

VEDHIK

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The New Learning Mantra

FOREWORD

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

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

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

CONTENTS

- News -Posts on Kashmir unacceptable Centre
GSP 02 A
- Editorials - Coasting towards trouble
GSP 02 E
- Editorials - Rights of the weak, duties of the powerful
GSP 02 E
- News - Haryana Cabinet nod for anti-conversion Bill Part I
GSP 02 E
- News - Haryana Cabinet nod for anti-conversion Bill Part II
GSP 02 E

CONTENTS

- Editorials - The Governor's role in approving a Bill
GSP 02 H
- Editorials - NEET and States
GSP 02 S
- Editorials - NEET is discriminatory, against social justice
GSP 02 S
- News - India's debt-to-GDP better than of U.S., official's riposte
GSP 03 A
- Editorials - Step up agri-spending, boost farm incomes
GSP 03 F

Posts on Kashmir unacceptable: Centre

Jaishankar speaks to South Korean counterpart

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Terming as “unacceptable” social media posts calling for Kashmiri “freedom” by various multinational companies (MNCs) based in Pakistan, the government on Tuesday went on a diplomatic overdrive.

While External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke to his South Korean counterpart Chung Eui-yong to protest against the posts put out by Hyundai Motor Company, the Ministry of External Af-



The strong displeasure of the government on the unacceptable social media post by Hyundai Pakistan was conveyed to [the Korean Ambassador]. It was highlighted that this matter concerned India's territorial integrity on which there could be no compromise

ARINDAM BAGCHI, MEA spokesperson



fairs (MEA) conveyed to a number of other countries that it found the posts “offensive”, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal told Parliament.

Apart from South Korean companies Hyundai and Kia, the Pakistani branches of American MNCs KFC and Pizza Hut, Japanese companies Osaka batteries, Atlas

Honda Ltd. and Isuzu as well as German pharmaceutical company Schwabe had carried posts expressing “solidarity” with “Kashmiri brothers and sisters”, and “praying for the liberation” on February 5, which is marked as “Kashmir solidarity day” in Pakistan.

South Korean Ambassa-

dor Chang Jae Bok was summoned to South Block by the MEA, while Indian Ambassador to Seoul Sripriya Ranganathan sought an explanation from Hyundai and Kia for the posts. “The strong displeasure of the government on the unacceptable social media post by Hyundai Pakistan was conveyed to [the Korean Ambassador],” MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said in a statement.

Mr. Bagchi said Mr. Chung, during his telephone conversation, “regretted the offence caused to the people and Government of India by the social media post”.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 14



For dignity: Hijab clad women staging a protest in Raichur on Monday against the 'dress codes' being imposed in schools and colleges of coastal Karnataka. • SANTOSH SAGAR

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Coasting towards trouble

The communalism being mounted in coastal Karnataka attempts to sever ties between communities

THE GIST

■ The social and ideological communalism in coastal Karnataka attempts to sever communities from all social ties and employs every possible resource to subvert this end. At the same time, such communalism operates in a context of growing sociality. It marks off a people from the rest by invoking religious divide as its justification.

■ Coastal Karnataka has always been peripheral to the larger dynamics at work in the rest of the State. Several developments in the 1970s and '80s led to a distinct dynamics in this region. The oil boom after 1973 gave a boost to migration of Muslims and Christians to the Gulf region while sections of Brahmins and backward castes along the coast came under the influence of the RSS and the Sangh Parivar.

■ Communal riots in this region began to assume a mass character in the 1980s. Following the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992, communal riots have constantly erupted in this region, a major one being at Surathkal in 1998. While in recent years, communal riots tend to be localised there is a new pattern that has become common, i.e. killing a political activist belonging to one of the militant communal groups and drawing political mileage out of it. It serves the interests of those who want to benefit from generalised social interactions without considering the bond of fellow-feeling cutting across communities.

VALERIAN RODRIGUES

This piece by Valerian Rodrigues dated August 3, 2017, gives us a history of the communally sensitive regions of coastal Karnataka which is now witnessing escalating tensions over the hijab row wherein Muslim women wearing the headscarf are not allowed entry into colleges and other educational institutions.

The regional media in Karnataka has resorted to highly suggestive terms to describe the recurrent pattern of communal outburst in coastal Karnataka, particularly in the outlying areas of Mangaluru city, in recent months. One such term is the 'Republic of coastal Karnataka', where communal bands rule the roost and the State enjoys little clout as sovereign, in the same way as in the 'Republic of Bellary' where, a few years ago, the writ of the mining barons ran. While such an analogy may not capture the everyday social dynamics of coastal Karnataka, the term does indicate an emerging social sensibility in the region where wanton and brutal killing of an ideological adversary is increasingly seen as normal and displayed as a public spectacle to reinforce community boundaries.

It is important to distinguish between ideological and social communalism mounted in coastal Karnataka on the one hand and political communalism elsewhere in the State, largely occasioned by the electoral calculations at work, on the other. Political communalism employs an event, a monument, a syncretic space or a social cleavage to pit a large group of people against the other. It does not sever all ties of people forged around social division of labour, linguistic affinities, folklore. But social and ideological communalism as in coastal Karnataka attempts to sever communities from all social ties and employs every possible resource to subvert this end. At the same time, such communalism operates in a context of growing sociality. It marks off a people from the rest when their adherents are akin to one another by invoking religious divide as its justification.

Community enclosures

Coastal Karnataka, comprising Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and a large part of Uttara Kannada district, has always been peripheral to the larger dynamics at work in the rest of Karnataka. During the national movement, a numerically significant section of Brahmins from this region aligned itself with sections of backward castes to form the main plank of the Congress, while the local landed gentry and Muslims tended to favour the non-Brahmin movement. There were other castes and communities such as Billavas and Christians who devoted themselves primarily to self-help and self-improvement. Following Independence, electoral politics drew the landed gentry, Muslims, Christians and a little

later the Billavas into the Congress fold. Communists and socialists too became an important political presence in the region with their social base among the tile, cashew, beedi and handloom workers as well as the tenants. Communal skirmishes have always erupted in this region from the late 1940s and were also employed to target the radical politics of socialists and communists. However, such conflicts remained primarily local.

Several developments in the 1970s and '80s led to a distinct dynamics in this region. The oil boom after 1973 gave a boost to migration of Muslims and Christians to the Gulf region. The Catholic Church, with 8% of the local population as its adherents, regrouped itself, following Vatican Council II, by embracing Konkani as its ritual language. The access to West Asia helped Muslims of the region as a whole, including communities with old roots such as the Bearys and the Nayavats, to augment their entrepreneurial abilities and explore new avenues of employment, while bringing them face to face with the chilling developments in the Islamic world, particularly in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

In recent years, given the economic toll that communal riots exact in the context of thick social interactions, they tend to be localised or erupt for a day or two before they subside, as reconnaissance exercises.

Diverse Brahmin castes, that form about 10% of the local population, have always enjoyed wider contacts across India particularly given the legacies of association with the Advaita and Dvaita traditions, as represented by Sringeri and Udupi, respectively, and the age-old hold of Gaud-Saraswats on trade in the western coast. While sections of Brahmins and backward castes along the coast came under the influence of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Sangh Parivar in this region early, it was in the late 1970s and early 1980s that this influence was to prove decisive. Calls came to be issued from different platforms for Hindu unity and pitting this unity against that of the Christians and Muslims. At the same time, land reforms and preferential measures to Backward Classes initiated by Devaraj Urs in the 1970s made the landed gentry desert the Congress fold, while tenants and backward castes flocked to it in strength. It also led to the precipitous decline of the socialists and communists in this region.

This rupture of community affinities was accompanied by the expansion of private education in this region, particularly under the aegis of upper-caste entrepreneurs. Christians were already a strong presence in this field, and

Muslim entrepreneurship too registered a steady advance in this sector from the 1980s. In certain other domains too such as land deals, construction, transport, and professions, there was a visible presence of members drawn from different communities. But such diversification of the market was invariably riven by religious belonging. While the goods and services sought were the same across the community divide, the associated members approached them as members of their respective communities.

Communal flare-ups

Communal riots in this region began to assume a mass character in the 1980s. Following the demolition of Babri mosque in 1992, several parts of this region erupted and the Army had to be called in to Mangaluru to restore law and order. From the early 1990s, Bhatkal in Uttara Kannada district blazed a distinct trail of its own when a few youths of this town came under the influence of political Islam. After 1992 communal riots have constantly erupted in this region, a major one being at Surathkal on the outskirts of Mangaluru in 1998, which resulted in eight deaths. Following the Surathkal riot, social vigilantism became a major social phenomenon in the district, every community leader playing the role of disciplining its members while gangs in the streets enforced it. Local gangs in the name of Sri Ram Sene and Hindu Yuva Sene policed social intimacies, often beating up members of other communities, while similar gangs guarded the boundaries of their own communities.

Politics in the region has largely traversed the fault lines of community divide. However, in recent years, given the economic toll that communal riots exact in the context of thick social interactions, they tend to be localised or erupt for a day or two before they subside, as reconnaissance exercises. But there is a new pattern that has become common, i.e. killing a political activist belonging to one of the militant communal groups and taking over the streets either to condemn such killings or to draw political mileage out of it. It serves the interests of those who want to benefit from generalised social interactions without considering the bond of fellow-feeling cutting across communities.

The State government has largely followed a strategy of using the law and order machinery to deal with communal flare-ups in this region. Media reportage and local gossip tend to blame politicians for stoking communal passions for electoral gains. But the issue demands a much more complex response if a shared public life is to be enabled in the context of generalised social interactions deeply marked by community affiliations.

Valerian Rodrigues is a former Professor at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Rights of the weak, duties of the powerful

A complaint of undue emphasis on rights creates the suspicion that citizens are being disempowered



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

Rights and duties are conceptually linked to one another. There are no rights without duties. If a person has the right to something, it necessarily implies that someone else has a corresponding duty to ensure that it is not violated. For example, if an individual has a right to free speech, then it is the duty of the state to prevent its infringement. Or take the right to religious freedom of, say, American Hindus. Other groups, regardless of numbers or social power, have a duty not to infringe it. If they ever fall short of space for worship, the government should help fix that problem, facilitate its possession or use by Hindus. Isn't it a shame then that in Gurugram only the Sikhs felt duty-bound to help ordinary Muslims offer namaz?

If I have rights which impose duties on others, then others also have rights that enforce duties on me. Individuals have as many duties as rights. Any individual who demands a right and expects others to allow or facilitate its exercise must also expect that she is equally duty-bound to reciprocate. This is so simply because, like her, all others have rights too. We are all rights- as well as duties-bearing individuals.

I hope it is abundantly clear that rights entail duties, that rights cannot be exercised without the simultaneous performance of duties. Because of their grounding in rights, these (rights-based) duties cannot be pitted against rights. No opposition between them exists. To say here that we must focus on duties *rather than* on rights makes no sense. What then could be meant by the proposition that we must move away from a rights-based to a duty-based perspective?

Duties against rights

It should be obvious that the framework of rights and duties discussed above is grounded in egalitarian assumptions. However, the moment we drop this assumption, this whole picture of rights and duties is trans-



formed. To be sure, the conceptual relation between rights and duties remains unbroken. Rights continue to entail duties, but in deeply hierarchical, inequalitarian societies, only a few people have rights, while the many have duties to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of these few.

In patriarchal families, the father alone has the right to take decisions. This puts all other members under a duty to abide by his decision. Remember Amrish Puri in *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*? He decides, without consultation, that Simran, played by Kajol, is to be married to the son of his friend in a Punjabi village. And Simran has no choice but to obey, to leave her home in London and settle in India. The mother, sympathetic to Simran, is also duty-bound not to object to the father's decision.

Much the same is true of caste-ridden societies. It is a misconception that the ancient Hindu *Varna Vyavastha* has only duties and no rights. The duties of Shudras and Ati-shudras to serve people of higher rank flow from rights possessed exclusively by upper castes. A hierarchical caste system distributes rights and duties unequally. Only a few have the most important rights – the right to be served, for instance; the larger population has corresponding duties to ensure that these rights are exercised without hindrance. Any infringement on the rights of the upper caste, especially the Brahmin, brings heavy penalties to the violator, sometimes even death. Similarly, in many Islamic societies, rights and duties are gender-specific, and unequal. It is the right of men to have their testimony in the court weigh twice as

much as that of women who are duty-bound to comply.

In absolute monarchies, the King has unrestricted rights and all others have corresponding duties which increase as we go down the ladder of political hierarchy. Those at the bottom have the maximum number of duties towards the maximum number of people, all ranked higher than them. Talk of priority of duties over rights is rampant in inequalitarian societies. When people are asked to forget about rights and think more about duties, the subtext is that they should forget about caring for their own rights and concentrate on their duties to the few. In hierarchical, inequalitarian societies, where power is unevenly distributed, duties are often seen in opposition to rights.

Careful attention to the structure of rights and duties in inequalitarian societies reveals its deep connection to social and political power. Those in power have rights; those without it have duties. A transformation from a hierarchical to an egalitarian order does not produce a power-free order. Instead, at least in principle, such change generates a democratic distribution of power. It is this equality of power that ensures a system of equal rights and duties. Indeed, in egalitarian polities, more power means more duties. The powerless have rights, the powerful have duties. For example, it is the duty of the state to ensure that there is no poverty, disease or unemployment. In this context, any move to shift focus from rights to duties, to complain of undue emphasis on rights breeds the suspicion that democracy is being undermined and hierarchy reintro-

duced through the backdoor.

Duties beyond rights

However, one cannot altogether deny the importance of a moral discourse that asks people to attend to duties. For, quite simply, duties that do not oppose rights exist and they do not flow from rights but go beyond them. Let us take an example. A surgeon performs an operation. He does his job efficiently and believes that once done, he is under no obligation to be present in the hospital or talk to the family of the patient. Now, consider another surgeon who after performing the operation feels compelled to interact with the patient, placate the anxieties of his family. Abandoning an impersonal stance, he brings warmth to his interaction. His act flows from duties that are integral to his character, to the goodness of his heart, to his personal virtues, to his commitment to warm social relationships, and *does not flow from any right* of the patient. To be sure, the patient and the family have the right to the surgeon's full attention when he is performing the operation. A failure to do so would mean an obvious violation of the patient's right. But no right of the patient or his family is violated if the surgeon does not go that extra mile to personally reassure the patient and his family.

A society with people who take such virtue-based, solidarity-infused duties seriously is much better than one where such duties are not valued. If that is the case, it is good to ask people to go beyond rights and to think also of their duties to others, and more generally to society. We all have a duty to build a tolerant society, or to remain vigilant against potential wrongs of our elected rulers. These duties are not antagonistic to rights; they are moral, non-justiciable. Many such duties are mentioned in our Constitution: to preserve composite culture, not destroy natural environment, develop scientific temper, safeguard public property, protect India's sovereignty and integrity. None of them are legally enforceable but they impose an obligation on all citizens, especially on those who occupy public office, to go beyond the call of rights-based duties.

Rajeev Bhargava is a political philosopher and Director, PAREKH Institute of Indian Thought, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

Haryana Cabinet nod for anti-conversion Bill

‘Umpteen cases of religious conversions recorded’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Haryana Cabinet on Tuesday approved the draft of the Haryana Prevention of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2022, which seeks to prohibit religious conversion effected through misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage or for marriage, by making it an offence.

According to the draft Bill, the burden of proof “lies on the accused”. The draft Bill will now be tabled before the Assembly, an official statement said.

Higher punishment

The Bill, on the lines of recent anti-conversion laws passed in other States, proposes to make conversion by marriage an offence.

It also prescribes higher punishment for conversion of minors, women, and members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

The draft Bill’s statements of objectives and reasons read, “The Constitution confers on each individual the fundamental right to profess, practise and propagate his religion. However, the individual right to freedom of conscience and religion can-

Legal code

A brief timeline of the developments leading to the drafting of the new Bill

Nov. 1, 2020: Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal says the State government was taking the ‘love jihad’ issue seriously

Nov. 17: Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij says a strict law will be enacted to control ‘love jihad’ cases in the State and a committee will be constituted to draft this law

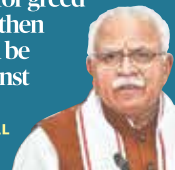
Nov-end: Govt. sets up a three-member committee to draft an anti-conversion law

Feb. 8, 2022: Haryana Cabinet approves the draft of the Haryana Prevention of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2022

■ The Bill is to be tabled during the Assembly session which begins on March 2

There is no bar on anyone who marries without converting, but if someone forcibly converts someone for greed of money, then action will be taken against them

MANOHAR LAL
HARYANA CM



not be extended to construe a collective right to proselytize; for the right to religious freedom belongs equally to the person converting and the individual sought to be converted.”

‘Hidden agenda’

It added that there have been umpteen cases of religious conversions, both mass and individual.

“Obviously, such incidents have been hotly debated, more so in a multi-religious society, such as ours. The presence of pseudo-social organisations with a hidden agenda to convert the vulnerable sections of other religions. There have been

instances when gullible people have been converted by offering allurement or under undue influence. Some have been forced to convert to other religions.”

It pointed out that in the recent past, there have been instances where to increase the strength of their own religion by getting people from other religions converted, people marry persons of other religion by either misrepresentation or concealment of their own religion and after getting married they force such other person to convert to their own religion.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 14

Haryana Cabinet nod for anti-conversion Bill

"Such incidents not only infringe the freedom of religion of the persons so converted but also militate against the secular fabric of our society that conversion just for the purpose of marriage is unacceptable," the draft Bill said.

The burden of proof as to whether a conversion was not affected through misrepresentation, use of force, under threat, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage or for marriage for the purpose of carrying out conversion lies

on the accused, it noted.

Every individual converting from one religion to another shall submit to the prescribed authority a declaration that the conversion effected through was not misrepresentation, use of force, under threat, undue influence, coercion or by any fraudulent means or by marriage or for marriage and such authority shall make an inquiry in such cases. Besides, the draft Bill provides for declaring marriages null and void, which were solemnized by concealment of religion.

EXPLAINER

The Governor's role in approving a Bill

Can the Governor over-ride the decision of the Legislative Houses? Under what circumstances does the President step in?

K. VENKATRAMANAN

The story so far: The Tamil Nadu Assembly has once again adopted a Bill that was earlier returned by Governor R.N. Ravi. The Bill seeks to grant exemption from the mandatory National Entrance-cum-Eligibility Test (NEET) for seats allotted by the Government in undergraduate medical and dental courses in Tamil Nadu. Last week, the Governor returned the Bill, contending that it was against the interests of rural and poor students.

What comes next?

There is no doubt that the Governor will now have to grant his assent to the Bill. Under Article 200 of the Constitution, which deals with grant of assent to Bills passed by the Assembly, the first proviso enables the Governor to return a Bill, that is not a Money Bill, with a message requesting the House, or Houses, if there is an upper chamber, to reconsider the Bill, or any provisions, and also consider introducing amendments he may recommend. The House will have to reconsider as suggested. If the Bill is passed

In the present case, the Bill will have to be sent to the President for his assent, as it is enacted under an entry in the Concurrent List on a subject that is covered by a central law

again, with or without changes, and presented for assent, "the Governor shall not withhold assent therefrom".

In the present case, the Bill will have to be sent to the President for his assent, as it is enacted under an entry in the Concurrent List on a subject that is covered by a central law. NEET is mandatory under Section 10D of the Indian Medical Council of India Act, an amendment introduced in 2016. Therefore, the State law can be in force only if the President grants his assent. This will cure the 'repugnancy' between the central and State laws.

What is the Governor's function in passing a Bill?

Under Article 200, the Governor may (a) grant assent (b) withhold assent (c) return for reconsideration by the Legislature or (b) reserve for the consideration of the



President any Bill passed by the State legislature and presented to him for assent.

There is no timeframe fixed in the Constitution for any of these functions. The Constitution makes it mandatory that the Governor should reserve for the President's consideration if, in his opinion (a phrase that means he exercises his own discretion in this), a Bill that "so derogates from the powers of the High Court as to endanger the position which that Court is by this Constitution designed to fill". In other words, any Bill that seems to clip the wings of the High Court or undermine its functioning will not become law without the President's assent.

What happens when the President considers the Bill?

Once again, there is no timeframe. Article 201 says when a Bill is reserved by a Governor for his consideration, "the President shall declare either that he assents to the Bill, or that he withholds assent therefrom". He may also direct the Governor to return the Bill, if it is not a Money Bill, to the Legislature along with a message. The

House or Houses will have to reconsider the Bill within a period of six months from receiving it. It may pass the Bill again with or without any change. The Bill shall again be presented to the President for his consideration. The article ends with that. This means that the Bill will become law if the assent is given, but nothing can be done if the Bill is denied assent by the President or if he makes no decision.

Does the Governor have any discretion in this regard?

Section 75 of the Government of India Act, 1935, contained the words "in his discretion" while referring to the Governor's grant of assent to Bills. The phrase was consciously omitted when Article 175 in the draft Constitution (later renumbered as the present Article 200) was enacted. Commentators generally agree that the Governor, who normally functions on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, is bound to go by the advice in the matter of granting assent. It may seem unusual to say the Governor should act on ministerial advice even when withholding assent and

returning a Bill for reconsideration. However, a reading of the Constituent Assembly debates shows that this was indeed what the framers of the Constitution intended. It was explained on behalf of the drafting committee that there may be a situation when the Council of Ministers feels that a Bill has been hastily adopted or that it requires changes.

In such a situation, the Constitution must provide for the possibility that the Council may want to recall its Bill, and accordingly advise the Governor to return it.

While analysing the provision, the Sarkaria Commission on Union-State Relations points out that the Constitutional Adviser's note said there could be occasions for even withholding assent on the advice of the Ministers.

For instance, if after a Bill is passed the Ministers resign before the Bill gets the Governor's assent, the new Ministry may not want to go ahead with the Bill and might advise against assent being given. These examples suggest that no discretion was ever envisaged for the Governor in dealing with Bills.

Pass the Bill: Students hold placards as they stage a protest against Tamil Nadu Governor's stand on the anti-NEET Bill, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on February 8, 2022.

PTI

THE GIST

■ The Tamil Nadu Assembly has once again adopted a Bill on the exemption of the NEET exams that was earlier returned by Governor R.N. Ravi. The Governor returned the bill stating that it was against the interests of rural and poor students.

■ The Governor will now have to grant his assent to the Bill as mandated by Article 200 of the Constitution. The first proviso of the article enables the Governor to return a Bill for reconsideration. If the Bill is passed again and presented for assent, "the Governor shall not withhold assent therefrom".

■ The Governor does not have discretion on matters of the Assembly and is bound to follow the advice of the ministerial Council even on matters where he/she might be withholding assent.

NEET and States

Governor should not delay assent to TN's Bill for exemption from mandatory admission test

With the Tamil Nadu Assembly passing once again its earlier Bill seeking to exempt government seats in undergraduate medical and dental courses from the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), the ball is once again in the court of Governor R.N. Ravi. The Governor had chosen to return to the House for reconsideration the Bill that was passed in September 2021, questioning the tenability of the Justice A.K. Rajan Committee Report that had given its findings in favour of the the passage of such a law. The DMK regime has thrown down the gauntlet as the Constitution is clear as far as the Governor's course of action is concerned. If the Bill is presented to him again, Mr. Ravi is constitutionally bound to grant assent. It is a matter of speculation whether the Bill will obtain presidential nod, but the episode raises a question whether the Governor could not have avoided the current situation by reserving the Bill for the President instead of returning it. After all, this is clearly a Bill that requires the President's acceptance – the exemption from NEET is in conflict with the central law that makes it mandatory and, therefore, can only be saved by the President's assent. Regardless of the Bill's merits, the Governor should delay the matter no further. The original intent of the Constitution makers was that the Governor, under Article 200, ought to have no discretion, save in the case of a law that undermines the position of the High Court, which he is bound to reserve for the President's consideration. However, the Governor's rare use of discretion to question the desirability or validity of a Bill, and ask for reconsideration is now a matter of constitutional practice.

Some parts of the Governor's communication to the Legislative Assembly Speaker seem to suggest that Mr. Ravi disagrees with the basis for the Bill, even though he is not wrong in highlighting a Supreme Court decision in favour of NEET. It is not generally desirable for the Governor to seek to match wits with the legislature's wisdom on social inputs that inform policy. It will be useful to recall that the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State relations observed that the Governor should not act contrary to the advice of the Council of Ministers merely because he did not like the policy embodied in the Bill. The attention will now be on whether the NEET Exemption Bill will pass muster. For one thing, the exemption may not be a solution to the problem of government school students not making it to MBBS courses in sufficient numbers. The situation prior to the introduction of NEET was no better. However, the issue of NEET being a barrier to access is genuine. There is no doubt that the mandatory nature of NEET on a pan-India basis undermines the role of State governments in medical education. As the main deliverers of public health, the States cannot be denied a say in who joins medical courses in government colleges.

'NEET is discriminatory, against social justice'

The NEET Exemption Bill not only defends the right to education and social rights but also upholds Tamil Nadu's rights



M.K. STALIN

Hon'ble Speaker of the House. Elections were held in the Province of Madras when the electoral system was first established in India to elect people's representatives by the people. The Justice Party, pioneer of the Dravidian movement, formed the government in the first general election in 1920, when the country was under British rule.

All those who travelled to India from England to observe the working of the Madras Provincial Assembly remarked that the Madras Province is the only province in India governed by the rule of law and administrative protocols.

This is a significant day in the history of this House, which established such democratic values. We have assembled here to defend democracy, to preserve democracy's dignity, to uphold the principle of federalism, and to secure the right to education.

To defend federal philosophy

We are not only getting together to talk about the NEET Exam [the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test]. We have gathered to preserve the Tamil Nadu Legislature's sovereignty and rights. Federalism is a fundamental idea that truly safeguards the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the Indian subcontinent! We have come together to ensure that the great federal philosophy remains intact.

I stand in this Assembly that has laid the foundation for success in upholding social justice, legal justice, oppressed people's rights, the greatness of Tamil ethnic community and its language. And I speak with the confidence that this Assembly can and will definitely eliminate the social injustice of NEET. Today, we are here in this Special Assembly to propose a policy of social justice in education for the entire country, having been trained in the footsteps of our leader Anna. To quench students' passion for medical education, we have all come together to work in solidarity and promote social justice.

NEET is not a system esta-

blished by the Constitution. It was not made a part of the Constitution. The Medical Council of India mandated the creation of NEET. When such an examination was proposed in 2010, Muthamizharinar Kalaingar, the then-Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, vehemently opposed it.

Much opposed

It was also opposed by a number of Indian States. This examination has been challenged in 115 cases across India. Tamil Nadu is the State that is leading the charge in this direction. All of these cases were heard by the Supreme Court.

NEET was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court itself on July 18, 2013. The Chief Justice of India delivered the judgment. The exam was subsequently abolished across the Indian subcontinent.

However, after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the election and formed the government, a private training institute reopened the issue. The Supreme Court heard the case of NEET. "Judgment is recalled" and "Hear this case afresh," the Supreme Court said on May 24, 2016 after hearing the case. On this basis, the BJP-led Union government issued an ordinance on April 11, 2016, which quickly implemented NEET across the country.

Private training institutes benefited from NEET. The NEET Exemption Bill is being introduced for the benefit of those who cannot afford to pay so much for training. NEET is an impediment to the entitlement of poor and needy children to education. In their dream of becoming doctors, a barrier wall has been placed in the name of NEET. "You can't be a doctor," says NEET. "You don't deserve it," it says, halting one's progress. That is why the NEET Exemption Bill has been introduced. I do not think I need to go into great detail about the abnormalities in that exam at this assembly.

So, to summarise, NEET is not a holy cow. It attempts to marginalise students from low-income families in the guise of merit. As a result, we oppose the examination and demand an exemption.

The question I would want to address in this forum is whether NEET, which has sent some students to the graveyard and others to jail, is really required. This is a question that has been raised by

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the entire student community as well as parents.

A detailed review

On June 19, 2021, a committee led by retired High Court judge A.K. Rajan was formed to investigate the issues and submit a report on the effects of NEET on poor and backward students. The public was consulted. On July 14, 2021, the Committee submitted a 193-page report to the Government based on those comments. They claimed that Government school students were unable to follow their dreams of pursuing a medical education.

I have formed a committee under the leadership of the Chief Secretary to provide detailed recommendations on this report. After careful consideration, the Bill exempting Tamil Nadu from NEET was enacted by this Assembly. We did a lot of study and were able to pass this Bill, supported with factual information.

The NEET Exemption Bill was passed with the support of all members of this House, with the exception of four BJP members. The Bill reflected not only the sentiments of Tamil Nadu as a whole, but also the Assembly's notion of its sovereignty.

It had to be approved by the Hon'ble Governor, and he should have sent it to the Hon'ble President for his approval. Instead, he kept it pending for 142 days before reaching a decision – despite our numerous requests – and then returned it to us. In this Assembly, I must state unequivocally that the reasons he cited for rejecting the Bill were incorrect.

On June 10, 2021, the Justice A.K. Rajan Committee was set up under G.O. No.283, Department of Health and Family Welfare. The committee was made up of academics and government officials. The study's terms of reference were also made public by this high-level group.

The public was asked to provide feedback to the committee. Hun-

dreds of thousands of people had expressed their opinions to the Commission by email, mail, and petition boxes put in various locations.

According to the recommendation, NEET has limited the diversity of community representation in MBBS and higher medical courses by impeding the desire of those underprivileged of receiving medical education and favouring the socio-economically rich sections. The statistics for this can be found in the report as well. According to the survey, government school-children, those whose parents' annual income is less than ₹2.5 lakh, the backward (BC), the most backward (MBC), Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are the most affected.

The Governor criticised the study for claiming that NEET is "against merit". It is worth noting that the report of the Justice A.K. Rajan committee includes proven facts rejecting this. Among those chosen so far, rural poor students have been affected. According to the research, those who studied in the Tamil medium in government schools are also harmed. At this point, I strongly advise that no one mistakenly counts those who benefit from the Government of Tamil Nadu's 7.5% reservation as having profited from NEET.

The power to legislate

A five-judge Supreme Court Bench heard the matter of *Modern Dental College vs Madhya Pradesh government*. The Supreme Court verdict was clear: The State government has the power to legislate on student admissions to higher education institutions.

In a separate judgment delivered by Justice Banumathi in the same case, she also ruled that the law regulating student admission was within the jurisdiction of the State government. We passed the Bill against NEET solely using the legislative power of the State legislature.

The Governor has urged that NEET be made mandatory by the Constitution. According to the Constitution, any legal provision can be made, but only for the rights of the socially and economically disadvantaged. We are bringing this NEET Exemption Bill back on that basis. The Constitution is anti-discriminatory. However, NEET is inherently discriminatory. Social justice is emphasised in

constitutional law. NEET, on the other hand, is opposed to social justice. The term "justice of the law" is used in constitutional law. But NEET favours the rich. The Indian Constitution is built on the principle of equality. NEET, on the other hand, is the polar opposite of equality. NEET is opposed to all of the Constitution's fundamental rights. That is why we are requesting NEET exemption.

My pain stems from having to debate for so long about a dreadful exam that disproportionately impacts poor and rural students.

The return of this Bill has also put into doubt the right of our State of Tamil Nadu. This legislature's sovereignty has been brought into question. The autonomy of States has been questioned. That is what concerns me. What will happen to the constitutionally mandated relationship between the Union and State governments? What are the rights and responsibilities of people of various races, languages, and cultures?

We passed a Bill on September 13, 2021 to exempt students from NEET based on the power we have. The Governor is required by law to reserve it to the President for approval. I expect the Governor to carry out his responsibilities correctly. That is the Governor's responsibility, which is limited by the legislative power of the legislature, which is elected by the people.

I hope that the Governor will respect the sentiments of the people of Tamil Nadu and act in the best interests of the students of Tamil Nadu by sending the NEET Exemption Bill to the President without delay, which will be reconsidered and passed under the power conferred on the people elected by the Legislature by the Constitution. I urge everyone to support this Bill in order to defend the right to education, which has been denied for a long time, as well as the State rights of Tamil Nadu and the social rights of Scheduled Castes, tribals, backward/most backward/the oppressed/the poor/the marginalised/and rural peoples.

Hail Tamil Nadu!

M.K. Stalin is the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and President of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). This article is an edited version of the Chief Minister's speech

India's debt-to-GDP better than of U.S., official's riposte

Somanathan questions rating agencies' 'double standards'

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI

Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan hit out at global rating agencies' comments about India being the most indebted emerging market and about the lack of clarity on a fiscal consolidation path in the Union Budget, arguing they appeared to adopt 'double standards' in their assessments of emerging economies and developed markets.

"I say this with a sense of seriousness and responsibility, not in a flippant way, that rating agencies do have double standards between emerging and non-emerging countries. Fitch [Ratings] has said that we have one of the highest debt-to-GDP ratios in emerging market countries," Mr. Somanathan said, asserting that India had 'one of the best' debt-to-GDP ratios when compared with higher-rated countries.

"Our debt-to-GDP ratio is far lower than the United States, Japan, and other such highly-rated countries in Europe. Our denominator in terms of GDP has a natural tendency, even in the worst of times, to grow faster than those AAA-rated countries. Even if you forget India's inherent fundamentals and go by pure mathematics, with a nominal growth rate of 10% to 12% and a 4% inflation rate, our deficits are far less worrying than some of the deficits of much higher-rated countries," the Finance Secretary told *The Hindu*.

'Ratio will decline'

"Ultimately it boils down to the debt dynamics, the numerical dynamics... We are very clear that the debt-to-



T.V. Somanathan

GDP ratio must decline and it will decline," he asserted.

Fitch, which maintains a negative outlook on India, had said the country had limited fiscal space to respond to shocks, with the highest general government debt ratio of any 'BBB'-rated emerging market sovereign at just under 90% of GDP'. The Budget, offered 'less clarity' on the medium-term fiscal outlook and 'few details' on how the 4.5% of GDP fiscal deficit target would be achieved by 2025-26, it said.

Moody's Investors Service, which termed the Budget a 'credit positive' for India's sovereign rating, said the path towards the medium-term deficit target was undefined, even as government debt would increase to about 91% of GDP next year. Mr. Somanathan, however, pointed out there was no need to assume 'ambiguity' on this front.

"The glide path has already been provided in last year's Budget, that we will reach a deficit of 4.5% of GDP in FY26 with an approximately even path of consolidation, and this Budget reiterated we are committed to that path," he said, asserting that a statement by the Finance Minister in Parliament was as vis-

ible a glide path as one could get. To get from 6.9% in 2021-22 to 4.5% by '25-26, entails an approximately 60-basis points reduction a year on average.

"In 2022-23, we are consolidating by 0.5%. So we may be 0.1% off that trajectory... but marginal adjustments have been made that seem to be desirable in terms of promoting growth now," he said. "So, there is a path that is stated, is feasible and we are on course to meeting it," he underlined.

The Finance Secretary said bond yields spiking was a 'normal response' to an expanded borrowing programme in a 'well-run and efficient' market, but emphasised that part of the spike in yields had happened even ahead of the Budget in response to global conditions such as high oil prices, inflation and the U.S. Federal Reserve's taper programme to replace quantitative easing.

"Yes, an additional supply of bonds will affect yields... but the balance that the government had to strike was at the margin," he said, referring to the dilemma between fretting about a small increase in yields and tightening fiscal at a juncture where some more expenditure is desirable to promote growth.

'Savers will be happy'

While the Centre's borrowing costs would rise sharply in FY23, the Finance Secretary said this was not at unprecedented levels. "Of course, we would like them to be as low as possible. But let me also remind you savers will be very happy when these rates go up. So everything has a positive side."

Step up agri-spending, boost farm incomes

India's poor AOI is a stark reminder of the need to attain a key sustainable development goal of higher agri-growth



POORNIMA VARMA

While the overall budgetary allocation towards the agricultural sector has marginally increased by 4.4% in the Union Budget 2022-23, the rate of increase is lower than the current inflation rate of 5.5%-6%. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) report for 2001 to 2019 shows that, globally, India is among the top 10 countries in terms of government spending in agriculture, constituting a share of around 7.3% of its total government expenditure. However, India lags behind several low-income countries such as Malawi (18%), Mali (12.4%), Bhutan (12%), Nepal (8%), as well as upper middle-income countries such as Guyana (10.3%) and China (9.6%).

India is ranked low

The picture changes and rather looks disappointing when we look at the Agriculture Orientation Index (AOI) – an index which was developed as part of the Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 emphasises an increase in investment in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, develop-

ment of technology to enhance agricultural productivity and eradication of poverty in middle- and lower-income countries. The AOI is calculated by dividing the agriculture share of government expenditure by the agriculture value added share of GDP. In other words, it measures the ratio between government spending towards the agricultural sector and the sector's contribution to GDP. India's index is one of the lowest, reflecting that the spending towards the agricultural sector is not commensurate with the sector's contribution towards GDP.

A comparison with Asia

Although the AOI has shown an improvement since the mid-2000s, as part of the general revival that took place in several middle-income countries, India's AOI (<https://bit.ly/3rBSorH>) is one of the lowest in Asia and among several other middle-income and upper-income countries. Asia as a whole performs much better, with a relatively higher performance by Eastern Asian countries. China has been doing remarkably well with an index steadily improving and crossing one.

Similarly, in countries such as the Republic of Korea, the value of AOI has been greater than one and greater than two since 2005-06 respectively. Even lower income African countries such as Zambia, have commendable spending in the agricultural sector despite being a landlocked country. India holds only the 38th rank in the world, despite being an agrarian



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economy wherein a huge population is dependent on the agricultural sector for its livelihood, and despite being among the largest producers of several crops produced and consumed in the world.

The enormous spending on the agricultural sector by East Asian countries is also reflected in their higher crop yield. For example, the total cereal yield in India is only around 3,282 kilograms per hectare compared to 4,225 kg per hectare in Asia. Within the Asian region, Eastern Asia has the highest cereal yield of 6,237 kg per hectare. In China, even with an average land holding size of 0.6 hectares, which is much lower than India's average land holding size, the performance of the sector in terms of crop yield is much higher than India. For example, the cereal yield is 6,296 kg per hectare, pulses yield is 1,815 kg per hectare and vegetable crops yield is 25,546 kg per hectare in China; the corresponding figures for India are 3,282 kg, 704 kg, and 15,451 kg, respectively. Both India and China are among the world's largest producers of wheat, rice, cotton and maize.

A closer look at the budgetary allocation towards the agricultural sector shows that there has been a drastic slashing of funds toward important schemes such as crop insurance and minimum support price (MSP). Even with an overall increase in budgetary outlays, the allocation towards Market Intervention Scheme and Price Support Scheme (MIS-PSS) was only ₹1,500 crore. This is 62% less than the previous allocation of ₹3,959.61 crore in revised estimates (RE) of FY 2021-22.

Other significant reductions

Similarly, the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshana Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) experienced a significant reduction to only one crore as against the allocation of ₹400 crore in 2021-22. It was allocated just ₹1 crore for the year as against an expenditure of ₹400 crore in 2021-22. Both schemes are pertinent to ensure MSP-based procurement operations in the country, especially for pulses and oil seeds. Furthermore, the distribution of pulses to States for welfare schemes has also been reduced to ₹9 crore as compared to the ₹50 crore of FY 2021-22 (revised estimates) and the allocated amount of ₹300 crore in the year 2021-22. Additionally, there is an overall reduction in ₹718.8 crore in total central schemes/projects, which may have serious implications for the performance of the sector.

While one can still argue that the capital investment in the agricultural sector is more crucial than price support programmes,

there has not been any considerable and commensurate increase in the allocation towards capital investment, especially for promotion of rural infrastructure and marketing facilities. Allocation for rural development was 5.59% in the previous Budget and it has been reduced to 5.23%. The allocation of funds towards schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana, though desirable, will not result in long run asset generation.

Measures to implement

The intensification in government spending towards the agricultural sector is the key to attain the sustainable development goals of higher agricultural growth and farm income. The focus on development of irrigation facilities, urban infrastructure and development of national highways must be complemented with an emphasis on the development of rural infrastructure and rural transportation facilities, along with an increase in the number of markets, as suggested by the National Commission on Farmers. These measures will play a crucial role in enhancing farmers' access to markets and integrating small and marginal farmers into the agricultural supply chain to a greater extent.

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General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

J	Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions;
K	Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies;
L	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies;
M	Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections;
N	Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;
O	Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;
P	Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures;
Q	Issues relating to poverty and hunger,
R	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes;
S	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources;
T	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health
General Studies Paper III	
A	Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment;
B	Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth;
C	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
D	Infrastructure Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. Government budgeting;
E	Land reforms in India
F	Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems;
G	Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints;
H	e-technology in the aid of farmers; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.
I	Issues of buffer stocks and food security, Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping;
J	Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management;
K	Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices
L	Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology;
M	Indigenization of technology and developing new technology;
N	Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life;
O	Issues relating to intellectual property rights
P	Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment
Q	Disaster and disaster management
R	Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security;
S	Money-laundering and its prevention;

T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
V	Linkages of organized crime with terrorism;
W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
General Studies Paper IV	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.