechanisms to carry out delimitation for J&K. By virtue of Sections 60-61, while the power to determine delimitation was conferred on the EC, Section 62(2) and 62(3) conferred powers to carry out delimitation on the Commission.

Unseemly conflict

Government's diatribe does not resolve conflict over judicial appointments

The Union government appears determined to turn its conflict with the judiciary over judicial appointments into something unseemly. The sources of friction are two-fold. One is the daily diatribe by Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, who appears to have been given an assignment to target the Collegium system with trenchant criticism of its known, but uncorrected flaws, and top it with unwarranted remarks such as asking the Court not to send any files, if it felt it was sitting on them. The second is the Government's strategy of delaying appointments recommended by the Collegium as a counterblast to its loss of primacy in the matter. A Supreme Court Bench, hearing a contempt petition against the Government for not approving names reiterated by the Collegium, has wondered whether the Government is not acting on the files because the Court did not permit the implementation of the National Judicial Appointments Commission. There will be many takers for Mr. Rijiju's central point that the collegium system is opaque. However, his adverse comments fail to hide the perception that the aim may be to delegitimise the Court. The Government is also violating the prevailing legal position that a recommendation reiterated by the Collegium, after due consideration of its objections, is binding on it.

It is not difficult to bring relations between the judiciary and the executive back on track, if only the two sides are willing to address each other's concerns. The Court has a valid point when it says the uncertainty over the fate of a recommendation for appointment is resulting in eminent lawyers withdrawing their consent or declining invitations to join the Bench. There are instances of the Government ignoring even two or three reiterations, and of the absence of any communication of objections or reservations, if any, that the Government may have about particular candidates. If the current trend continues, it is not difficult to conceive of a situation in which a major verdict that may go against the Government is portrayed by the political leadership as stemming from the hostility of the judiciary and not one on merits. One way of stopping further deterioration is for the Government to clear pending recommendations with due despatch. Another way is for the judiciary to begin or agree to a process of reforms in the way the Collegium functions, especially with regard to expanding the range of consultation and widen the zone of consideration so that the superior judiciary, and those it consults, are more diverse and representative of all sections. It is also not beyond the realm of possibility for the Government to bring about a new constitutional mechanism to make appointments without undermining judicial authority.

Towards a robust triumvirate

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court is examining a bunch of petitions recommending reforms in the process of appointment of members of the Election Commission. Their hearings have come not a moment too soon. It is hoped that the Bench will also examine electoral reforms suggested to governments by successive Election Commissions over the last two decades or so.

A list of over 20 reform proposals was compiled in 2004. More proposals were added to the list over time and are pending with government. These range from strengthening the Commission's inherent structure to handling the misuse of muscle and money power during elections, which violate the Model Code of Conduct.

The matter of appointments

This article deals with two issues. The first, under consideration, is whether Election Commissioners should be selected by the executive or by a collegium. The idea of a collegium is not new. The Dinesh Goswami Committee in 1990 suggested that the Chief Election Commissioner be appointed by the President (read: executive) in consultation with the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of the Opposition (and in case the Leader of the Opposition was not available, then consultation be held with the leader the largest opposition group in the Lok Sabha). It said this process should have statutory backing. Importantly, it applied the same criteria to the appointments of Election Commissioners, along with consultation with the Chief Election Commissioner.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, under Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, said that the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners should be appointed on the recommendation of a body



Navin Chawla

is former Chief Election Commissioner and author of 'Every Vote Counts: The Story of India's Elections'

Accepting reforms mooted by previous panels will strengthen the Election Commission's independence

comprising the Prime Minister, the Leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

The 255th Report of the Law Commission, chaired by Justice A.P. Shah, said the appointment of all the Election Commissioners should be made by the President in consultation with a three-member collegium consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition of the Lok Sabha (or the leader of the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha), and the Chief Justice of India. It also suggested measures to safeguard Election Commissioners from arbitrary removal, in a manner similar to what is accorded to the Chief Election Commissioner, who can only be removed by impeachment, which is by no means easy.

None of these recommendations gained traction in the governments to whom they were submitted.

Providing security

The second issue is to afford the same security from arbitrary removal to Election Commissioners that the Constitution affords to the Chief Election Commissioner. The Supreme Court lost an opportunity for reform in its judgment in the Sheshan case. It conferred equal powers on the Election Commissioners as those enjoyed by the Chief Election Commissioner (referring to the Chief Election Commissioner as *primus inter pares*, or first among equals) and even offered majority power, whereby any two can overrule even the Chief Election Commissioner. Yet, it did not afford the Election Commissioners the same constitutional protection (of removal by impeachment) as is accorded to the Chief Election Commissioner. It is hoped that the present Bench will examine this.

I was in the Commission from 2005 to 2010 – as Election

Commissioner for four years and as Chief Election Commissioner for 15 months – and oversaw the 2009 general election. It was only when I was appointed Chief Election Commissioner and enjoyed the full protection that the Constitution afforded to me that I addressed the Prime Minister of the time, recommending that the Election Commissioners be offered the same protection from arbitrary removal as enjoyed by the Chief from the day of appointment. Without this, they may hesitate to act independently, which they otherwise might if they were truly secure. In the absence of full constitutional security, an Election Commissioner could feel they must keep on the right side of the Chief Election Commissioner. They might also feel they should remain within the ambit favoured by the government. With such misgivings, an Election Commissioner can never be sure whether they will automatically be elevated to the top post because nowhere has elevation been statutorily decreed. I have known cases of Election Commissioners having to wait nervously till the last minute, uncertain of the announcement of their elevation to the top post. This is why the recommendations made by previous Commissions, if accepted, would go a long way in strengthening the independence of the Election Commission.

While the Chief Election Commissioner should be appointed by a collegium, this must apply equally to the Election Commissioners. The collegium should be wide based. Strengthened now by a broad-based selection by the top constitutional luminaries of the country, the Election Commission must now equally be protected from arbitrary removal by a constitutional amendment that would ensure a removal process that currently applies only to the Chief Election Commissioner. Without this, the Election Commission of India will not be a robust triumvirate.

An Indian recipe to quell micronutrient malnutrition

When it comes to nutrition, or more specifically micronutrient malnutrition, there is an urgent need to address the maladies that poor nutrition can inflict on the masses, especially given the diverse populations in India.

Malnutrition exacerbates the magnitude of the public health crises we face, and is India's most serious challenge and concern. As in National Family Health Survey-5 data, every second Indian woman is anaemic, every third child is stunted and malnourished, and every fifth child is wasted. According to an FAO Food Security Report for 2021, India ranks 101 out of 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2021, with a 15.3% undernourished population, the highest proportion of stunted children (30%), and wasted children (17.3%).

The picture the Global Nutrition Report 2021 paints is cause for concern, noting that stunting among children in India is significantly higher than the Asian average of 21.8%.

Since the 1920s, developed countries and high-income countries have successfully tackled the issue of malnutrition through food fortification. Of late, the low-and middle-income countries, such as India, have pursued food fortification as one of the strategies to tackle micronutrient malnutrition. Put simply, food fortification is the process of adding nutrients to food. For instance, rice and wheat are fortified with iron, folic acid and vitamin B₁₂, and salt fortified with iron and iodine. Iodised salt has been in use for the past few decades.

The rice programme and anaemia

Pilot projects on the distribution of fortified rice have been taken up in select States, including Maharashtra (Gadchiroli district) as part of a targeted Public Distribution programme for the



Sirimavo Nair

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Food fortification is a proven cost-effective and complementary strategy to address India's malnutrition burden

masses. The programme has been a success in terms of preventing cases of anaemia – from 58.9% to 29.5% – within a span of two years, prompting the central government to declare the scaling up of the distribution of fortified rice, the major staple diet of 65% of the population, through the existing platform of social safety nets such as the PDS, ICDS and PM-POSHAN.

Experiences from the different States on the fortified rice project, so far tally with the results of global programmes that use fortified food as a cost-effective strategy. The health benefits accruing from food fortification have made 80 countries to frame laws for the fortification of cereal flour, and 130 countries with iodised salt, where 13 countries have mandated rice fortification. The encouraging results of the pilot programme in Gadchiroli have prompted the proposed large-scale food fortification programme, which includes fortified rice in all safety net government schemes. The study found a promising reduction (29.5%) in the prevalence of anaemia among women, adolescent girls, and children put together in Gadchiroli district.

Noon meal scheme in Gujarat

In Gujarat, an eight-month long study on multiple micronutrient fortified rice intervention for schoolchildren (six-12 years) in 2018-2019, as part of the Midday Meal Scheme, found increased haemoglobin concentration, 10% reduction in anaemia prevalence, and, more importantly, improved average cognitive scores (by 11.3%).

Iron deficiency anaemia is a major public health concern, because it is responsible for 3.6% of disability-adjusted life years or DALYs (years of life lost due to premature mortality and years lived with disability) according to the World Health Organization (WHO) – i.e., a loss of 47 million DALYs, or years of healthy life lost due to

illness, disability, or premature death (2016).

According to NITI Aayog (based on WHO meta-analysis on the impact of rice fortification), a rice fortification budget of around ₹2,800 crore per year can save 35% of the total or 16.6 million DALYs per year with no known risk of toxicity. In India, the cost of one DALY lost due to iron deficiency anaemia (IDA) is approximately ₹30,000, while the cost of averting an IDA-related DALY is only ₹1,545, resulting in a cost-benefit ratio of 1:18. Rice fortification, which costs less than 1% of the food subsidy bill (2018-19), has the potential to prevent 94.1 million anaemia cases, saving ₹8,098 crore over a five-year period.

Need for precautions

Despite the programme's proven efficacy, activists have expressed concern that excess iron overload from fortified rice has been dangerous for Jharkhand's tribal population suffering from sickle cell anaemia and thalassaemia. Iron levels in fortified rice range from 28 mg to 42.5 mg, folic acid levels from 75 mcg-125 mcg, and vitamin B₁₂ levels from 0.75 mcg to 1.2 mcg (FSSAI standards). Considering the per capita intake, in a family of three members with a rice consumption of approximately 60 grams per person, the additional intake is 2.45 mg of iron. This in fact compensates our daily losses of iron from the body, which is 1 mg-2 mg per day.

Food fortification, according to stalwarts of nutrition, is a cost-effective complementary strategy to address multiple micronutrient deficiencies. Thus, given its proven efficacy and cost-effectiveness, food fortification can help us in reducing micronutrient deficiencies and address overall health benefits. The intervention, carried out with precautions, is the key to the malnutrition issue which the nation continues to grapple with.

Fiscal deficit touches 45.6% of full-year Budget target

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The government's fiscal deficit in end-October touched 45.6% of the full-year Budget Estimate, according to data released by the Controller General of Accounts on Wednesday.

This compares with 36.3% seen a year earlier.

For FY23, the fiscal deficit of the government is estimated to be ₹16.61 lakh crore or 6.4% of the GDP.

Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA, said the 14% contraction in non-tax revenues, combined with the 10% rise in revenue expenditure, and the robust 62% expansion in capex, widened fiscal deficit to ₹7.6 lakh crore from ₹5.5 lakh crore seen a year earlier.



MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	%CHANGE
Sensex	63,100	0.67
US Dollar	81.30	0.51
Gold	53,300	0.87
Brent oil	85.3	-0.22

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	3917.90	39.50
Adani Ports	881.00	2.80
Apollo Hosp	4726.40	7.20
Asian Paints	3175.15	40.10
Axis Bank	901.25	8.70
Bajaj Auto	3750.70	90.60
Bajaj Finserv	1626.50	-5.50
Bajaj Finance	6720.95	-13.20
Bharti Airtel	848.75	12.90
BPCL	341.15	2.10
Britannia Ind	4362.30	76.95
Cipla	1139.65	18.50
Coal India	227.25	0.05
Divis Lab	3404.70	32.00
Dr Reddys Lab	4487.15	33.80
Eicher Motors	3484.50	68.40
Grasim Ind	1759.75	40.60
HCL Tech	1120.80	-8.15
HDFC	2692.55	27.30
HDFC Bank	1608.45	10.60
HDFC Life	590.60	5.75
Hero MotoCorp	2851.90	23.65
Mindtree	450.70	14.75

GDP growth dips to 6.3% as manufacturing slides

Chief Economic Adviser Nageswaran says nation's recovery from pandemic continues; economy growing faster than in other countries and is on track for a 6.8%-7% expansion in this fiscal year

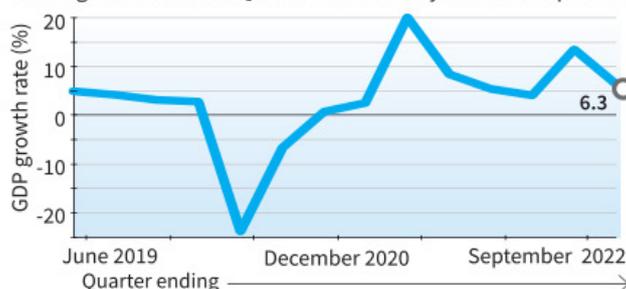
Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Manufacturing and mining output contracted year-on-year in the July-September quarter, dragging Gross Value Added growth to a slower-than-expected 5.6%, which together with high inflation and weak exports combined to slow overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth to a 6.3% pace, as per estimates released by the National Statistical Office.

At a little over ₹75 lakh crore, India's GDP in the first half of 2022-23 was 5.7% larger than the comparable pre-COVID level. The April to June quarter of this fiscal had witnessed GDP growth of 13.5%, with GVA expanding 12.7%.

Growth decelerates

India's GDP grew by 6.3% during the July-September quarter, slowing from 13.5% in Q1 and 8.4% in the year-earlier quarter



While growth in agriculture GVA quickened to 4.6% in the second quarter, from 4.5% in the preceding three months, manufacturing and mining GVA contracted 4.3% and 2.8%, respectively, in Q2 compared with a year earlier. For the first half of 2022-23, the Indian economy recorded 9.7% growth

in GDP, compared with 13.7% in the same period last year, while GVA rose 9%, compared with its 12.8% surge.

Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran said the data confirms that the economy's recovery from the pandemic continues and is on track to clock between 6.8% to 7%

real GDP growth this year.

Among GVA components, the sharpest growth in Q2 was reported by the contact-intensive trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting segment which surged 14.7%.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

GDP growth dips to 6.3% as manufacturing slides

This was followed by financial, real estate and professional services, which expanded 7.2%, and construction which grew 6.6%.

“India’s growth rates in real terms of 9.7% in the first half of this year is well above the trend in other countries and is happening amid tightening global financial conditions and the commodity price shock since the Ukraine invasion by Russia,” the CEA emphasised, adding that moderation in growth rates is expected due to base effects. Barring consumer durables, production levels are well above pre-pandemic levels for most sectors, while in services, all but domestic air passenger traffic levels have reverted to 2019-20 trends, Mr. Nageswaran said.

India's core sector growth braked to 0.1% in October

Natural gas output shrank for a fourth straight month, contracting 4.2%; cement production contracted 4.3% from a year earlier and was also 2.4% below the level of output in September

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India's eight core sectors' output growth virtually ground to a halt in October, slowing sharply to just 0.1%, from 7.8% in September, with cement and refinery products slipping into contraction and electricity generation rising a mere 0.4%.

Economists reckoned October saw the weakest core sector performance since February 2021, partly driven by base effects. Steel output rose 4% in October, reflecting the slowest growth since July, while coal and fertilizer produc-

Weakening core

Economists term performance as weakest since February 2021



- Steel output rose 4% in October, reflecting the slowest growth since July

- Cement output shrank 4.3% from the year-earlier period

- Coal, fertilizers, cement and electricity had clocked double-digit output growth in September 2022

tion grew 3.6% and 5.4%, respectively.

Cement production shrank 4.3% from the year-earlier period and was also 2.4% below the September 2022 output. Coal, fertiliz-

ers, cement and electricity had clocked double-digit growth in September.

The Index of Core Industries, which constitutes about 40% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP),

was unchanged month-on-month at 138, signalling a flat sequential trend.

Natural gas output shrank for the fourth successive month, by 4.2%, the sharpest decline in at least 12 months. Crude oil output dipped for the fifth month in a row, but the contraction was the smallest in four months at 2.2%.

While the data signal weakening activity, last October's high base of 8.7% growth also had a role, said Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis.

"The performance... does not signal a strong recovery in the months to come," he added.

New digital lending norms kick in today

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank's modified guidelines on digital lending for customers who had taken loans prior to September 2 will come into force from Thursday. The guidelines seek to protect customers from unethical loan recovery practices.

In order to ensure a smooth transition, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had given time till November 30 to Regulated Entities (REs) to put in place adequate systems and processes to ensure compliance of the guidelines for digital loans sanctioned before September 2.

As per an RBI circular, the digital loan providers were required to comply with the modified norms for all new loans from September 2. Under the new norms, all loan disbursements and repayments are required to be executed only between the bank accounts of the borrower and regulated entities (such as banks and NBFCs) without any pass-through / pool account of the Lending Service Providers (LSPs).

"Any fees, charges, etc, payable to LSPs in the credit intermediation process shall be paid directly by RE and not by the borrower", the RBI said while conveying the regulatory stance.

Panel moots gas pricing freedom from 2026

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

A government-appointed gas price review panel led by Kirit Parikh on Wednesday, submitted its report to the government, recommending a floor and ceiling price for legacy fields and complete pricing freedom starting January 1, 2026.

Currently, fields in deep sea or in high-temperature, high-pressure zones are governed by a different formula that includes an element of imported LNG cost, but the same is also subject to a ceiling.

“Such producers have marketing and pricing freedom which is constrained

The Kirit Parikh panel also suggested including natural gas in the one-nation one-tax GST regime

by an upper bound fixed by the government. We have suggested continuing with the cap for 3 years and giving total pricing freedom from Jan. 1, 2026, removing the cap,” he said.

The panel also suggested including natural gas in the one-nation one-tax regime of GST by subsuming excise duty charged by the Centre and varying rates of VAT levied by State governments.

Sitharaman sees govt. capital spending spurring growth

Reuters

NEW DELHI

India plans to sustain its high growth rate through more government capital spending but will also focus on health and education next year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the Reuters NEXT conference on Wednesday.

Ms. Sitharaman was speaking amid consultations for the next Budget, which is scheduled for February 1. It will be the last full Budget before national elections in 2024.

“We would continue to push capital expenditure, and that I’m saying even as I’m preparing for the next

Budget,” she said.

“We are well on course on meeting this year’s target. The States have shown extraordinary absorption capacity for taking the monies and spending on capital assets.”

The Centre sees the “capital expenditure route as one of those which can guarantee good growth,” she said. India has budgeted capital spending of ₹7.5 trillion for the current fiscal year, which ends on March 31.

Ms. Sitharaman said she looked forward to “a very good ... growing Indian economy this year and the next”. She was speaking ahead of the publication of

July-September growth data, which showed the economy growing 6.3% on an annual basis.

Rupee to stabilise

Ms. Sitharaman said the government was comfortable with the country’s current foreign exchange reserves but believed that the rupee would stabilise without much intervention from the central bank.

The private sector is starting to raise investments, she said, which augurs well for the economy that is projected to grow at 7% this fiscal year, despite many other economies suffering because of the Russia-Ukraine war.

SC worried over effect of GM crops on livelihood of women farm labourers

Petitions challenge environmental nod given to GM mustard; petitioner says widespread use of herbicide-tolerant crops will encourage farmers to spray chemical weed-killers, leaving large amounts of toxic chemical residue on the crops

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed concern about the plight of thousands of women agricultural labourers in rural areas traditionally engaged in de-weeding as they would be part of the human cost if the government permitted the commercial cultivation of herbicide-tolerant crops such as GM mustard.

"In rural areas, women are experts in removing weeds. They are a part of the labour force in agriculture in India. It brings them employment... You know it is because women started agriculture that humankind stopped being nomads and we saw the sprouting of civilisations," Justice B.V. Nagarathna observed orally while hearing challenges against the environmental clearance given to genetically modified mustard by the Centre.



Crucial factor: Women working on a mustard field in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. CH. VIJAYA BHASKAR

Justice Dinesh Maheshwari, the lead judge on the Bench, agreed that women were an integral part of the Indian agricultural landscape from paddy fields to tea estates, across the country.

"They work in knee-deep water in the fields, bending the whole day and working," Justice Nagarathna said.

Senior advocate Sanjay Parikh, for a petitioner, said the widespread use of herbicide-tolerant crops would encourage farmers to spray chemical weed-

killers, leaving toxic chemical residue in large amounts on the crops.

'Not meant for India'

"The Supreme Court's own Technical Expert Committee [TEC] had said that these GM crops were not meant for agriculture in the Indian context. They may be suitable in the western context where there are large farms, but not here," Mr. Parikh argued.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, for activist Aruna Rodrigues, submitted that

India had 5,477 varieties of mustard, which would be at risk. He argued that the regulatory system under the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), which cleared the environmental release of Dhara Mustard Hybrid-II (DMH-II), a genetically engineered variant of mustard, was "horrendous" and riddled with conflict of interest.

Mr. Bhushan said the Department of Biotechnology had funded DMH II and then was part of the regulatory mechanism. The environmental release of the hybrid mustard variety was cleared despite warnings from the parliamentary committee and the Supreme Court's Technical Expert Committee report calling for its ban. Besides, the government had not placed the biosafety dossier on the GM crop in the public domain.

He said the Supreme Court-appointed member

of the GEAC, Pushpa M. Bhargava, had said the commercial cultivation of GM mustard would open the door wide, for multinational corporations.

He said GM mustard, if approved for commercial cultivation, would be the first genetically modified food crop available to Indian farmers. He recalled how Bt Brinjal was withdrawn by the government years ago after the regulatory system was found riddled with inconsistencies.

"Hybrid crops should not be released in the open fields and allowed to contaminate other crops... It would trigger a chain reaction which would be irreversible," he said.

Mr. Bhushan said the testing of the GM crop was "completely flawed". There were no labs capable of doing bio-safety tests.

The Attorney-General will argue on behalf of the government on Thursday.

SC seeks Centre's response on evolving a programme to protect Great Indian Bustard

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought the government's response about evolving a "Project Great Indian Bustard" conservation programme like the Project Tiger to bring attention to the peril faced by the critically endangered bird.

Project Tiger is touted by the government as one of the most successful conservation programmes for a single species in the world.

"Can we not have a focussed approach by the Environment Ministry involving something like Project Tiger? Take instructions on it. Have a word with the Minister and come back to us on it," Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud addressed Attorney-General R. Venkataramani and Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the government. The court is hearing a series of petitions highlighting the numerous



The court is hearing petitions highlighting the numerous deaths of Great Indian Bustards in Gujarat and Rajasthan. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

deaths of Great Indian Bustards due to power transmission lines criss-crossing their habitat in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Expert panel

In its order, the Special Bench, including Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian, directed the Chief Secretaries of Gujarat and Rajasthan to undertake and complete a comprehensive exercise within four weeks to find out the total length of the transmission lines in question and the number of bird diverters required in the priority areas of the birds' habitats.

The court was not, however, for the time being, ready to agree with the Centre's plea to expand its expert committee formed in April 2022 to study the problem.

The government wanted the court to allow the Additional Secretary of the Renewable Energy Ministry and the Chief Operating Officer of Central Transmission Utility of India Ltd. to join the committee as domain experts on transmission lines. Instead, the Bench said the expert committee was free to consult the firm's officer for his expert opinion for now.

160-200 mn Indians could be exposed to lethal heat waves annually: World Bank report

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

From 2030, 160 million to 200 million people can be exposed to lethal heat-waves in India every year, and nearly 34 million Indians will face job losses due to heat stress-related productivity decline. By 2037, the demand for cooling is likely to be eight times more than the current level, the World Bank has said in a report.

In this scenario, it is imperative for India to deploy alternative and innovative energy efficient technologies for keeping spaces cool. According to the report, “Climate investment opportunities in India’s cooling sector”, this could open an investment opportunity of \$1.6 trillion by 2040, besides reducing greenhouse gas emissions significantly and creating 3.7 million jobs.

With the demand for cooling shooting up, there will be a demand for a new air-conditioner every 15 seconds, the report said,



India’s cooling strategy can help save lives and livelihoods, reduce carbon emissions and position it as a global hub for green cooling manufacturing

AUGUSTE TANO KOUAMÉ
World Bank’s Country Director

leading to an expected rise of 435% in annual greenhouse gas emissions over the next two decades. Thus, there is a need to shift to a more energy-efficient pathway which could lead to a reduction in expected CO2 levels.

The report proposes a road map to support New Delhi’s India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP), 2019, through new investments in three major sectors: building construction, cold chains and refrigerants.

Adopting climate-responsive cooling techniques as a norm in both private and government-funded

constructions can ensure that those at the bottom of the economic ladder are not disproportionately affected by rising temperatures. The report suggests that India’s affordable housing programme for the poor, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), can adopt such changes on scale.

It proposed enacting a policy for “district cooling”, which could lead to the consumption of 20-30% less power than the most efficient conventional cooling solutions. District cooling technologies generate chilled water in a central plant which is then distributed to buildings via underground insulated pipes. This brings down the cost for providing cooling to individual buildings. Apart from this, guidelines for implementation of local and city-wide urban cooling measures such as cool-roofs should also be considered. “India’s cooling strategy can help save lives and livelihoods and reduce carbon emissions.

Are ransomware attacks increasing in India?

What happened at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences? How does a ransomware infect a computer? How many organisations in India are working toward cyber-crime responses and prevention?

Devesh K. Pandey
Arnabjit Sur

The story so far:

On November 23, e-services at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) were crippled by what is being suspected to be a ransomware attack. The Delhi Police's Intelligence Fusion & Strategic Operations have registered a case and launched investigations to identify the perpetrators, while cyber security experts are employing software tools for data recovery. They have been able to retrieve a significant number of files. However, pending sanitisation of the entire network and its nodes, all hospital services are currently being executed manually. AIIMS has a Local Area Network comprising more than 6,500 computers supporting the institute, its hospital, centres and

other departments. While a probe is underway to determine if essential safety protocols were in place, measures are being taken to thwart any such attack in the future.

What is ransomware?

Ransomware is a type of malicious software, used by cyber criminals, to infect a computer system by blocking access to the stored data by encrypting the files. A ransom is then demanded from the owner in exchange for the decryption key.

While it is not yet clear as to how exactly the AIIMS computer systems were targeted, the malware may usually be injected remotely by tricking the user into downloading it upon clicking an ostensibly safe web link sent via email or other means, including hacking. It can spread throughout the network by

exploiting existing vulnerabilities. Ransomware attacks can also be accompanied by theft of sensitive data for other sinister motives.

How serious are ransomware attacks?

Preliminary findings by cyber experts have indicated that at least five of the AIIMS' servers that hosted data related to more than three crore patients were compromised. In India, several cases of ransomware attacks targeting commercial and critical infrastructure have been reported in the recent past. In May, Spicejet had faced such a threat, while Public Sector Undertaking Oil India was targeted on April 10. Cybersecurity firm Trellix, in its third-quarter global report, has identified 25 major ransomwares in circulation. According to the Interpol's first-ever Global Crime Trend report presented at its 90th General Assembly

meeting in Delhi this October, ransomware was the second highest-ranking threat after money laundering, at 66%. It is also expected to increase the most (72%).

Which agencies in India deal with cyber-attacks?

Set up in 2004, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is the national nodal agency that collects, analyses and circulates inputs on cyber-attacks; issues guidelines, advisories for preventive measures, forecasts and issues alerts; and takes measures to handle any significant cyber security event. It also imparts training to computer system managers. The National Cyber Security Coordinator, under the National Security Council Secretariat, coordinates with different agencies at the national level on cybersecurity issues, while the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre has been set up for the protection of national critical information infrastructure. According to the government, the Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre) has been launched for detection of malicious software programmes and to provide free tools to remove the same, while the National Cyber Coordination Centre works on creating awareness about existing and potential threats.

THE GIST

On November 23, e-services at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) were crippled by what is being suspected to be a ransomware attack.

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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.