

### NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Call it the triumph of soft power or Stimulus Maitri, one South Asian country is silently thankful to Indians' indefatigable wanderlust that has lifted its recovery prospects from the pandemic's disastrous aftermath, even as the Chinese have gone virtually missing in action. After COVID19 hammered a 33.2% contraction on the Maldives' tourism dependent economy in 2020, the country's growth prospects for this calendar year have seen the biggest upgrades from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) — at least five percentage points — thanks to Indian hodophiles. Last week, the World Bank raised its 2021 growth projection for the Maldives from 17.1% to 22.3%. The ADB had pegged 2020's GDP fall for the Maldives at 32% and expected it to rebound with a 13% uptick this year, but has now raised growth hopes to 18%.

The Union Government will take a final decision on vaccinating children and adolescents against COVID19 on the basis of overall scientific rationale as well as the supply situation of vaccines available for those below the age of 18, COVID Task Force chief V.K. Paul said on Sunday. Mr. Paul, who has been playing a key role in the Government's efforts in the fight against the COVID19 pandemic, said that though infections were coming down and the second wave was subsiding, it would not be fair now to say that the worst was over since many countries had seen more than two waves.

The Tamil Nadu police have issued an alert on the possibility of an attack on fishermen crossing the Internal Maritime Boundary Line for fishing in Sri Lankan waters. Law-enforcing agencies along the coastal districts have been advised to sensitise the fishing community to the risks in the backdrop of simmering differences between fishermen from India and Sri Lanka over the catching of fish in the Katchatheevu area.

The 17th edition of the India-U.S. bilateral exercise, Yudh Abhyas 2021, got under way at the Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, Alaska, U.S., with the two sides set to hone their skills in counterterror operations in mountainous terrain and cold climate conditions. Interestingly, this is the only India-U.S. service exercise continuing in

### BUILDING WATER CONSERVATION

### SECURITY-GROUNDWATER

**1.A key focus of water security in India has to be rational groundwater use, replenishment and conservation. How is the present groundwater usage scenario? Groundwater Resource Estimation Committee's report (from 2015) - 1,071 out of 6,607 blocks in the country are over-exploited. This is likely to have worsened over the years. India's groundwater usage exceeds that of China and the US combined. More than a third of the country's population lives in water-stressed areas, and this number is expected to shoot up. Per capita water availability in the country had fallen to just under a third of 1950 levels by 2011; projected to fall to a fourth in the next 20 years.**

**2.What are the key factors for the decline?** Rising population Increasing unsustainable use of groundwater Rapid rise in tubewell-irrigation Increase in the acreage under water-guzzling crops like sugarcane and paddy due to flawed policies like MSP-led public procurement and government fixing cane prices Agriculture accounts for 78% of all freshwater used annually in the country; 64% of this coming from groundwater.

**3.What are the present policy shortfalls?** The Atal Bahuja Yojana (ABY), by the Jal Shakti Ministry, is the flagship conservation programme. But the model proposed could take decades to get implemented across the country, but there is a need for immediate results. The expenditure against the targets under the scheme, as also the release of funds, has been alarmingly low for the past as well as the present year.

**4.What are the favourable policies?** National Water Policy 2020 Contains specific strategies and deadlines Gives the highest priority to groundwater governance and management through a Participatory Groundwater Management (PGWM) approach. 2018 PM-AASHA (Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan) Proposes up to 40% procurement of crops that are not as water-intensive (millets, nutri-cereals) if these are successfully integrated into the PDS.

**5.What is to be done?** Stop encouraging cultivation of water-intensive crops (via MSP-led procurement, SAP/FRPs). Take up crop diversification Attention to pricing of water, and timely data on usage/availability/depletion, etc. Centre and the states must act rapidly on groundwater conservation if Jal Se Jeevan and other flagship water-access programmes are to be a success.

### RISE IN CIVILIANS DEATH IN J&K

**1.**There is an increase in the number of deaths of civilians recently, including those of the minority community after terror attacks in J&K. What is the recent happening? The dissent in the Valley with the recent administrative and political measures is being exploited to trigger communal discord and violence. The recent attacks are carried out allegedly by a shadowy force calling itself The Resistance Front (TRF), termed by security forces as being set up by the LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba). The attacks are a major setback when the number of violent incidents in the Kashmir Valley was the lowest in 5 years.

**2.What is the impact?** Pushed the Valley's minority Hindu and Sikh communities into a state of fear. Many Kashmiri Pandit and Sikh employees abstained from work or took leave temporarily, worried about their security. Reminds the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits due to terror attacks in the early 1990s.

**3.What does this call for?** A reassurance of security from the Government for members of the minority communities such as the Pandits and the Sikhs. A commitment for solidarity with the victims from the various political forces and civil society. Initiatives by the civil society to foster communal amity and to mobilise people across communities against hatred.

**4.What lies ahead?** While the above are temporary responses, the dissatisfaction over the abrogation of J&K's special status, its bifurcation and designation as a UT continues. Immediate renewal of political dialogue to address this concern as well as the resumption of political and press freedoms is essential for long-standing peace.

bilateral format. The India-U.S. Malabar naval exercise became trilateral with the addition of Japan in 2015 and further brought in all the Quad partners together with the inclusion of Australia in 2020. Similarly, Japan joined the India-U.S. bilateral air exercise, Cope India, as an observer in 2018 and the plan is to make it trilateral in phases. India and the U.S. also hold a triservice exercise.

The value of a key indicator used in the Global Hunger Index is 'inflated' as only 3.9% of the anganwadi children were found to be undernourished, the Union Government said. "The realtime data of beneficiaries registered on the Anganwadi platform include 7.79 crore children aged between 6 months to 6 years as per realtime Poshan Tracker data [as on 16/10/2021]. Corresponding number of undernourished children reported on Poshan Tracker is 30.27 lakh which comes to only 3.9%," according to a reply from the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Over four crore unorganised sector workers had been registered on the eShram portal in under two months of its launch, Labour and Employment Minister Bhupender Yadav said on October 17. Marking the milestone, the Minister said in a tweet that once registered on the portal, the unorganised workers would be able to access the benefits of various welfare schemes easily. The portal was launched on August 26 with the aim of creating a national database of unorganised workers. As on October 17 morning, the portal (eshram.gov.in), showed 4.15 crore registrations.

China's military has carried out its first ever test of a "nuclear capable hypersonic missile", according to a report on October 17. The missile in August "circled the globe before speeding towards its target, demonstrating an advanced space capability that caught U.S. intelligence by surprise".

Iran is to resume nuclear negotiations with world powers on October 21 that were suspended in June, an Iranian lawmaker said on Sunday after a meeting with Foreign Minister Hossein AmirAbdollahian. The Minister said that "talks with the 4+1 Group will restart on Thursday in Brussels", Ahmad Alirezabeigui told after a closed-door session with AmirAbdollahian. The lawmaker was referring to four UN Security Council permanent members — Britain, China, France and Russia — along with Germany.

The Saudi-led military coalition supporting Yemen's government said on Sunday it had killed at least 165

## POLITICAL STORM OVER EXTENSION OF BSF'S JURISDICTION

1. The recent notification of Ministry of Home Affairs extending the jurisdiction of BSF along the international borders in three states has led to a fresh round of controversy involving the Centre and states. As stated by Sir Ivor Jennings, "India has a federation with a strong centralising tendency".

2. **What is BSF?** Border Security Force (BSF) is a specialized centrally controlled force to man the International Border with Pakistan. It is one of the five Central Armed Police Forces of the Union of India and is under the administrative control of Ministry of Home Affairs. Based on the recommendations of the Committee of Secretaries in the wake of the 1965 War, BSF came into existence on 01st Dec 1965. BSF has been termed as the First Line of Defence of Indian Territories. BSF is deployed at various integrated checkpoints of borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh and is handling the security issues in the famous Kartarpur Corridor.

3. **What is the role of BSF?** Peace time Promote a sense of security among the people living in the border areas. Prevent trans-border crimes, unauthorized entry into or exit from the territory of India. Prevent smuggling and any other illegal activity.

4. **War time Holding ground in less threatened sectors so long as the main attack does not develop in a particular sector Protection of vital installations particularly air-fields against enemy commandos/Para troopers or raids.** Limited aggressive action against Para military or irregular forces of the enemy within the overall plan of the Armed forces. Performing special tasks connected with intelligence including raids. Acting as guides in an area of responsibility where routes are known. Maintenance of law and order in enemy territory administered under the control of the Army. Guarding of prisoners of war cages. Assistance in control of refugees. Anti-infiltration duties in specified area.

5. **What is the need for revision of jurisdiction?** Punjab -The threat perception from across the international borders has undergone a sea change in the context of recent developments in the Af-Pak region. Radical groups of different shades are attempting to destabilise Punjab where there have been several attempts to drop weapons from drones. The seizure of 3,000 kg of heroin that originated from Afghanistan and the killing of five army personnel in Surankote (Jammu and Kashmir) are the recent ones.

6. **There have been probabilities for Pakistan-sponsored terrorist groups, particularly the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad to renew their onslaught in the border states. West Bengal - Illegal migrants have caused a democratic change in West Bengal.** Assam - Assam faces multiple problems of ethnic insurgencies, smuggling, counterfeit currency, drug trafficking, etc. The effectiveness of State police force against the emerging trans-border threats is under suspicion. Hence, the Government of India decided to extend the jurisdiction of the BSF in three states.

## AIDING AFGHANS

1. The Prime Minister has called for the international community to provide Afghanistan with immediate and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance. **What is the current crisis in Afghanistan?** In Afghanistan, banks are running out of money, civil servants have not been paid and food prices have soared, leaving millions at risk of severe hunger. The country is struggling with drought and severe poverty following the decades of war. The U.S. has frozen the reserves of Afghanistan making the situation vulnerable. The Taliban government's refusal to allow women to work and stopping girls from schooling have complicated the issue.

2. **What does UNHCR report say?** UNHCR has published a report that states that half the population in Afghanistan (more than 20 million people) are in need of lifesaving humanitarian assistance. An estimated 270,000 Afghans have been newly displaced inside the country since January 2021. The number of civilian casualties has risen 29 per cent during the first quarter of this year compared to 2020. The UN has received only 35% of the funds needed for its relief operations.

3. **How can the situation be eased?** EU has already committed \$1.15 billion for Afghanistan and neighbouring countries where refugees have fled. The U.S. and China pledged \$1.1 billion at a donor conference in Geneva last month. G20 leaders have also

**Huothi rebels in strikes south of Marib, as the battle for the strategic city rages. The strikes “destroyed 10 military vehicles and killed more than 165” rebels in the past 24 hours in the Abdiya district.**

**Japan's PM Fumio Kishida said the planned mass disposal of wastewater stored at the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant cannot be delayed, despite concerns from locals and neighbouring countries.**

pledged to help for Afghan humanitarian crisis at special summit. Maintaining links with terror groups including those that target India leaves little space for government to increase its engagement or to send aid directly to the new regime. Coordinating with the Taliban did not mean recognising their administration and hence India could contribute to international agencies that are working with displaced Afghans.

4.The government could also consider liberalising its visa regime for Afghans. As a goodwill gesture, India could send food aid, including wheat, grain, fortified biscuits and other packaged food directly to Kabul. Regional leader like India have to play a key role in unfolding the humanitarian crisis because not only Afghans but also the rest of the world will pay a heavy price.