

# **The Hindu**

## **Front Page**

### **Uddhav resigns after SC denies stay on floor test (Page no. 1)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

Embattled Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced his resignation from the post on Wednesday, moments after the Supreme Court refused to stay Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's direction to the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government to take a floor test in the Assembly on Thursday.

The rebel Sena MLAs who were stationed in Guwahati since June 22 were taken to Goa on Wednesday evening and from there, they were scheduled to be brought to Mumbai.

Prior to leaving, all the MLAs were taken to the Kamakhya temple. "We will be in Mumbai on Thursday to vote in the floor test," rebel leader Eknath Shinde said.

Central forces are here. Army might be called. Those who should have been at China borders will be here. I don't want to see blood of my workers spilling on the roads of Mumbai.

Today, I resign from the post of Chief Minister." He said he was quitting as a Member of the Legislative Council and would now only concentrate on party work.

"I never said I will return. I never wanted to be here at this place, but I came. From now on, I will be fully with you," he told Sena workers.

### **Govt. hikes GST for household items (Page no. 1)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Economy)**

From July 18, tax hikes will kick in for over two dozen goods and services, ranging from unbranded food items, curd and buttermilk to lowcost hotels, cheques and maps, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council decided after a two-day meet that concluded on Wednesday.

Tax rates will be lowered for about half-a-dozen goods and services, including ropeways and truck rentals where fuel costs are included, and scrapped for items imported by private vendors for use by defence forces.

At the meeting, over a dozen States wanted the GST compensation to continue for some more time.

The upward changes in GST levies include tweaks for 17 goods and services, to correct anomalies that had crept in from inverted duty structures where tax rates on inputs were higher than the final product.

Separately, the tax rate on Tetra Pak has been raised from 12% to 18%, while cut and polished diamonds will now attract GST at 1.5% instead of the prevailing 0.25%.

The GST rate on splints for treating fractures, intraocular lens for those with failing eyesight and ostomy appliances will be reduced from 12% to 5%.

The Council has also clarified that Assisted Reproductive Technology and In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) services are covered under the health care services for the purpose of GST exemption, but stem cell preservation services will no longer be tax-free.

Hospital room rents over ₹5,000 a day, excluding patients in intensive care units, shall now be taxed at 5%.

## **States**

### **'Do not give green nod for Mokedatu project' (Page no. 4)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Governance)**

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Wednesday urged the Centre not to give environmental clearance for Karnataka's Mokedatu reservoir project on the Cauvery.

Launching various projects including the opening of a bus terminus in Vellore, he said giving environmental clearance for the project would go against the Supreme Court's 2018 order in which it upheld the rights of the lower riparian State (Tamil Nadu).

"In such a scenario, I request the Centre not to give clearance for the project. Karnataka has been pressuring the Centre by frequently visiting the national capital over this issue," Mr. Stalin said.

The Chief Minister said the project would prevent Tamil Nadu from exercising its rights over Cauvery water. Besides, it would reduce the quantum of water meant for the State, which would be tantamount to deceiving the farmers, he said, adding that denial of water was against the principles of cooperative federalism.

Pointing to Tamil Nadu's contribution to the national economy in various sectors, Mr. Stalin said the State accounted for 6% of the total revenue generated, 8.4% of the total exports, 19.4% of the total textile exports, 32.5% of the total car exports and 33% of the total leather exports of the country.

On the other hand, the Centre had shared only 1.21% of its total revenue with the State. "As you all know, I raised this injustice before the Prime Minister when he was here (in Chennai).

The DMK government will always raise its voice for the State's rights," he said. The Chief Minister listed several projects that were in various stages of execution in Vellore.

"A SIPCOT unit would come up on 300 acres in Mahimandapam village in Katpadi taluk. This was a request made by Water Resources Minister Mr. Duraimurugan. Other upcoming projects include a five-acre Tidel Park in Abdullapuram village on the Chennai-Bengaluru Highway. The airport for Vellore town is also being constructed in the village.

## **Editorial**

### **Zakia Jafri and the constitutional conscience (Page no. 6)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Governance)**

On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court of India delivered a 452-page judgment in the case of Zakia Ahsan Jafri vs State of Gujarat, which has far-reaching implications for our understanding of constitutional morality and the rule of law in a constitutional democracy.

The arrests of human rights defender and co-petitioner Teesta Setalvad, and former Gujarat police officer R.B. Sreekumar followed close on the heels of the judgment as if on cue to put all those who had (to quote from the judgment) 'the audacity to question the integrity of every functionary involved in the process of exposing the devious stratagem adopted (to borrow the submission of the learned counsel for the Special Investigation Team [SIT]), to keep the pot boiling, obviously, for ulterior design... in the dock and proceeded with in accordance with law'.

Ms. Setalvad, Mr. Sreekumar and (another former IPS officer) Sanjiv Bhat (who has been in custody) are named several times with words such as 'vengeance', 'tirade', 'persecution' and 'disgruntlement' liberally used to describe them — the 'aggrieved party' in this account is the state.

The judgment reproduces at length the assertions of the SIT. Two senior advocates appointed as amicus curiae, advocate Prashant Bhushan and advocate Rohinton Fali Nariman (as he was then) withdrew in quick succession.

The third, advocate Raju Ramachandran, submitted a separate report, parts of which are reproduced in the appendix.

This report (although given no weight by the SIT with the Supreme Court following suit) nevertheless gives us a window into how constitutional sensibilities might be deployed in a case such as this against the odds.

In all this, by deflecting judicial ire onto Ms. Setalvad, Mr. Sreekumar and Mr. Bhat, Zakia Jafri ends up being portrayed as a victim of diabolical activists rather than as a survivor of mass murder.

### **The anti defection law — political facts, legal fiction (Page no. 6)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Governance)**

In the din of India's electoral politics, floor crossing by legislators rarely goes out of public discourse. The practice of legislators from changing political parties during their term continues unabated in Indian legislatures despite the Tenth Schedule having been inserted into the Constitution in 1985.

Commonly known as the 'anti-defection law', it was meant to arrest the practice of legislators from changing political affiliations during their term in office.

The political crisis in Maharashtra, and many others before it, are grim reminders of what the Tenth Schedule can and cannot do.

Instances of floor crossing have long gone unchecked and unpunished. In part, this can be attributed to the exemption given to mergers between political parties which facilitate bulk defections.

In 2019, MLAs in the Goa Legislative Assembly from the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), crossed over to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The Speaker of the Assembly as well as the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court dismissed the pleas seeking disqualification of these MLAs.

Both these authorities held that because the MLAs formed two-thirds of their respective legislature parties, disqualification under the Tenth Schedule was not possible. In other words, there was a "deemed merger" of the INC and the MGP with the BJP.

## **OPED**

## **The Indian challenge in Afghanistan (Page no. 7)**

### **(GS Paper 2, International Relation)**

India's record as a 'first responder' is improving by the day. Just 24 hours after a massive earthquake hit Afghanistan, the Indian Air Force moved in with tonnes of relief.

That is impressive. It is also badly needed, given that the worst earthquake in 20 years hit a region that has been at war for decades.

Desperate people are always open to adopting any means to survive. Apart from India, other countries will soon weigh in with aid. This might be the time to either make friends or renew hostility with old enemies.

The massive earthquake was centred around Khost along the Afghanistan- Pakistan border, and measured 5.9 on the Richter Scale.

Clearly, the Pakistan side would have suffered as well, though there has been no reportage on this in the Pakistani media. Like other news from the tribal areas, this one also appears to have been damped down.

The proximity to the affected area also meant that Pakistan was able to send relief aid quickly. Trucks decked with banners entered Afghanistan declaring that the aid was from "the people of Pakistan".

Iran also sent relief material by air. Both these efforts and the Pakistan Foreign Ministry's statement expressing condolences were reported by Xinhua. There was nothing about India's effort.

There was also nothing on Qatar, which is in negotiations to manage Kabul, Kandahar and Herat airports.

## **A direct approach to conservation (Page no. 7)**

### **(GS Paper 3, Environment)**

Incentives for biodiversity protection and sustainable use include biodiversity-relevant taxes, fees, levies, tradeable permits, and Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES).

Through these economic instruments, governments can affect both public and private financing flows for biodiversity. Mobilisation of biodiversity finance through pesticide levies, admission fees to natural parks, hunting and fishing permit fees, and the trade-in energy-saving certificates has gained governmental support and political will, but the mobilisation of private and public finance for PES has lacked lustre.

Lack of academic research, governmental support, and political will have vexed environmental economists.

Despite a solid theoretical foundation and the ability to tether investments more directly to outcomes, the debate revolves around the same issues from two decades: monetisation of environmental benefits, lack of additionality (how much environmental service would have been provided without conditional payments), and so on.

PES is one way to conserve and increase ecosystem services. It works through the establishment of performance contracts.

People who can help provide the desired ecosystem service are rewarded based on their actions, or the quantity and quality of the services themselves.

PES presents a unique scope for incentivising local land stewards to manage threatened ecosystems.

It has the potential to achieve the dual goals of conservation and poverty alleviation towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. This places PES as one of the pivotal economic instruments for conservation.

## **Explainer**

### **How Turkey made peace with Sweden and Finland joining NATO (Page no. 8)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, International Relation)**

On June 28, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Turkey, Finland and Sweden in a trilateral meeting held in Madrid, Spain.

The MoU was signed once the Finland President Niinistö and Sweden Prime Minister Andersson agreed to address the national security concerns of Turkey. Following this assurance, President Erdoğan agreed to support Finland and Sweden in their bid to join NATO.

The key provisions of the MoU include the following three points: a joint commitment between Turkey, Finland, and Sweden to counter terrorism; addressing the pending extradition of terror suspects through a bilateral legal framework, and investigating and interdicting "any financing and recruitment activities of the PKK and all other terrorist organisations."

Besides the above, Finland and Sweden assured that "their respective national regulatory frameworks for arms exports enable new commitments to Allies".

Both countries also promised to stand against disinformation and to fully commit to EU's CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) and Turkey's participation in the ESCO (Permanent Structured Co-operation) Project on Military Mobility.

## **News**

### **Speeding major cause of death: Lancet study (Page no. 12)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Governance)**

Steps taken to check vehicle speed on roads in India could alone have the biggest impact on ensuring road safety by saving 20,554 lives annually, says a new Lancet study, which underlines that interventions focusing on four key risk factors such as speeding, drunk driving, non-use of crash helmets and seat belts could prevent 25% to 40% of the 13.5 lakh fatal road injuries worldwide every year.

This is the first study that gives country-specific estimates of the effect of addressing the four main road safety risk factors through interventions for 185 countries.

In India, interventions to check speeding could save 20,554 lives and promotion of crash helmets could save 5,683 lives. Encouraging the use of seat belts can also save 3,204 lives in the country.

The estimate for drunken driving was not available for India because either the percentage of total deaths due to alcohol consumption in the country was not reported or calculations were found to be unstable.

The report uses mortality data from Global Burden Diseases, 2017, which are based on modelling and estimated 2,18,876 deaths due to road injuries in India in 2017, while the Government of India's figures which suffer from under-reporting stood at 1,47,913 for the year.

According to the Road Transport and Highway Ministry's 2020 report, there were a total 1,31,714 deaths due to road accidents, where speeding accounted for 69.3% of deaths (91,239), non-wearing of helmets resulted in 30.1% deaths (39,798) and non-use of seat belts caused 11.5% of deaths (26,896).

### **63,000 farm co-ops to be digitized (Page no. 12)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Agriculture)**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday approved a proposal to digitise around 63,000 primary agricultural credit societies (PACS).

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah said that PACS are the smallest unit in the cooperative sector and their computerisation will prove to be a boon for it.

Mr. Shah said the PACS will be digitised at a cost of ₹2,516 crore, which will benefit about 13 crore small and marginal farmers.

Each PACS will get around ₹4 lakh to upgrade its capacity and even old accounting records will be digitised and linked to a cloud based software.

"In this digital age, the decision of computerisation of PACS will increase their transparency, reliability and efficiency, and will also facilitate the accounting of multipurpose PACS," Mr. Shah said.

The Minister said the software will be made available in local languages for the convenience of the people. Along with this, it will also help primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) to become a nodal centre for providing services such as direct benefit transfer (DBT), Interest subvention scheme (ISS), crop insurance scheme (PMFBY), and inputs like fertilizers and seeds.

## **Business**

### **'GST hike for pumpsets will affect farm sector (Page no. 14)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Economy)**

Hike in GST rates for pumpsets from 12% to 18%, as recommended by the GST Council, will hit the agriculture sector, said K.V. Karthik, president of Southern India Engineering Manufacturers' Association.

The average minimum cost of an agriculture pumpset is ₹40,000, excluding GST. With the increase in GST from 12% to 18%, a farmer, who is the customer of the pumpset, would have to pay ₹2,400 more only towards GST.

With this hike, the difference in cost between a branded pumpset and a locally-assembled one would widen and farmers would prefer to go for alternatives that would cost lower, he said.

The assembled pumpsets would not have energy efficiency rating and increase in use of such pumpsets would indirectly result in electricity losses.

The steep hike in the cost of pumpsets would hit the agriculture sector. This would be a larger problem. The pumpset sector had been facing a slowdown for the last six months and the hike in GST rate would be an another blow to the industry, he added.