

2024_10_17 DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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India, Pak. avoid blaming each other at SCO meet

Jaishankar and his counterpart Ishaq Dar interact 'informally' during the first visit by an Indian Foreign Minister to Pakistan in nine years; atmosphere of exchanges more positive than in previous encounters; Jaishankar refers to cross-border terror, but in terms of SCO's 2001 charter; Pakistan PM makes no references to the Kashmir dispute

GS Paper II: SCO
Suhasini Haidar
ISLAMABAD

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar held an "informal interaction" at the conclusion lunch for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government meeting in Islamabad on Wednesday.

Officials confirmed the interaction even as a short video clip that appeared online showed the Ministers of the two countries speaking at a table seated next to each other.

The lunch was hosted by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif who chaired the SCO session where, unlike on past occasions, both India's and Pakistan's national statements avoided contentious language on sensitive issues.

According to sources, Mr. Jaishankar had also

held a brief discussion with Mr. Dar at the SCO dinner on Tuesday evening as well, where they were joined by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, who is also Chairperson of the Pakistan Cricket Board. Pakistan has been keen to host the Indian team as part of the Champions Trophy due to be held in Pakistan in early 2025, but the Board of Control for Cricket in India has not confirmed their participation.

Normal discourse

Officials stressed that the conversation was part of normal diplomatic discourse, given that Mr. Jaishankar was attending the lunch along with dignitaries from all 10 SCO nations including Russia, China, Iran, Belarus, and the central Asian states, and that "all leaders talked to each other during lunch and in the waiting lounge".

The exchange reflected a much warmer note than



Key meeting: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Wednesday. PTI

similar previous encounters, including at the SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Goa in 2023, and the UN General Assembly meet last month.

Leaving Islamabad at the end of what had been the first visit by an Indian External Affairs Minister to Pakistan in nine years, Mr. Jaishankar thanked Mr. Sharif and Mr. Dar, commending them for a "productive" meet.

"A productive meeting

is the world's largest such regional group.

"If trust is lacking or cooperation inadequate, if friendship has fallen short and good neighbourliness is missing somewhere, there are surely reasons to introspect and causing to address," he said. Pointing to India's concerns over China's Belt and Road Initiative, he said that cooperation on trade, investment, connectivity, and energy flows must respect territorial integrity and sovereignty issues.

Mr. Jaishankar referred to cross-border terrorism, but in terms of the SCO's 2001 charter's phrasing of the "three evils" in the region: terrorism, separatism, extremism.

"If activities across borders are characterised by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows, connectivity, and people-to-people exchanges in parallel," Mr.

Jaishankar said in his statement at Wednesday morning's plenary session, avoiding specific Indian concerns over terror-financing, "justifications for terrorism", and other points referring to Pakistan that he has raised in previous SCO meetings.

Mr. Sharif made no references to the Kashmir dispute in his speech, a departure from his own speech at the UN General Assembly on September 27, where he had likened India's actions in Kashmir to Israel's "colonial settler's project" in Palestine.

In 2023, then-Pakistan FM Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had also raised the dispute, mentioning SCO States that "violated UN Security Council Resolutions" in a "unilateral and illegal" manner – a reference to the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 – and saying they should refrain from "weaponising terrorism for diplomatic

point scoring".

Wednesday's exchanges, and the lack of negative comments during the event, were hailed by the Pakistani hosts, who said the SCO summit – that resulted in eight signed documents – had been successful.

"I think there's a lot of positivity around the SCO in Islamabad. I think things have gone positively, and Mr. Jaishankar was received by Prime Minister [Sharif] at the events," Pakistani Information Minister Ataullah Tarar told *The Hindu*.

When asked about whether the positivity could translate from the multilateral event to bilateral ties between India and Pakistan, he said that "there is a lot in the past [of the relationship] between the two countries", adding that any new India-Pakistan initiatives in the future would be based "purely on reciprocity".

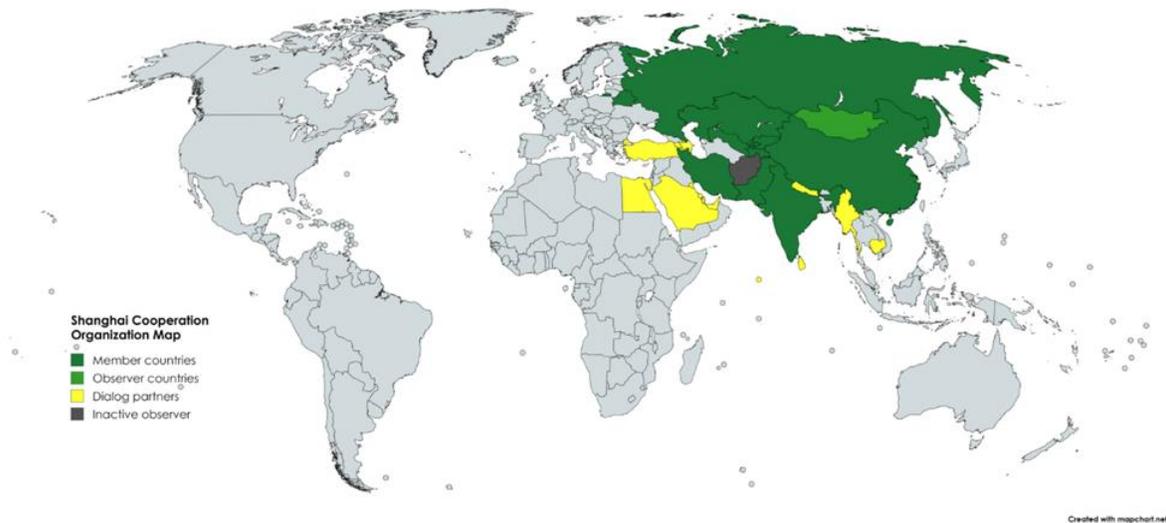
India, Pak. avoid blaming each other at SCO meet (17 October)

Jaishankar and his counterpart Ishaq Dar interact 'informally' during the first visit by an Indian Foreign Minister to Pakistan in nine years; atmosphere of exchanges more positive than in previous encounters; Jaishankar refers to cross-border terror, but in terms of SCO's 2001 charter; Pakistan PM makes no references to the Kashmir dispute

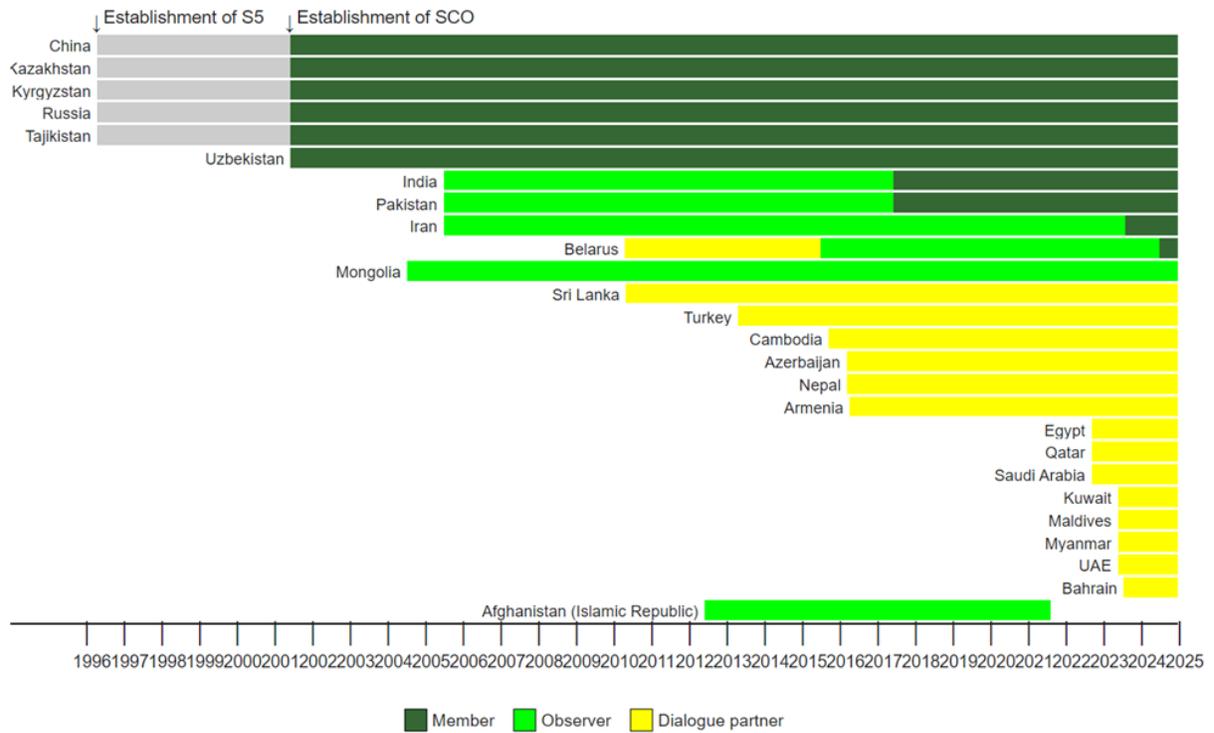
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar had an informal interaction at a luncheon for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government meeting in Islamabad on Wednesday.
- Officials confirmed the interaction, supported by a video clip showing the ministers seated next to each other.

- The lunch was hosted by Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who chaired the SCO session; both India’s and Pakistan’s national statements avoided contentious language on sensitive issues.
- Sources indicated that Mr. Jaishankar also had a brief discussion with Mr. Dar during the SCO dinner on Tuesday evening, joined by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Chairperson of the Pakistan Cricket Board.
- Pakistan is eager to host the Indian team for the Champions Trophy in early 2025, but the Board of Control for Cricket in India has not confirmed participation.
- Officials emphasized that the conversation was part of normal diplomatic discourse, with Mr. Jaishankar attending alongside dignitaries from all 10 SCO nations, including Russia, China, Iran, Belarus, and Central Asian states.
- The interaction reflected a warmer tone compared to previous encounters, such as the SCO Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Goa in 2023 and the UN General Assembly last month.
- At the conclusion of his visit, which was the first by an Indian External Affairs Minister to Pakistan in nine years, Mr. Jaishankar thanked Mr. Sharif and Mr. Dar, describing the meeting as “productive.”
- He noted on social media that “a productive meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government concluded in Islamabad today” and highlighted India’s positive contribution to the deliberations.
- During his speech, Mr. Jaishankar urged SCO members to have an “honest conversation” about the state of the SCO region, which represents 40% of the global population.
- He emphasized the importance of avoiding “point scoring.”
- Wednesday’s exchanges and the absence of negative comments during the event were praised by Pakistani hosts, who deemed the SCO summit successful.
- The summit resulted in eight signed documents.
- Pakistani Information Minister Ataullah Tarar expressed that there was “a lot of positivity around the SCO in Islamabad” and noted Mr. Jaishankar’s positive reception by Prime Minister Sharif at the events.
- When asked if the positivity could translate into improved bilateral ties between India and Pakistan, he acknowledged the historical complexities in the relationship.
- Tarar stated that any future India-Pakistan initiatives would be based “purely on reciprocity.”

- Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established in 2001. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) traces its origin to **Shanghai 5** which was established in 1996.
- It resulted due to border demilitarization negotiations and talks among China, 3 Central Asian Republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan), and Russia.
- In 2001, Uzbekistan joins and the name of the organization was changed to **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**.

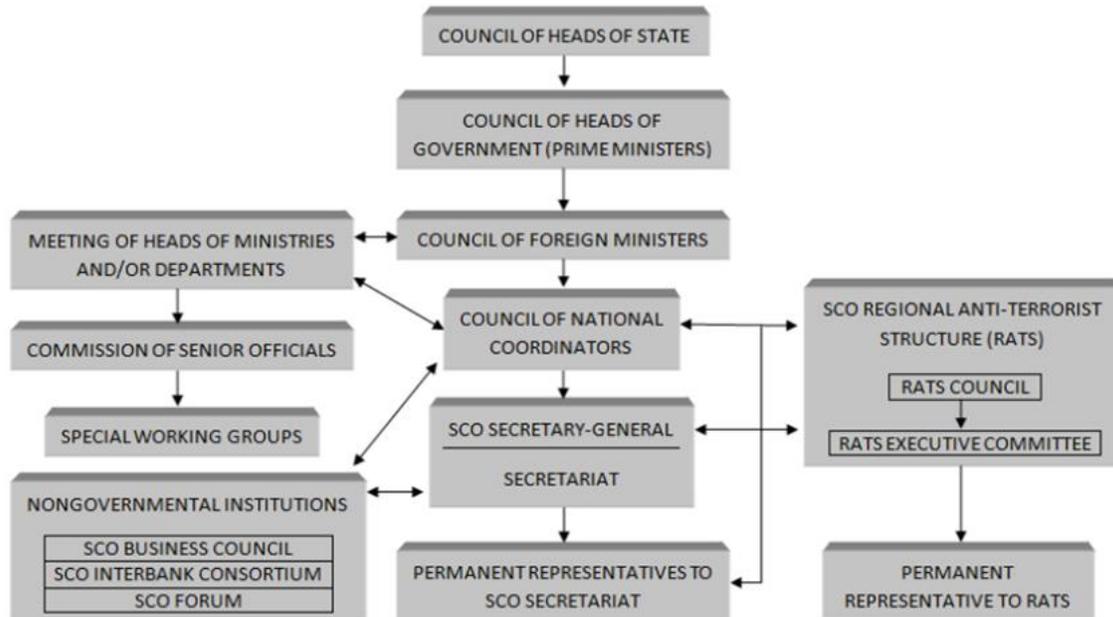


- The aim of this organization is to check the three evils extremism, separatism, and religious fundamentalism (terrorism).
- The headquarters of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** is in **Beijing**.
- The second permanent body of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)**.
- Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is located in **Tashkent in Uzbekistan**.
- In 2017 the membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was further expanded to **India and Pakistan** as full members. Since 2005 India was an observer country to Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- In **2021, at Dushanbe Summit, Iran** was admitted as a member country. Iran joined Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a full member country in **2023** after it completes all the formalities.
- **Belarus** joined in **July 2024**.



- **Observer States of SCO:** Afghanistan, and Mongolia.
- **Official language:** Chinese and Russian.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION



Hill Areas Committee asks Manipur govt. to hold ADC polls soon

GS Paper II: Scheduled Area

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Hill Areas Committee of the Manipur Legislative Assembly has now recommended to the State government with the request for elections to be held for the Autonomous District Councils as soon as possible.

While the HAC's resolution of October 14 said the committee had "unanimously" taken this decision, sources said none of the 10 Kuki-Zo MLAs attended the meeting given that it was being held in Imphal.

The HAC was set up through a 1972 government order and comprises legislators of all constituencies that fall partly or wholly within the State's hilly areas.

This resolution of the HAC comes months after the Manipur State Cabinet in June resolved to hold ADC elections by September. The Chief Minister N. Biren Singh-led Cabinet had said it would consult the HAC for this purpose.

Officials in the State government told *The Hindu* that not much progress had been made on scheduling the ADC elections so far. There are six ADCs in Manipur – Chandel,

Panel claims to have 'unanimously' taken this decision, but sources said no Kuki-Zo MLA attended the meeting

Churachandpur, Sadar Hills (Kangpokpi), Manipur North (Senapati), Tamenglong, and Ukhrul. Of these, Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts are dominated by the Kuki-Zo-Hmar tribes, while Ukhrul and Senapati are dominated by the Nagas. The other districts have a mixed tribal population.

Soon after the Cabinet announced that it planned to hold the ADC elections in September, Kuki-Zo bodies from several districts had issued a joint statement, asking members of their community to boycott the polls "unless political demands are met".

The groups had said holding the elections in the middle of the ongoing ethnic conflict was nothing but an attempt to "create division among us by pitting us against each other."

The HAC also noted that the system of a caretaker chairperson had been nullified by an order of the Gauhati High Court in March this year.

chairperson was nullified by an order from the Gauhati High Court in March this year.

Hill Areas Committee asks Manipur govt. to hold ADC polls soon (17 October)

- The Hill Areas Committee (HAC) of the Manipur Legislative Assembly has recommended that the State government hold elections for the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) as soon as possible.
- The HAC's resolution on October 14 stated that the decision was taken "unanimously," but sources reported that none of the 10 Kuki-Zo MLAs attended the meeting in Imphal.
- The HAC was established through a 1972 government order and includes legislators from constituencies in the State's hilly areas.
- This resolution follows a June decision by the Manipur State Cabinet, led by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, to hold ADC elections by September and to consult the HAC.
- Officials in the State government indicated that not much progress has been made on scheduling the ADC elections so far.
- There are six ADCs in Manipur: Chandel, Churachandpur, Sadar Hills (Kangpokpi), Manipur North (Senapati), Tamenglong, and Ukhrul.
- Churachandpur and Kangpokpi districts are dominated by the Kuki-Zo-Hmar tribes, while Ukhrul and Senapati are primarily inhabited by Nagas; other districts have a mixed tribal population.
- Following the Cabinet's announcement about the ADC elections, Kuki-Zo bodies from several districts issued a joint statement urging a boycott of the polls "unless political demands are met."
- These groups argued that holding elections amid ongoing ethnic conflict was an attempt to "create division among us by pitting us against each other."
- The HAC also noted that the system of a caretaker

Five Eyes supports Canada in spat with India on Nijjar

U.K. is the latest to declare its confidence in the judicial process by Ottawa, which is investigating the alleged involvement of Indian diplomats in the 2023 killing of a pro-Khalistan preacher

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The United Kingdom has “full confidence” in the Canadian judicial process, the Foreign Office in London declared on Wednesday, expanding the ambit of the unprecedented diplomatic crisis that has broken out between India and Canada over the alleged involvement of Canada-based Indian diplomats in the 2023 killing of pro-Khalistan preacher Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

U.K. is the fourth member of the ‘Five Eye’ countries to extend support to Canada’s position. Earlier New Zealand, the United States and Australia had backed Canada.

“We are in contact with our Canadian partners about the serious developments outlined in the independent investigations in Canada. The U.K. has full confidence in Canada’s judicial system. Respect for sovereignty and the rule of law is essential,” said the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office in an official statement.

The Five Eye countries – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, U.S., and U.K. –



Tit-for-tat: India and Canada have both expelled diplomats from their missions in the row over the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. PTI

often coordinate closely on issues of common security interest.

The key pillar

The protection of political and civil rights, including the right to peaceful protest, is a key pillar of the Five Eye democracies. In the recent years, India has been uncomfortable with the campaign for so-called (online) referendum on Khalistan in all the five countries but India’s arguments did not prevent the Five Eye countries to crack-down on the pro-Khalistan campaigners.

Earlier, New Zealand became first among the friends of Canada from within the Five Eye democracies to express support

for the Canadian position expressing concern about the allegations from Canada.

“The alleged criminal conduct outlined publicly by Canadian law enforcement authorities, if proven, would be very concerning,” said New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters in a social media statement on X on Tuesday.

Mr. Peters expressed support for the rule of law.

Diplomats expelled

Citing alleged involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Canada has expelled six Indian diplomats, including High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma. In a tit-for-tat

move, India too expelled six Canadian diplomats, including the head of mission Stewart Ross Wheeler. Both sides have given time till October 19 for the diplomats to exit.

Australia has also come forward to support Canada’s allegations and urged for respect for sovereignty of nation states.

Spokesperson of the U.S. State Department Mathew Miller also said on Tuesday, “When it comes to the Canadian matter, we have made clear that the allegations are extremely serious, and they need to be taken seriously. We wanted to see the Government of India cooperate with Canada in its investigation. Obviously, they have not chosen that path.”

The escalating crisis drew attention of the Indian National Congress that urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take Parliament into confidence. “Our nation’s international image as a country that believes in and adheres to rule of law is at risk, and it is crucial that we act together to defend it,” said Jairam Ramesh, general secretary in charge of communications, expressing concern about the crisis.

Five Eyes supports Canada in spat with India on Nijjar (17 October)

U.K. is the latest to declare its confidence in the judicial process by Ottawa, which is investigating the alleged involvement of Indian diplomats in the 2023 killing of a pro-Khalistan preacher

- The United Kingdom has “full confidence” in the Canadian judicial process, according to the Foreign Office in London.
- This statement expands the diplomatic crisis between India and Canada over the alleged involvement of Canada-based Indian diplomats in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
- The U.K. is the fourth member of the Five Eyes countries to support Canada, following New Zealand, the United States, and Australia.
- The U.K. is in contact with Canadian partners regarding serious developments from independent investigations.
- The U.K. emphasized respect for sovereignty and the rule of law.
- The Five Eyes countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, U.S., and U.K.) coordinate closely on common security issues.
- Protecting political and civil rights, including the right to peaceful protest, is a key pillar of the Five Eyes democracies.
- India has been uncomfortable with the pro-Khalistan campaign in the Five Eyes countries but faced crackdowns on campaigners.
- New Zealand was the first among the Five Eyes to express support for Canada, highlighting concerns about the allegations.
- New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters stated that the alleged criminal conduct would be very concerning if proven.
- Canada expelled six Indian diplomats, including High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma, due to alleged involvement in Nijjar's killing.
- In retaliation, India expelled six Canadian diplomats, including head of mission Stewart Ross Wheeler.
- Both countries have given diplomats until October 19 to exit.
- Australia has also supported Canada's allegations and urged respect for national sovereignty.
- U.S. State Department spokesperson Mathew Miller stated that the allegations are serious and require cooperation from India.
- The escalating crisis has prompted the Indian National Congress to urge Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inform Parliament.
- Congress expressed concern about India's international image as a nation adhering to the rule of law.

Five Eyes (FVEY)

- The **Five Eyes (FVEY)** is an intelligence alliance comprising five countries: the **United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand**.
- It is one of the world's most comprehensive and integrated intelligence-sharing frameworks. These countries collaborate on intelligence gathering, especially in the areas of **signals intelligence (SIGINT)**, with a focus on global security, counterterrorism, cyber defense, and military intelligence.
- The origins of this alliance date back to **World War II**.

Historical Background:

- The **Five Eyes** arrangement evolved from the **UKUSA Agreement**, a treaty established in **1946** between the United States and the United Kingdom, to facilitate the exchange of intelligence.
- Over time, Canada (in **1948**), Australia, and New Zealand joined the alliance, extending the scope of cooperation.

Structure and Function:

The alliance's core activity revolves around **signals intelligence (SIGINT)** collection, processing, and sharing. This involves the monitoring of communications, both military and civilian, and the use of advanced technologies for surveillance. Each member of FVEY contributes intelligence resources and capabilities. The members divide the world into areas of responsibility for surveillance:

- **The US** handles the Americas and Pacific.
- **The UK** covers Europe, Western Russia, and the Middle East.
- **Canada, Australia, and New Zealand** cover their respective geographic regions and the South Pacific.

The information-sharing is typically conducted through secure and highly classified channels. The **National Security Agency (NSA)** in the United States and the **Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ)** in the UK play key roles in this network, along with their counterpart agencies in the other member states.

Legal Framework:

While FVEY operates through **mutual legal agreements**, it has often raised concerns over privacy and human rights due to mass surveillance. The member nations have extensive surveillance capabilities through various programs, including **PRISM** and **ECHELON**, which have sometimes come under scrutiny after leaks, like those by **Edward Snowden** in 2013.

Recent Updates and Geopolitical Importance:

1. **Cybersecurity and China:** The FVEY alliance has recently emphasized cooperation against **cybersecurity threats**, especially those emanating from China and Russia. In

2021, FVEY countries issued statements condemning **cyber espionage activities** linked to state actors, particularly in China.

2. **Technology and 5G:** Another area of recent focus has been the security implications of **5G technology**. The alliance has urged caution regarding **Huawei** and its involvement in 5G infrastructure due to concerns over data security.
3. **Counterterrorism:** FVEY continues to be a crucial platform for counterterrorism cooperation, with members sharing intelligence to thwart potential terrorist threats globally, particularly in the wake of the **war on terror** post-9/11.
4. **Expansion of Activities:** In recent years, there have been discussions about expanding the scope of FVEY to include other nations as partners or observers, such as **Japan** and **Germany**, to further enhance global security cooperation.

SC to deliver verdict on Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955

[GS Paper II: Citizenship Amendment](#)

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud is scheduled to pronounce judgment on October 17 on the constitutionality of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

Section 6A was a special provision inserted into the 1955 Act in furtherance of a Memorandum of Settlement called the 'Assam Accord' signed on August 15, 1985 by the then Rajiv Gandhi government.

Under Section 6A, foreigners who had entered Assam before January 1, 1966, and been "ordinarily resident" in the State, would have all the rights and obligations of Indian citizens. Those who had entered the State between

January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971 would have the same rights and obligations except that they would not be able to vote for 10 years.

Why Assam alone?

The petitioners had questioned why Assam alone, among the border States, had been singled out to implement Section 6A.

They had blamed "rise in infiltration a consequence or an effect of Section 6A".

The court had, in turn, asked the petitioners to show material that benefits given to cross-border migrants, who arrived in India between 1966 and 1971 just before the Bangladesh Liberation War, led to radical demographic change which impacted the Assamese cultural identity.

SC to deliver verdict on Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 (17 October)

- A Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud is set to announce a judgment on October 17 regarding the constitutionality of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Section 6A was added to the 1955 Act as part of the 'Assam Accord' signed on August 15, 1985, by the Rajiv Gandhi government.
- Under Section 6A, foreigners who entered Assam before January 1, 1966, and were "ordinarily resident" in the State, would have the rights and obligations of Indian citizens.
- Those who entered Assam between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971, would have the same rights and obligations but would be unable to vote for 10 years.
- Petitioners questioned why Assam was singled out among border States for the implementation of Section 6A.
- They argued that the "rise in infiltration" was a consequence of Section 6A.
- The court asked the petitioners to provide evidence that benefits given to cross-border migrants between 1966 and 1971

led to significant demographic changes affecting Assamese cultural identity.

Army to commemorate 62 years of the Battle of Walong with China

GS Paper I: Post Independence India

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

To mark the 62nd anniversary of the iconic Battle of Walong during the 1962 war with China, the Army is planning a month-long series of commemorative events beginning on Thursday. They will continue till November 14. In addition to a series of activities, the newly renovated Walong War Memorial, Shaurya Sthal at Lama Spur, and some key infrastructure projects in the border areas are also set to be inaugurated.

In 1962, the Indian Army halted the advancing People's Liberation Army soldiers for 27 days which forced them to commit their reserve Division from Tawang Sector to Walong as fierce battles unfolded in the unforgiving terrain



Last stand: The Walong War Memorial commemorating the iconic battle of 1962 in Arunachal Pradesh. DINAKAR PERI

of Kibithu, Namti Tri Junction (famously known as Tiger's Mouth), Walong, and adjoining features.

In October 1962, as Chinese forces advanced into the eastern most parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the task of defending it fell on the 11 Infantry Brigade under the Second Infantry Division. The Brigade had 6 Kumaon regiment, 4 Sikh

regiment, third battalion of 3 Gorkha Rifles, in addition to second battalion of 8 Gorkha Rifles and 4 Dogra.

The Chinese offensive with more than 4,000 soldiers could not breach the forward defences held with 800 men for over 27 days and the Chinese Army was subsequently forced to employ additional division size force of approximately

15,000 soldiers. Vastly outnumbered and with little ammunition and no resources, the Indian soldiers fought till the last man, last round. Capturing this, the *Time* magazine wrote in January 1963, "At Walong, Indian troops lacked everything. The only thing they did not lack was guts."

This year's commemoration promises a vibrant mix of activities aimed at engaging the local communities and honouring the memory of the fallen heroes, one Army official said. "The events include white water rafting, motorcycle rallies, bicycle rallies, battlefield treks, adventure treks and a half marathon, all designed to reflect the adventurous spirit of the Indian Army in the rugged terrain of Arunachal Pradesh."

Army to commemorate 62 years of the Battle of Walong with China (17 October)

- The Army is planning a month-long series of commemorative events to mark the 62nd anniversary of the Battle of Walong during the 1962 war with China, starting Thursday and continuing until November 14.
- The events will include the inauguration of the newly renovated Walong War Memorial, Shaurya Sthal at

Lama Spur, and key infrastructure projects in border areas.

- In 1962, the Indian Army successfully halted the advancing People's Liberation Army soldiers for 27 days, forcing them to commit reserve divisions from Tawang Sector to Walong.
- Fierce battles took place in the challenging terrain of Kibithu, Namti Tri Junction (Tiger's Mouth), Walong, and surrounding areas.
- The task of defending Arunachal Pradesh fell to the 11 Infantry Brigade under the Second Infantry Division, which included various regiments such as 6 Kumaon, 4 Sikh, 3 Gorkha Rifles, 2/8 Gorkha Rifles, and 4 Dogra.
- The Chinese offensive, involving over 4,000 soldiers, failed to breach the forward defenses held by 800 Indian men for 27 days.
- The Chinese Army was forced to employ an additional division-sized force of approximately 15,000 soldiers.

- Outnumbered and with limited ammunition and resources, Indian soldiers fought valiantly until the last man and last round.
- Time magazine noted in January 1963 that, “At Walong, Indian troops lacked everything. The only thing they did not lack was guts.”
- This year’s commemoration will include activities such as white water rafting, motorcycle and bicycle rallies, battlefield and adventure treks, and a half marathon.
- The events aim to engage local communities and honor the memory of fallen heroes, reflecting the adventurous spirit of the Indian Army in Arunachal Pradesh's rugged terrain.

Supreme Court to hear marital rape exclusion case today

GS Paper I: Society
the hindu bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a series of petitions seeking to criminalise marital rape on Thursday.

The petitioners have argued that protection given to non-consensual sexual acts by a man with his own wife violated women's right to bodily integrity, autonomy, and dignity.

However, a recent affidavit filed by the Centre said punishment of non-consensual sexual acts in wedlock and categorising it as rape would impact conjugal relationship and lead to “serious disturbances” in the institution of marriage.

Exception 2

The petitions seek to strike down **Exception 2 of Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)**. The provision excludes non-consensual sexual intercourse by a husband with his wife, if the latter is over fifteen years of age, from the definition of ‘rape’.

The case would be heard by a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud.

The petitions were triggered by decisions from Karnataka and Delhi High Courts, requiring an authoritative pronouncement from the top court.

The Karnataka High Court had held that a husband was liable to be

The petitions were triggered by decisions from Karnataka and Delhi High Courts

charged for rape if he had forcible sex with his wife. The Karnataka government had supported the High Court judgment in an affidavit in the top court subsequently.

“A man is a man; an act is an act; rape is a rape, be it performed by a man the ‘husband’ on the woman ‘wife,’” the Karnataka High Court had observed in its decision, saying an accused should trial regardless of the immunity in the penal code.

Split verdict

A Division Bench of the Delhi High Court had however in May last year delivered a split verdict in a separate case on the identical issue.

Justice Rajiv Shakdher, who headed the two-judge Bench, had struck down as unconstitutional the Exception two to Section 375 of the IPC.

However, Justice C. Hari Shankar, the associate judge on the high court Bench, had rejected the plea to criminalise marital rape, noting that any change in the law should be carried out by the legislature since the issue required consideration of various aspects, including social, cultural and legal.

Supreme Court to hear marital rape exclusion case today (17 October)

- The Supreme Court is set to hear petitions seeking to criminalize marital rape on Thursday.
- Petitioners argue that the current protection for non-consensual sexual acts by a husband violates women's rights to bodily integrity, autonomy, and dignity.
- A recent affidavit filed by the Centre stated that punishing non-consensual sexual acts in marriage would disrupt conjugal relationships and lead to “serious disturbances” in marriage as an institution.
- The petitions aim to strike down Exception 2 of Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which excludes non-consensual sexual intercourse by a husband with his wife (if she is over fifteen) from the definition of ‘rape.’
- The case will be heard by a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud.
- The petitions were prompted by rulings from the Karnataka and Delhi High Courts, necessitating a definitive pronouncement from the Supreme Court.
- The Karnataka High Court ruled that a husband could be charged with rape for forcible sex with his wife and supported its judgment with an affidavit in the Supreme Court.

- The Karnataka High Court emphasized that “a man is a man; an act is an act; rape is a rape,” stating that an accused should face trial regardless of immunity in the penal code.
- In contrast, a Division Bench of the Delhi High Court delivered a split verdict on a similar issue in May last year.
- Justice Rajiv Shakti of the Delhi High Court struck down Exception 2 as unconstitutional.
- However, Justice C. Hari Shankar rejected the plea to criminalize marital rape, arguing that any legal change should be made by the legislature due to the need to consider various social, cultural, and legal aspects.

NPPA increases ceiling prices of 8 scheduled drugs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has approved an increase in the ceiling prices of 11 scheduled formulations of eight drugs by 50% of their current ceiling prices.

Most of these drugs are low-cost and generally used as first-line treatment crucial to the public health programmes of the country. These drugs are used for treatment of asthma, glaucoma, thalassemia, tuberculosis, mental health disorders, and so on.

Need for the revision

Elaborating on the need to bring in the increase in price, the authority said that this was done to ensure availability of essential drugs at affordable prices without jeopardising access to such medicines.

“The essential drugs must remain available to address the public health needs of the country, and their price regulation should not lead to a situation where these drugs become unavailable in the market,” it added.

The NPPA explained that it has been receiving applications from the ma-



These drugs include Cefadroxil, Pilocarpine, Atropine, and Streptomycin.

ufacturers for a revision of prices citing reasons such as increased cost of active pharmaceutical ingredients and cost of production, and change in exchange rate, resulting in unviability in sustainable production and marketing of drugs.

“Companies have also applied for discontinuation of some of the formulations on account of their unviability,” the NPPA said.

Formulations for which ceiling prices have been revised include Atropine injection 0.6 mg/ml; Streptomycin powder for injection 750 mg and 1000 mg; Salbutamol tablet 2 mg and 4 mg and respirator solution 5 mg/ml; Pilocarpine 2% drops; Cefadroxil tablet 500 mg; Desferrioxamine 500 mg for injection; and Lithium tablets 300 mg.

NPPA increases ceiling prices of 8 scheduled drugs (17 October)

- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has approved a 50% increase in the ceiling prices of 11 scheduled formulations of eight drugs.
- Most of these drugs are low-cost and crucial for first-line treatments in public health programs.
- These drugs are used for conditions such as asthma, glaucoma, thalassemia, tuberculosis, and mental health disorders.
- The NPPA emphasized the need for the price revision to ensure the availability of essential drugs at affordable prices without compromising access.
- The authority noted that essential drugs must remain accessible to meet the public health needs of the country.
- The NPPA has received applications from manufacturers for price revisions due to increased costs of active pharmaceutical ingredients, production costs, and changes in exchange rates.
- Manufacturers have cited unviability in sustainable production and marketing as reasons for the price revision.
- Some companies have applied for the discontinuation of certain formulations due to unviability.

Formulations with revised ceiling prices include:

- Atropine injection 0.6 mg/ml
- Streptomycin powder for injection (750 mg and 1000 mg)
- Salbutamol tablet (2 mg and 4 mg) and respiratory solution (5 mg/ml)
- Pilocarpine 2% drops
- Cefadroxil tablet 500 mg
- Desferrioxamine 500 mg for injection
- Lithium tablets 300 mg

Nobel for **microRNA** underscores the primacy of RNA in biology

When Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun won the Nobel Prize last week, 581 clinical trials involving miRNA had been registered in the U.S. alone. Of these, 215 had been completed and 20 had been terminated over safety concerns, showing the importance of its role in finding cures

GS Paper III: S&T
Arun Panchapakesan

In 1993, two post-doctoral researchers named **Victor Ambros** and **Gary Ruvkun** independently published back-to-back papers in the December 3 issue of the journal *Cell*. In their papers, they described how the roundworm *Caenorhabditis elegans* uses a small RNA molecule to control the production of a protein.

While the work was certainly novel, it did not receive much attention at the time because other scientists thought the phenomenon was unique to worms and of no practical relevance to understanding its role in other life-forms, including humans.

It was not until seven years later that Ruvkun found a similar mechanism existed in nearly all of the animal kingdom. The paper created waves in the scientific community since it represented a whole new paradigm in **molecular biology**, with potentially far-reaching implications on human health and disease.

Last week, Ambros and Ruvkun were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their discovery of microRNA and the latter's role in gene regulation, a process universal to all cells.

What, when, where, why

Every cell in an organism contains a copy of its DNA, the blueprint for how to build and maintain that organism. The building and maintenance activities are achieved by molecules called proteins; the DNA contains instructions on how cells can make these proteins.

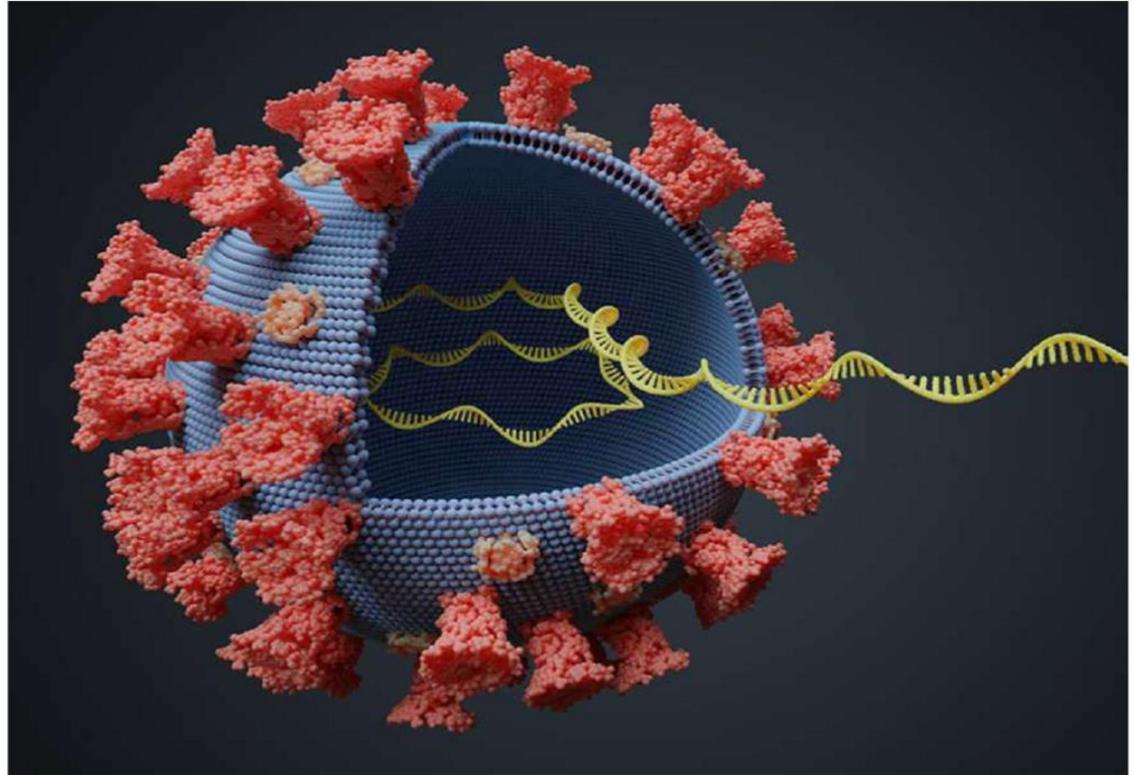
Every protein has a specific function. For instance, haemoglobin is responsible for carrying oxygen from the air we breathe to the cells in the body. Each set of instructions to make a given protein from the organism's total DNA is called a gene.

The DNA of humans has between 19,000 and 20,000 genes. While all cells in the body contain all these genes, and thus the information on how to make all the proteins, no cell makes all 20,000 proteins. Gene expression – the process of reading the information in a gene to make a protein – is specific to cell types. A given cell will only make those proteins it needs for its function. Thus the red blood cells make haemoglobin but not the cells that make up the stomach.

When a cell wants to make a protein, it first makes a transient copy of the gene called the messenger RNA (mRNA). The information in the mRNA is then used to make the protein. This process of making an mRNA copy of the information in the gene is called transcription. A gene is transcribed to mRNA to make a protein only in those cells where that protein is required.

Once the mRNA is made, the cell will continue to make proteins until it is stopped. The protein production process must be stopped when enough proteins have been made because if it isn't controlled, excess protein, apart from being a waste of resources, can be harmful to the cell.

For a long time, this halting of protein production, called **post-transcriptional gene regulation**, was thought to occur when the mRNA degrades – either on its own (due to its low stability) or aided by special enzymes that the cell makes.



Every cell in an organism contains a copy of its DNA, the blueprint for how to build and maintain that organism. The building and maintenance activities are achieved by molecules called proteins. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Ambros and Ruvkun essentially identified a new way in which cells regulate protein production. They discovered the existence of tiny RNA molecules called microRNA (miRNA) that bind to mRNAs and prevent protein synthesis.

A vital cellular process

Chemically, miRNA is made of the same material that makes up mRNA. The difference lies in their sizes: RNA is composed of a combination of four chemical bases arranged on a sugar-phosphate backbone, rather like a long bead of strings made of four coloured beads arranged at random. Their length is therefore measured in how many beads, or bases, they contain. Thus, mRNAs range from hundreds to lakhs of bases, while the average miRNA is just 22 bases long.

The composition of these 22 bases – or the order of arrangement of the beads on the string – depends on which mRNA a given miRNA is going to target. Usually, the sequence of bases of a miRNA is complementary to a stretch of bases on the target mRNA, making it specific to that mRNA. Once the miRNA binds to its target, the target mRNA is either marked for destruction or is unable to serve as a template to produce protein, thus switching protein production off. This way, if needed, miRNAs can inhibit the synthesis of a given protein even before it begins. Since Ruvkun's report of the first human miRNA in 2000, researchers have discovered thousands of new miRNAs, playing roles in regulating almost 60% of all human genes.

Switching off protein production at the

Ambros and Ruvkun essentially identified a new way in which cells regulate protein production. They discovered the existence of tiny RNA molecules, called microRNA that bind to mRNAs and prevent protein synthesis

right time is a vital cellular process.

Therefore, it was no surprise when researchers found miRNAs to play pivotal roles in animal development, the differentiation of cells into their correct types, cell division, cell death, and – importantly – response to stress and disease, especially in various cancers.

The high specificity of miRNAs made them ideal candidates for targeted therapies for conditions like cancer, which involve abnormal protein production. But despite their potential, the story of the research on the clinical utility of miRNAs does not have a very happy beginning.

RNA is important

The rapid academic progress on miRNAs prompted scientists to test the therapeutic potential of miRNAs. Early experiments in mice gave encouraging results, where researchers were able to inhibit the formation of lung tumours using miRNAs.

The first clinical trial of a human miRNA, called miRNA-34a, soon followed in 2013. But the technology to deliver the mRNA to the target cells was not as well developed then as it is now; as a result, scientists had to administer extremely

high doses of the molecule to ensure a small amount would reach the target site. This had the unfortunate consequence of triggering an immune response. When four patients died, the investigators immediately stopped the trial.

Scientists later made significant advances in packaging and delivering miRNA, allowing others to test multiple other miRNAs against various diseases – including hepatitis C, multiple cancers, and cardiovascular diseases.

When Ambros and Ruvkun won the Nobel Prize last week, 581 clinical trials involving miRNAs had been registered in the U.S. Of these, 215 had been completed and 20 had been terminated over safety concerns.

Since other alternatives are available for most of these conditions, miRNA's time in medicine has yet to come. Hopefully the Nobel Prize will change this field's fortunes: despite the challenges it faces in therapy, miRNAs' relevance to physiology and medicine is unquestionable. This is why Ambros and Ruvkun were awarded the Nobel Prize despite the absence of therapeutic applications.

This is also the fifth instance of a Nobel Prize being awarded for RNA research: mRNA vaccines won in 2023; RNA interference in 2006; RNA's role as enzymes in 1989; the discovery of mRNA in 1965. Indeed, scientists are slowly understanding that RNA, not DNA, is at the core of the delicate balance cells must maintain.

(Arun Panchapakesan is an assistant professor at the Y.R. Gaiithonde Centre for AIDS Research and Education, Chennai. arun.panchapakesan@gmail.com)

Nobel for microRNA underscores the primacy of RNA in biology (17 October)

When Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun won the Nobel Prize last week, 581 clinical trials involving miRNA had been registered in the U.S. alone. Of these, 215 had been completed and 20 had been terminated over safety concerns, showing the importance of its role in finding cures

- In 1993, researchers Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun published back-to-back papers in the journal *Cell* on December 3.
- They described how the roundworm *Caenorhabditis elegans* uses small RNA molecules to control protein production.
- At the time, their work received little attention as scientists believed the phenomenon was unique to worms and not relevant to other life forms, including humans.
- Seven years later, Ruvkun discovered a similar mechanism in nearly all of the animal kingdom, leading to significant interest in the scientific community.
- This discovery represented a new paradigm in molecular biology, with implications for human health and disease.
- Last week, Ambros and Ruvkun were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their discovery of microRNA and its role in gene regulation.
- Every cell in an organism contains a copy of its DNA, which serves as a blueprint for building and maintaining the organism.
- Proteins, which perform specific functions (e.g., hemoglobin carries oxygen), are made according to instructions in the DNA.
- Humans have between 19,000 and 20,000 genes, and while all cells contain these genes, not all cells produce all proteins.
- Gene expression is specific to cell types, meaning each cell only makes the proteins necessary for its function.
- To make a protein, a cell first creates a temporary copy of the gene called messenger RNA (mRNA).
- The process of creating mRNA from a gene is called transcription, occurring only in cells where that protein is needed.
- Once mRNA is produced, the cell continues to make proteins until production is halted to prevent excess, which can be wasteful and harmful.
- This halting of protein production, known as post-transcriptional gene regulation, was previously thought to occur when mRNA degrades.
- Ambros and Ruvkun identified a new regulatory mechanism where tiny RNA molecules called microRNA (miRNA) bind to mRNAs and prevent protein synthesis.

A vital cellular process

- Chemically, miRNA is made of the same materials as mRNA, differing mainly in size.
- RNA consists of four chemical bases arranged on a sugar-phosphate backbone, resembling a string of colored beads.
- mRNAs range from hundreds to lakhs of bases, while the average miRNA is just 22 bases long.
- The sequence of these 22 bases is complementary to specific stretches of bases on target mRNAs, allowing for targeted interaction.
- When miRNA binds to its target mRNA, the mRNA is either marked for destruction or rendered unable to produce protein, effectively switching off protein production.
- MiRNAs can inhibit protein synthesis even before it begins.
- Since Ruvkun reported the first human miRNA in 2000, thousands of new miRNAs have been discovered, regulating nearly 60% of all human genes.
- Switching off protein production at the right time is essential for cellular processes.
- Researchers found miRNAs to play crucial roles in:
 - Animal development
 - Differentiation of cells into correct types
 - Cell division
 - Cell death
 - Response to stress and disease, particularly in various cancers.
- The high specificity of miRNAs makes them suitable candidates for targeted therapies in conditions like cancer, which involve abnormal protein production.
- Despite their potential, research on the clinical utility of miRNAs has had a challenging start.

RNA is important

- Rapid academic progress on miRNAs led scientists to explore their therapeutic potential.
- Early experiments in mice showed promising results, inhibiting lung tumor formation using miRNAs.
- The first clinical trial of a human miRNA, miRNA-34a, began in 2013.
- At that time, the technology for delivering miRNAs to target cells was underdeveloped, requiring extremely high doses to ensure effectiveness.
- High doses triggered immune responses, leading to the trial's halt after the deaths of four patients.
- Subsequent advancements in packaging and delivering miRNA allowed for testing against various diseases, including hepatitis C, multiple cancers, and cardiovascular diseases.
- By the time Ambros and Ruvkun won the Nobel Prize, 581 clinical trials involving miRNAs had been registered in the U.S.

- Out of these, 215 trials were completed, and 20 were terminated due to safety concerns.
- Despite available alternatives for most conditions, miRNA's time in medicine has not yet arrived.
- The Nobel Prize is hoped to improve the field's fortunes, as miRNAs are undeniably relevant to physiology and medicine.
- Ambros and Ruvkun received the Nobel Prize despite the lack of therapeutic applications for miRNAs.
- This marks the fifth Nobel Prize awarded for RNA research:
 - mRNA vaccines in 2023
 - RNA interference in 2006
 - RNA's role as enzymes in 1989
 - Discovery of mRNA in 1965
- Scientists are increasingly recognizing that RNA, not DNA, is central to the balance that cells must maintain.



The Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO) in Kaiping, Guangdong province, China. REUTERS

Chinese lab that seeks to crack physics mystery nears completion

CS Paper III: S&T

A giant sphere 700m underground with thousands of light-detecting tubes will be sealed in a 12-storey cylindrical pool of water in the coming months for an experiment that will shine new light on elusive subatomic particles known as neutrinos.

After years of construction, the \$300-million Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO) in China's southern Guangdong province will soon start gathering data on neutrinos, a product of nuclear reactions, to help solve one of the biggest mysteries in particle physics.

Every second, trillions of extremely small neutrinos pass through matter, including the human body. Mid-flight, a neutrino, of which there are three known varieties, could transform into other types. Determining which types are the lightest and the heaviest would offer clues to subatomic processes during the early days of the universe and to explaining why matter is the way it is.

To that end, Chinese physicists and collaborating scientists from all over the world will analyse the data on neutrinos emitted by two nearby Guangdong nuclear power plants for up to six years.

JUNO will also be able to observe neutrinos from the Sun, gaining a real-time view of solar processes. It could

Scientists are mulling relaying long-distance messages via neutrinos, which pass through solid matter such as the earth at near light-speed

also study neutrinos given off by the radioactive decay of uranium and thorium in the earth to better understand mantle convection driving tectonic plates.

Due to go operational in the latter half of 2025, JUNO will outpace the far larger Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment (DUNE) under construction in the U.S.

Institutions collaborating on JUNO hail from locations including France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the U.S., and even self-governed Taiwan, which China claims as part of its territory.

Neutrino observatories are also being constructed in other places. "The one in the U.S. will be six years behind us. And the ones in France and Japan... will be two or three years later than us. So we believe we can get the result of mass hierarchy (of neutrinos) ahead of everybody," Wang Yifang, chief scientist and project manager of JUNO, said.

So far, real-life neutrino applications remain a distant prospect. Some scientists have mulled the possibility of relaying long-distance messages via neutrinos, which pass through solid matter such as the earth at near light-speed.

Researchers are keeping their distance from politics to focus on the science, although they remain at the mercy of governments providing the funding.

The passage of neutrinos from the two power stations will be logged by JUNO's 600-tonne spherical detector, which will immediately transmit the data to Beijing electronically. The data will be simultaneously relayed to Russia, France and Italy, where it can be accessed by all of the collaborating institutions, said Cao Jun, JUNO's deputy manager.

For data on the more crucial aspects of the experiment, at least two independent teams will conduct analyses, with their results cross-checked. "When these two groups get a consistent result, we can publish it," Cao said.

Chinese lab that seeks to crack physics mystery nears completion (17 October)

- A giant sphere, 700m underground, will be sealed in a 12-storey cylindrical pool of water for an experiment on neutrinos.
- The Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO) in China's Guangdong province, costing \$300 million, is nearing completion.
- JUNO aims to gather data on neutrinos, which are products of nuclear reactions, to address major mysteries in particle physics.
- Trillions of neutrinos pass through matter, including the human body, every second.
- Neutrinos can transform between three known varieties, and determining their mass differences could provide insights into early universe processes.
- Chinese physicists and global collaborators will analyze neutrinos emitted by two nearby nuclear power plants over six years.
- JUNO will also observe solar neutrinos for real-time insights into solar processes.
- The observatory will study neutrinos from radioactive decay in the Earth to better understand mantle convection and tectonic plate movement.
- JUNO is expected to be operational in the latter half of 2025, ahead of the larger Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment (DUNE) in the U.S.
- Collaborating institutions include organizations from France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the U.S., and Taiwan.
- Other neutrino observatories are under construction in various locations, with U.S. efforts lagging six years behind JUNO.
- Scientists are exploring potential applications of neutrinos, such as relaying long-distance messages, due to their ability to pass through solid matter.
- Researchers focus on scientific progress while navigating government funding and political considerations.
- JUNO's 600-tonne spherical detector will log neutrino passage from the power stations and transmit data electronically to Beijing, with simultaneous access for collaborating institutions in Russia, France, and Italy.
- Two independent teams will analyze crucial data, ensuring cross-checking before publication of consistent results.

Canadian frostbite

India must consider the impact of its next steps on its diplomacy and image

After a year of frosty exchanges and declining relations, India and Canada have declared diplomatic war, as India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) revealed this week that the Canadian government had sought to investigate and even interrogate the Indian High Commissioner and five other diplomats, naming them "persons of interest" for the killing of **Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar**. Mr. Nijjar, who was shot dead in June 2023 in British Columbia, was wanted by India. In a press conference, the Canadian police (RCMP) detailed their suspicions that the Indian diplomats were somehow involved with an Indian criminal network they believe is responsible for the killing, as well in the targeting of some in the Indian diaspora. The Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has alleged political interference by India's diplomats, something hitherto it had accused China of. India's MEA has called the charges "preposterous", accusing Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of orchestrating the investigations for political gain with a pro-separatist Khalistani votebank, given his record-low ratings ahead of the 2025 general election. India also accused what it called the Canadian "regime" for providing space to "violent extremists and terrorists to ... intimidate Indian diplomats and community leaders...", in the name of free speech. Delhi and Ottawa have each expelled six diplomats. With the reduced staff strength in the High Commissions in both capitals and an outraged India reserving the right to further action, it could well mean drastic cuts in visas and curtailed direct travel links.

With the die cast for worsening ties, New Delhi must consider carefully the impact of its next steps not only on Indian diplomacy but also India's image. While it is imperative to defend India's diplomats, it is equally important to investigate the allegations that Indian intelligence agencies have overstepped in operations in the case. The RCMP's naming of Indian underworld gangster Lawrence Bishnoi must also be investigated. As India's adversaries seek to draw links between allegations against Indian intelligence and national security operations in Pakistan, the UAE, Qatar, Canada and the U.S., even India's close partners are looking askance. The U.S.'s statement, that India should cooperate with Canada, must be seen as evidence of that. India's dual policy towards the Nijjar case, which it outrightly rejects any connection to, and the Pannun case in the U.S. – it has sent a high-level inquiry team – also raises questions. The government must prove it has nothing to hide. It must also be more transparent about how it expects to deal with this challenge, and to reports that link Canada's allegations to India's top leadership including National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Home Minister Amit Shah. Above all, New Delhi must step up an international campaign to ensure accountability from Canada: to either present verifiable evidence, or to stop casting this shadow over India's reputation and its diplomats.

Canadian frostbite (17 October)

India must consider the impact of its next steps on its diplomacy and image

- India and Canada have declared a diplomatic conflict after a year of strained relations.
- India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reported that Canada sought to investigate and interrogate Indian High Commissioner and five other diplomats, naming them "persons of interest" in the killing of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
- Nijjar was shot dead in June 2023 in British Columbia and was wanted by India.
- Canadian police (RCMP) alleged involvement of Indian diplomats with a criminal network responsible for the killing and targeting some in the Indian diaspora.
- The Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Indian diplomats of political interference, previously reserved for accusations against China.
- India's MEA called the charges "preposterous," suggesting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is exploiting the situation for political gain with a pro-separatist Khalistani voter base ahead of the 2025 elections.
- India accused the Canadian government of providing a platform for "violent extremists and terrorists" to intimidate Indian diplomats and community leaders under the guise of free speech.
- Both countries expelled six diplomats, reducing staff at their High Commissions and risking further actions, such as cuts in visas and travel links.
- New Delhi must carefully consider the implications of its next steps on diplomacy and India's international image.
- While defending its diplomats is crucial, India should also investigate allegations that its intelligence agencies may have overstepped.
- The naming of Indian underworld gangster Lawrence Bishnoi by the RCMP should also be scrutinized.
- India's adversaries are trying to link these allegations to national security operations in various countries, causing concern even among close allies.

- The U.S. has urged India to cooperate with Canada, indicating scrutiny of India's actions.
- India's dual approach towards the Nijjar case and the Pannun case in the U.S. raises questions about transparency and accountability.
- The government must demonstrate it has nothing to hide and clarify its strategy for addressing the challenge.
- New Delhi should launch an international campaign for accountability from Canada, demanding verifiable evidence or cessation of damaging allegations against India and its diplomats.

Abject failure

India's 2024 Global Hunger Index ranking is a matter of concern

The 2024 Global Hunger Index (GHI) suggests that India's undernourished population this year would effectively rank as the seventh most populous country in the world – with roughly the population of Brazil, a staggering 200 million people. In stark terms, this is about 14% of India's existing population. The 2024 GHI, which is the report's 19th edition, considers comprehensive sets of data in its findings. In India's case, it considers the Sample Registration System statistical reports, that the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation publishes annually, which provide data such as on births, deaths, infant and maternal mortality, based on reports by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and NITI Aayog.

In 2024, the scorecard for the 127 nations analysed ranges from "low" to "extremely alarming". While India is ranked "serious" (rank 105 and score 27.3), it might as well be considered "extremely alarming" if one considers various other relevant factors. It also establishes the abject and systemic failure by the Indian state to address the most basic of human needs – of adequate food and nutrition that are essential to reap the benefits of the much touted 'demographic dividend'. India was the world's fastest growing economy, at 6.8% in FY24, with an estimated GDP of almost \$4 trillion, ranking fifth globally. However, its per capita income, of \$2,485 in FY24, was less than a fourth of the global average of \$13,920 in FY22, indicating the wide income inequality that would result in vastly varied disposable incomes. This is pertinent as food inflation more than doubled between FY22 and FY24, from 3.8% to 7.5%, affecting the poor. Even as the Economic Survey for 2023-24 blames this on 'extreme weather events, low reservoir levels and damaged crops, affecting farm output', India recorded one of its highest levels of food production – 332 million tonnes in 2023-24. This was largely due to bumper crops in rice and wheat, though pulses and vegetables were affected by extreme weather events. But these numbers when read with India's infant mortality – 26 per 1,000 live births in 2022, while the global average was 28 – and child stunting and wasting rates, of 35.5% and 18.7%, respectively, are revealing. They point to a failure of India's health-care and safety net systems and the denial to address what is apparent, namely, climate change that has already begun to cast a long shadow on India's food security.

Abject failure (17 October)

India's 2024 Global Hunger Index ranking is a matter of concern

- The 2024 Global Hunger Index (GHI) indicates that India's undernourished population would rank as the seventh most populous country globally, with about 200 million people, roughly 14% of India's population.
- The GHI report considers comprehensive data, including the Sample Registration System statistics published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- These statistics cover births, deaths, infant and maternal mortality, based on reports from the Ministry of Women and Child Development and NITI Aayog.
- The 2024 GHI scorecard for 127 nations ranges from "low" to "extremely alarming."
- India is ranked "serious" at 105 with a score of 27.3 but could be viewed as "extremely alarming" based on other factors.
- This ranking reflects a systemic failure by the Indian state to meet basic human needs for adequate food and nutrition, crucial for benefiting from the supposed 'demographic dividend.'
- India is the world's fastest-growing economy at 6.8% in FY24, with a GDP nearing \$4 trillion, ranking fifth globally.
- However, its per capita income of \$2,485 in FY24 is less than a fourth of the global average of \$13,920 in FY22, highlighting significant income inequality.

- Food inflation more than doubled from FY22 to FY24, rising from 3.8% to 7.5%, adversely impacting the poor.
- The Economic Survey for 2023-24 attributes food inflation to extreme weather events, low reservoir levels, and damaged crops affecting farm output.
- Despite recording one of its highest food production levels at 332 million tonnes in 2023-24, mainly due to bumper rice and wheat crops, pulses and vegetables suffered from extreme weather.
- India's infant mortality rate was 26 per 1,000 live births in 2022, slightly better than the global average of 28.
- Child stunting and wasting rates are 35.5% and 18.7%, respectively, indicating failures in India's health-care and safety net systems.
- These figures suggest a denial to address the apparent challenges posed by climate change, which is impacting India's food security.

Cauvery awards work only during good monsoons

An overview of the water releases month-wise, since 2018, shows that the order was adhered to when rains were bountiful

GS Paper II: Inter-State Water Dispute

T. Ramakrishnan

The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)'s prescription of the monthly schedule of the release of water by Karnataka to Tamil Nadu has been a bone of contention since the Tribunal's interim order in June 1991. Though the CWDT's final award, delivered in 2007, was modified by the Supreme Court 11 years later to address certain stakeholders' concerns, the court did not disturb the scheme of the monthly schedule.

Also, considering the growing requirements of Bengaluru city for drinking water, the court awarded an additional 4.75 TMC to Karnataka, along with 10 more TMC. Consequently, Tamil Nadu's overall allocation went down to 404.25 TMC from 419 TMC, as stipulated in the Tribunal's final award, and that of Karnataka rose to 284.75 TMC from 270 TMC. Of the total allocation for Tamil Nadu, Karnataka should release water from its reservoirs in such a manner that 177.25 TMC is realised by the lower riparian State annually (June-May) as per the monthly schedule.

The first four months of the water year – June-September or southwest monsoon (SWM) – are crucial for both the principal riparian States of the Cauvery river, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It is during the June-September period that the upper riparian State, Karnataka, receives the most rainfall. For Tamil Nadu, these four months account for nearly 70% of the annual quota – 123.1 TMC – of inflows into the State.

This year's SWM was bountiful for both the riparian States compared to the previous year. Last year, the lack of adequate rainfall led to emotions running high in both States over the lack of water supply for irrigation. This year, however, as the social media handle of the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre

(KSNDMC) revealed, the gross storage of four reservoirs of the Cauvery basin at the end of the monsoon period (September 30) was almost 60% higher than what it was on the corresponding day last year.

In terms of TMC, this year's storage was about 110.83 TMC against the previous year's 59.85. This year's storage amounted to 97% of the gross capacity, 114.57 TMC. Karnataka's four reservoirs in the basin – Krishnaraja Sagar, Kabini, Hemavathi, and Harangi – received at least 80 TMC more this time compared to the 30-year average of cumulative inflows. According to the KSNDMC, a total of 338 TMC was received by the reservoirs during this year's SWM. With the bountiful rains and the reservoirs filling up, water supply should not be an issue in the coming months for both agricultural and drinking water purposes in Karnataka.

The story for the lower riparian State, Tamil Nadu also coheres with the above; this year's figure of Cauvery water realisation exceeded the 200 TMC mark, with nearly 204 TMC released to the State. The receipts are vital as Tamil Nadu's Cauvery delta relies mainly on water from the upper riparian State during the SWM since the north-east monsoon (NEM) is relatively unpredictable and erratic in terms of rainfall patterns. This is evident in the way the India Meteorological Department views the NEM – as one of large spatial variations.

The eastern part of the Cauvery Delta, also closer to the coast, receives heavy rainfall many times in November and December, but the rest of the State does not receive this frequency of rainfall.

Considering these factors, the CWDT and the Supreme Court retained the scheme of a monthly schedule for the release of water from the Karnataka reservoirs. This was done to ensure that Tamil Nadu receives the maximum amount of water from June to September. The measurement is done

by taking the flow calculated at the Central Water Commission's gauge and discharge site in Biligundlu as the reference point.

The overall water requirement for Tamil Nadu, assessed in the CWDT's report (volume 5, pages 85-86), is 390.85 TMC to provide irrigation to 24.71 lakh acres of cropping land. This figure includes 10 TMC for reservoir losses.

Even though this year's total figure of realisation has crossed the annual share, Tamil Nadu, at meetings of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC), both of which form part of the implementation mechanism of judicial verdicts, has been contending that Karnataka should stick to the schedule of monthly release and make good any shortfall that arose in June and September.

Data on water release shows that leaving aside the water year 2023-24 when the CMWA and CWRC, at regular intervals, modified the stipulated quantum of water release for a few months, the cumulative realisation during June-September fell short of the prescribed quantity only in two out of six years. Table 1 shows that since 2018, the highest quantity – around 452 TMC – during the southwest monsoon was registered in 2022-23. The lowest was around 45 TMC in 2023-24, going purely by the statistical angle.

Chart 2 showing average figures of realisation month-wise for the SWM since 2018 – the year of the Supreme Court's judgment – reveals that August accounts for about 47% of the season's overall figure. July's share is 27% followed by September at around 23% with June constituting the rest.

This break-up across months is in line with the 42-year-long average figures (1974-75 to 2015-16) worked out by the Central Water Commission (CWC) which calculated August's share at 41%, July - 26%, September - 27% and June - 6%.

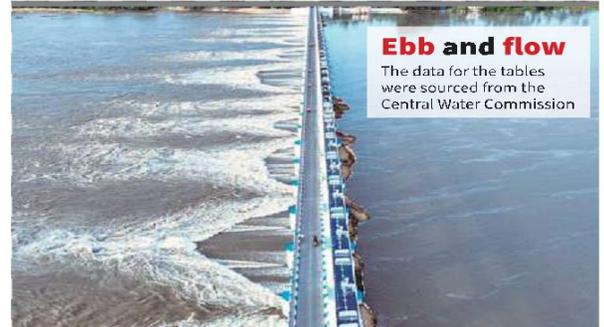


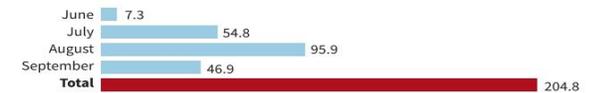
Table 1: The table shows the average figures of realisation month-wise for the southwest monsoon since 2018 – the year of the Supreme Court's judgment

STATEMENT OF FLOWS REALISED AT BILIGUNDLU		Figures in TMC			
Month/period	Quantity as per Supreme Court's judgment of February 16, 2018	Quantity received			
		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
June	9.2	13.3	2.1	6.2	
July	31.2	124.7	7.4	11.3	
August	46.0	176.5	92.3	57.5	
September	36.8	31.5	71.7	45.2	
Southwest monsoon season	123.1	346.0	173.5	120.2	
Excess/shortfall		222.9	50.3	-2.9	
Annual	177.3	405.4	275.2	211.4	
Excess/shortfall		228.2	97.9	34.1	

Month/period	Quantity as per Supreme Court's judgment of February 16, 2018	Quantity received			
		2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
June	9.2	7.7	16.5	2.8	2.3
July	31.2	28.0	106.9	8.7	96.5
August	46.0	22.6	223.6	20.0	78.4
September	36.8	33.1	105.5	13.6	27.6
Southwest monsoon season	123.1	91.5	452.5	45.2	204.8
Excess/shortfall		-31.7	329.3	-77.97*	81.7
Annual	177.3	281.1	667.5	81.4	N.A.
Excess/shortfall		103.8	490.3	-95.9*	N.A.

N.A. - not applicable. * worked out, if the year in question was a normal one

Chart 2: The chart shows the average realisation for the months of June to September over the last six years. Figures in TMC



Worked out by T. Ramakrishnan

Cauvery awards work only during good monsoons (17 October)

An overview of the water releases month-wise, since 2018, shows that the order was adhered to when rains were bountiful

- The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) established a monthly water release schedule from Karnataka to Tamil Nadu in June 1991.
- The CWDT's final award in 2007 was modified by the Supreme Court in 2018 to address stakeholder concerns, but the monthly schedule remained unchanged.

- The Supreme Court awarded Karnataka an additional 4.75 TMC and 10 more TMC for drinking water in Bengaluru.
- Tamil Nadu's allocation decreased from 419 TMC to 404.25 TMC, while Karnataka's rose from 270 TMC to 284.75 TMC.
- Karnataka must ensure that Tamil Nadu receives 177.25 TMC annually from its reservoirs as per the monthly schedule.
- The June-September period (southwest monsoon) is crucial for both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, with Karnataka receiving the most rainfall.
- These four months account for nearly 70% of Tamil Nadu's annual water inflow (123.1 TMC).
- This year's southwest monsoon was significantly better than last year's, which saw inadequate rainfall.
- Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) reported that reservoir storage at the end of the monsoon (September 30) was nearly 60% higher than the previous year.
- This year's reservoir storage was approximately 110.83 TMC compared to last year's 59.85 TMC, reaching 97% of gross capacity (114.57 TMC).
- Karnataka's four reservoirs (Krishnaraja Sagar, Kabini, Hemavathi, and Harangi) received at least 80 TMC more water than the 30-year average.
- A total of 338 TMC was received by the reservoirs during this year's southwest monsoon.
- With ample rainfall and full reservoirs, water supply for agricultural and drinking purposes in Karnataka is expected to be sufficient in the coming months.
- Tamil Nadu's Cauvery water realization this year exceeded 200 TMC, reaching nearly 204 TMC.
- The Cauvery delta relies primarily on water from Karnataka during the southwest monsoon (SWM) due to the unpredictability of the northeast monsoon (NEM).
- The India Meteorological Department characterizes the NEM as having large spatial variations.
- The eastern part of the Cauvery Delta receives heavy rainfall in November and December, while the rest of the State does not experience this frequency of rainfall.
- The CWDT and Supreme Court maintained a monthly water release schedule from Karnataka to ensure Tamil Nadu receives maximum water from June to September.
- Flow measurements are taken at the Central Water Commission's gauge and discharge site in Biligundlu.
- Tamil Nadu's overall water requirement is assessed at 390.85 TMC to irrigate 24.71 lakh acres, including 10 TMC for reservoir losses.
- Despite exceeding the annual share this year, Tamil Nadu argues in meetings of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) that Karnataka should adhere to the monthly release schedule and address any shortfalls from June and September.

- Data indicates that cumulative realization during June-September fell short of the prescribed quantity only twice in six years, excluding the modified water release quantum in 2023-24.
- The highest water quantity recorded during the southwest monsoon since 2018 was around 452 TMC in 2022-23, while the lowest was about 45 TMC in 2023-24.
- Average monthly realization figures since 2018 show August accounts for approximately 47% of the overall season's total, followed by July at 27% and September at around 23%, with June making up the rest.
- This monthly distribution aligns with the 42-year average calculated by the Central Water Commission (CWC) for the years 1974-75 to 2015-16.

How firms like Samsung view labour

Why is the South Korean electronics giant adamant on not recognising the Samsung India Workers' Union? What is Kaizen, the Japanese production method, and how does it influence East Asian capital? How do Chaebols operate in South Korea?

GS Paper II: Collective Bargaining

EXPLAINER

Anand P. Krishnan

The story so far:

In October 15, the Tamil Nadu labour department announced that the month-long strike at Samsung's manufacturing facility in Sriperumbudur has ended after successful negotiations between the workers and company management. The Samsung India Workers' Union (SIWU), affiliated to the Centre for Indian Trade Unions, announced the withdrawal of the strike and said they will return to work on October 17. While workers have raised various economic demands such as an incremental increase in their salaries over the next two years, at the heart of their protest is the demand for the recognition of SIWU. The management has continued to stonewall this particular demand, and the workers have resorted to the judicial route, with the matter now pending before the Madras High Court.

When did Samsung India start?

The South Korean company, Samsung commenced its operations in India in 1995. The biggest generator of revenue for the company in India are smartphone devices, with most of these manufactured at its second plant in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. Its facility in Sriperumbudur was established in 2007, and produces consumer durables such as televisions, refrigerators, washing machines and air conditioners. It employs close to 5,000 workers. In 2022, the company signed an MoU with Tamil Nadu government, through an investment of ₹1,588 crore, to set up a new plant to produce compressors for refrigerators.

How do East Asian firms view unions?

Forming a workers' union in a foreign-owned enterprise in India is a challenge in itself, with the need to pass through several political-bureaucratic loops to get it registered. However, getting



Across borders: The National Samsung Electronics Union workers shout slogans in front of the Samsung Electronics Nano City Hwaseong Campus in Hwaseong, South Korea on July 8. REUTERS

it recognised by the management has often proved to be even more difficult. Labour subordination and disciplining has remained the default setting of most East Asian companies operating in India, especially in the past two decades. Some notable workers' protests in different parts of India have been at manufacturing facilities with East Asian capital – Honda Scooters and Motorcycles in 2005, Maruti Suzuki in 2011-12, Wistron in 2020 and Foxconn in 2021. The stressful working conditions in these factories are shaped and determined by their management philosophy, which largely draws inspiration from the Japanese production method called Kaizen – that is, continuous improvement to increase work intensity and reduce idle time. Over the years, through offshore supply chains, global manufacturing in the electronics industry has been reordered into just-in-time production – a system in which products are created to meet

demand rather than in surplus or in advance of need. As companies adopt this model to increase efficiency, the output is ramped up ahead of product launches and peak sales periods. It leads to punishing work ethic, regimented culture of rules and unyielding deadlines.

It is in this context that the demand for representative associations is pertinent from a labour-centric perspective. However, past experiences – the ready reference being Maruti Suzuki workers' struggles to form a union – reflect the reluctance of managements. They remain extremely wary of unions, especially those with communist affiliations, and are apprehensive of their militant actions. As is visible in the present case, while there has been some conciliation towards other demands, Samsung has remained adamant on not recognising SIWU.

What about labour in South Korea?
Companies in South Korea such as

Samsung are called Chaebols. These are large, diversified business conglomerates owned and controlled by families or their close kin for generations. Chaebols have dominated South Korean economy since the 1960s and have also had significant links to the country's polity. Their origins can be traced to the encouragement and support provided by the authoritarian military dictatorship to rebuild the economy post the Korean war in 1953. The export-led growth strategy of Chaebols was dependent on their labour management strategies which was a combination of minimising labour costs, and intensification of work. Since then the work environment has moved from militaristic labour control and subordination in the 1970s to more paternalistic management practices such as welfare schemes and subsidies in later years. According to scholars Seung-Ho Kwon and Michael O'Donnell, as independent trade unions emerged in the country in the 1980s, the Chaebols brought in automated production systems, introduced external subcontractors and restructured as well as decentralised their operations to curb labour power (including transnational investments). Presently, Samsung, founded by Lee Byung-chul in 1938, is the country's largest Chaebol.

What are the concerns for India?

The prolonging of the strike causes concerns for both central and State governments – for the former, regarding India's manufacturing ambitions and becoming an alternative to China, and for the latter, who are forced to strike a balance between attracting foreign investments and signifying its political-governing philosophy of dignity and justice. The resolution of the issue is therefore a matter of prestige and urgency rather than any pro-labour development.

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THE GIST

▼ The South Korean company, Samsung commenced its operations in India in 1995. The biggest generator of revenue for the company in India are smartphone devices, with most of these manufactured at its second plant in Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

▼ The stressful working conditions in these factories are shaped and determined by their management philosophy, which largely draws inspiration from the Japanese production method called Kaizen – that is, continuous improvement to increase work intensity and reduce idle time.

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How firms like Samsung view labour (17 October)

Why is the South Korean electronics giant adamant on not recognising the Samsung India Workers' Union? What is Kaizen, the Japanese production method, and how does it influence East Asian capital? How do Chaebols operate in South Korea?

- On October 15, Tamil Nadu's labour department announced the end of a month-long strike at Samsung's manufacturing facility in Sriperumbudur after successful negotiations.
- The Samsung India Workers' Union (SIWU), affiliated with the Centre for Indian Trade Unions, announced the withdrawal of the strike and plans to return to work on October 17.
- Workers raised various economic demands, including incremental salary increases over the next two years, but their primary demand is for recognition of SIWU.
- The management has not recognized SIWU, and the workers have pursued legal action, with the matter pending in the Madras High Court.
- Samsung began operations in India in 1995, with smartphones being its biggest revenue generator, primarily manufactured at its Noida plant.
- The Sriperumbudur facility was established in 2007 and produces consumer durables like televisions and refrigerators, employing close to 5,000 workers.
- In 2022, Samsung signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tamil Nadu government for a ₹1,588 crore investment to set up a new plant for refrigerator compressors.
- Forming a workers' union in foreign-owned enterprises in India is challenging due to political-bureaucratic hurdles for registration and recognition by management.
- East Asian companies in India often default to labor subordination and strict management practices, as seen in notable protests at Honda, Maruti Suzuki, Wistron, and Foxconn facilities.
- The working conditions are influenced by the Japanese production method called Kaizen, which emphasizes continuous improvement and efficiency, often resulting in high work intensity and reduced idle time.
- The shift to just-in-time production in global manufacturing leads to rigorous work ethics and strict deadlines, making representative associations crucial from a labor perspective.
- Historical experiences, such as the Maruti Suzuki workers' struggles, illustrate management's reluctance to accept unions, especially those with communist affiliations.
- In the current situation, while Samsung has shown some willingness to address other demands, it remains steadfast in not recognizing SIWU.

What about labour in South Korea?

- Companies in South Korea, such as Samsung, are known as Chaebols.
- Chaebols are large, diversified business conglomerates owned and controlled by families or their close kin for generations.
- They have dominated the South Korean economy since the 1960s and have significant links to the country's polity.
- Their origins trace back to the support from the authoritarian military dictatorship to rebuild the economy after the Korean War in 1953.
- The export-led growth strategy of Chaebols relied on labor management practices focused on minimizing labor costs and intensifying work.
- The work environment evolved from militaristic labor control in the 1970s to more paternalistic management practices, including welfare schemes and subsidies.
- In the 1980s, as independent trade unions emerged, Chaebols introduced automated production systems, external subcontractors, and decentralized operations to curb labor power.
- Samsung, founded by Lee Byung-chul in 1938, is currently the largest Chaebol in South Korea.
- The prolongation of the strike raises concerns for both central and state governments in India.
- For the central government, the concern relates to India's manufacturing ambitions and becoming an alternative to China.
- For the state government, the challenge lies in balancing the attraction of foreign investments with the political philosophy of dignity and justice.
- The resolution of the strike issue is viewed as a matter of prestige and urgency rather than a genuine pro-labor development.

What does the Global Hunger Index 2024 state about India?

Why has the Ministry of Women and Child Development raised concerns over the data collection method?

GS Paper II: Poverty and Hunger
सप्तमो ग्लोस

The story so far:

The Global Hunger Index for 2024 states that a 'serious' level of hunger is prevalent in India. It ranks India 105th among 127 countries, giving it a score of 27.3. A score below 9.9 indicates low levels of hunger, 10-19.9 moderate, 35-49.9 alarming and above 50 extremely alarming.

What does it state about India?

The score is based on four broad parameters, that is, child stunting (share of children under five with lower height proportional to their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition), undernourishment (share of population with insufficient caloric intake), child wasting (share of children under five with lower weight proportional to their height) and child mortality (share of children who die before their fifth birthday). The report traced 13.7% of the population to be undernourished, 35.5% of children as

stunted, 18.7% of children wasted and 2.9% of children dying before their fifth birthday. As per the survey, India has the highest child wasting rate globally.

However, the analysis states that India has demonstrated "significant political will" to transform the food and nutrition landscape – pointing to the National Food Security Act, Poshan Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission), PM Garib Kalyan Yojna (PMGKAY) and National Mission for Natural Farming. But the report argues there exists room for improvement. To illustrate a solution, the report points to the co-relation between the poor nutritional status of mothers being transferred onto their children. There exists an 'intergenerational pattern of undernutrition' where the factors driving India's high child wasting rate entail mothers inflicted with insufficient weight gain during pregnancy and low birth weight among infants.

What about India's GDP growth?

The report states that the relationship

between per capita GDP growth and low levels of hunger is "not always direct or guaranteed". In other words, GDP growth alone does not result in improved food and nutritional security for the entire populace. Thus, the report puts forth the imperative for policies to emphasise pro-poor development alongside addressing social/economic inequalities.

What solutions does it propose?

Broadly, the report proposes a multifaceted approach such as improved access to social safety nets, addressing complementary factors relating to well-being and nutrition, alongside dedicated approaches to assessing and provisioning nutritional needs. The first of the proposed measures entail improved access to safety nets and cash transfers. These, the report states, involve improving access to programs such as the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS), PMGKAY and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). Other than this, it proposes investments in

agriculture and a holistic food systems approach which promotes diversified, nutritious and ecological food production including nutri-cereals such as millets.

Other dedicated approaches include making effective investments in mother and child health. It recommends a set of factors such as improved water, sanitation and hygiene, among other things. Finally, the report also seeks interventions to consider links between food and nutrition, gender and climate change.

What is the debate about data collection methodology?

The previous year, the Ministry of Women and Child Development had expressed concerns about the data not being accessed from their ICT application 'Poshan Tracker'. The Ministry pointed out that UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank have acknowledged the tracker as a "game-changer". It observed child wasting being consistently below 7.2% on a month-on-month basis as compared to the 18.7% stated in the 2023 index.

However, researchers have maintained that they use survey estimates that have been vetted for inclusion in the Joint Malnutrition Estimates and/or the WHO Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition. It argues that using the same data source ensures that the numbers are produced using comparable methodologies. "Introducing exceptions to this process for any country would compromise the comparability of the results and the ranking," it states.

THE GIST

▼
The Global Hunger Index for 2024 states that a 'serious' level of hunger is prevalent in India.

▼
The score is based on four broad parameters, that is, child stunting (share of children under five with lower height proportional to their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition), undernourishment (share of population with insufficient caloric intake), child wasting (share of children under five with lower weight proportional to their height) and child mortality (share of children who die before their fifth birthday).

▼
The Ministry of Women and Child Development have expressed concerns about the data not being accessed from their ICT application 'Poshan Tracker'.

What does the Global Hunger Index 2024 state about India? (17 October)

Why has the Ministry of Women and Child Development raised concerns over the data collection method?

- The Global Hunger Index for 2024 indicates a 'serious' level of hunger in India, ranking it 105th out of 127 countries with a score of 27.3.
- Score ranges: below 9.9 indicates low hunger, 10-19.9 moderate, 35-49.9 alarming, and above 50 extremely alarming.

The score is based on four parameters:

- Child stunting: share of children under five with lower height proportional to age (chronic undernutrition).
- Undernourishment: share of the population with insufficient caloric intake.
- Child wasting: share of children under five with lower weight proportional to height.
- Child mortality: share of children who die before their fifth birthday.

Report findings:

- 13.7% of the population is undernourished.
- 35.5% of children are stunted.

- 18.7% of children are wasted.
- 2.9% of children die before their fifth birthday.
- India has the highest child wasting rate globally.
- The report acknowledges significant political will in India to transform the food and nutrition landscape, citing initiatives like the National Food Security Act, Poshan Abhiyan, PM Garib Kalyan Yojna, and National Mission for Natural Farming.
- It argues there is room for improvement, particularly noting the intergenerational pattern of undernutrition, where poor nutritional status in mothers affects their children.
- Insufficient weight gain during pregnancy and low birth weight among infants contribute to high child wasting rates.
- Regarding GDP growth, the report states the relationship between per capita GDP growth and low levels of hunger is not always direct or guaranteed.
- GDP growth alone does not ensure improved food and nutritional security for the entire population.
- The report emphasizes the need for policies focused on pro-poor development and addressing social/economic inequalities.

What solutions does it propose

- The report proposes a multifaceted approach to improving nutrition and well-being, including:
 - Improved access to social safety nets.
 - Addressing complementary factors related to well-being and nutrition.
 - Dedicated approaches to assessing and provisioning nutritional needs.

Proposed measures include:

- Improved access to safety nets and cash transfers.
- Enhancing access to programs like the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS), PMGKAY, and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- The report advocates for investments in agriculture and a holistic food systems approach, promoting diversified, nutritious, and ecological food production, including nutri-cereals like millets.
- Dedicated approaches also focus on effective investments in mother and child health, including improved water, sanitation, and hygiene.
- The report highlights the need for interventions considering links between food and nutrition, gender, and climate change.

There is a debate regarding data collection methodology:

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development raised concerns about data not being accessed from their ICT application 'Poshan Tracker'.

- The Ministry noted that UNICEF, WHO, and the World Bank recognize the tracker as a “game-changer” and reported child wasting consistently below 7.2%, contrasting with the 18.7% stated in the 2023 index.
- Researchers defend their use of survey estimates vetted for inclusion in the Joint Malnutrition Estimates and/or the WHO Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition, arguing that this ensures comparability of methodologies.
- They caution that introducing exceptions for any country would compromise the comparability of results and rankings.