

The Hindu

Front Page

Mir's quick trial came ahead of U.S.- Pak. meet (Page no. 1)

(GS Paper 3, Internal Security)

Lashkar-e-Taiba deputy chief and 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks planner Sajid Mir was sentenced by a Pakistan anti-terrorism court in Lahore on terror-financing charges in May this year.

In a speedy trial completed just three weeks after he was arrested, three days before a U.S.-Pakistan ministerial meeting and a month before the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary that gave Pakistan a reprieve.

Mir had been declared “dead” by Pakistani officials as recently as in December 2021, but was then arrested by the police on April 21, 2022, convicted on May 16, 2022, and sent to prison to serve three consecutive sentences amounting to fifteen and a half years in prison.

According to a report in Pakistan Geo News, officials said Mir was tried and convicted “quietly”, given the sensitivities around the case.

The Ministry of External Affairs in India has not commented on the case, given that the arrest, conviction and sentencing have not been formally announced by Pakistan.

However, a government official said that the “timing” of Pakistan’s actions were “clearly aimed at being granted leniency from western countries at the FATF.

The conviction of Mir came just three days before a meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto on May 19 in New York, where they discussed Pakistan’s grey listing at the FATF.

‘India’s gig workforce to reach 2.35 cr. by 2030’ (Page no. 1)

(GS Paper 2, Social Justice)

The Centre’s policy think tank NITI Aayog has recommended steps to provide social security, including paid leave, occupational disease and accident insurance, support during irregularity of work and pension plans for the country’s gig workforce, which is expected to grow to 2.35 crore by 2029-30.

According to a study released by NITI Aayog on Monday, the number of gig workers is estimated to be 77 lakh in 2020-21.

India requires a framework that balances the flexibility offered by platforms while also ensuring social security of workers.

The consequent platformisation of work has given rise to a new classification of labour — platform labour — falling outside of the purview of the traditional dichotomy of formal and informal labour.

It added that platform workers are termed “independent contractors” and as a result, they cannot access many aspects of workplace protection and entitlements.

The report broadly classifies gig workers into platform and non-platform based workers. While platform workers are those whose work is based on online software applications or digital platforms, non-platform gig workers are generally casual wage workers and own-account workers in the conventional sectors, working part-time or full time.

PM invites G7 nations to invest in clean energy (Page no. 1)

(GS Paper 3, Environment)

Access to energy should not be a privilege of the rich and the poor also should have equal right to energy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday.

At a special session of the G7 summit in Germany, he said the clean energy sector had emerged as a major domain in India and developed economies should invest in this arena.

All of you will agree that energy access should not be the privilege of the rich only. A poor family also has the same rights.

And today, when energy costs are sky-high due to geopolitical tensions, it is more important to remember this,” Mr. Modi said at a session, ‘Investing in a better future: Climate, Energy, Health’.

India, along with South Africa, Indonesia, Argentina and Senegal, is a guest at this year’s G7 summit.

States

Musical boost for Tibetan carpets in Arunachal (Page no. 5)

(GS Paper 3, Economy)

An investment in a music system may power the journey of a carpet-weaving centre in Arunachal Pradesh from gloom to a GI (geographical indication) boom.

Floor and wall carpets have been the unique selling point for the Choephelling Cooperative Society since it was established in 1975 by Tibetan refugees on the outskirts of Miao, a subdivisional headquarters in Changlang district. But productivity slumped after more than four decades and the society was finding it hard to replace the ageing weavers with younger, faster ones.

The carpet unit and its wooden looms were falling apart and a poor lighting system was affecting the eyesight of the weavers.

The scenario changed after the Changlang district administration undertook a ₹15- lakh project to overhaul the carpet-weaving centre a few months ago.

The old looms were non-adjustable. For carpets of different sizes, they had to dismantle a loom and reinstall it, wasting a day in the process.

The weavers also had to sit on a low wooden block, bend and stand for different stages of work on a carpet.

Editorial

Complicated, volatile, the descriptors of Israel's politics (Page no. 6)

(GS Paper 3, Economy)

Israel is to call for yet another national election, its fifth since 2019, as Naftali Bennett's coalition government has ended abruptly. Israel's Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, has succeeded him as the caretaker Prime Minister and Israel is to go to the polls in either October or November 2022.

In April, Mr. Bennett had planned to travel to India to celebrate 30 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

His visit was cancelled at the last minute due to the rise in terror attacks in Israel and the crisis of a failing coalition.

In the scene of a rapidly changing domestic politics, Naftali Bennett and his right-wing members were constantly targeted by Opposition leaders such as Benjamin Netanyahu for having an alliance with an Arab party and giving work permits to the Palestinians from Gaza.

The coalition whip, Idit Silam, left the government in April and said this government has not been Jewish enough or loyal to the rightwing constituencies.

Accommodation of ideological differences was rejected; ideological compromise was seen as weakening the state of Israel. Mr Bennett could not create unity in diversity and offered to step down.

OPED

From higher to hire education (Page no. 7)

(GS Paper 2, Social Justice)

Higher education policy planners and regulators are busy giving shape to the digital university, which was announced in the 2022-23 Union Budget.

Though still on the drawing board, the digital university is expected to offer any number, kind, and type of course without limits on intake, in a hybrid or 'physical plus digital' mode. It proclaims to provide equitable access to quality higher education and employability-enhancing skill development programmes to all.

In the interim, the University Grants Commission has relaxed the norms and standards for setting up open universities. In particular, land requirement has been reduced from 40 acres to just five acres.

This is likely to open the flood gates for private open universities. Simultaneously, more universities are being enabled to offer courses in the distance, open and online mode, mostly in collaboration with EdTech startups and unicorns.

Some have already outsourced the delivery of their courses to such agencies. Students are also made to complete a certain portion of their course requirements through Massive Open Online Courses.

Additionally, they can accumulate credits at will and deposit them in their Academic Bank of Credit to be exchanged for a degree at a later stage. Higher education in India is getting metamorphosed into 'hire education'.

In the process, higher education is now getting delivered by for-profit entities, in contravention of the long-held belief that education at all levels must be provided on a not-for-profit basis.

Modi's two summits: UAE trumps G7 (Page no. 7)

(GS Paper 2, International Relation)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is attending two summits this week – he is a ‘special invitee’ at the 48th G7 Summit at Schloss Elmau in Germany.

After that, he has a bilateral summit in Abu Dhabi with the UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on June 28.

Though the pundits may consider the second event as a sideshow, some statistics are enough to prove them wrong. If the U.S. is exempted, no G7 country comes close to the UAE as India’s trading partner, exports market, Indian diaspora base and their inward remittances.

According to our official Foreign Direct Investment data, the UAE invested more in India in 2021 than Germany and France combined.

Unlike the UAE, none of the G7 countries has yet signed a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with India.

Both summits are important to India, but unlike the interlocutors in the Bavarian Alps, our Prime Minister is unlikely to be hectorred in Abu Dhabi about where not to buy oil from or how much Indian wheat and sugar must be sold.

The agenda is likely to be more constructive and benign.

Text and Context

When defection is a mere detour for an MLA (Page no. 9)

(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

The Supreme Court, after hearing rebel MLA faction leader Eknath Shinde’s petition challenging the disqualification notices issued to him and 15 other rebel MLAs, extended the deadline given to the concerned MLAs to file their responses to the disqualification notices.

They defected, re-contested, and became members again, all in six months. Some are even likely to become Ministers soon.

The Karnataka byelection results have widely put to display the ineffectiveness of the Anti-Defection Law. Of the 17 defecting Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) MLAs, 11 were re-elected on a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ticket.

Not only did this set of events lay down a well-structured framework to sidestep the law, it even set a dangerous precedent for neutralizing the consequences of the law altogether.

The phenomenon of defections is not new to Indian politics. It has been plaguing the political landscape for over five decades.

The most prominent case was that of Haryana’s Gaya Lal, originally an independent MLA who, in 1967, juggled between the Congress and Janata Party for two weeks, during which he switched his loyalty thrice.

The recurrence of this evil phenomenon led to the 1985 Anti-Defection Law, which defined three grounds of disqualification of MLAs — giving up party membership; going against party whip; and abstaining from voting.

News

Sikar in Rajasthan tops school grading index at district level (Page no. 12)

(GS Paper 2, Education)

Rajasthan’s Sikar is the top performer, followed by Jhunjhunu and Jaipur in the Union government’s index for performance of school education system at the district level.

The Ministry of Education’s Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) for 2019 released on Monday studied 83 indicators grouped in six categories.

These categories are outcomes, effective classroom transaction, infrastructure facilities and student’s entitlements, school safety and child protection, digital learning and governance process.

The three districts have figured in the ‘Utkarsh’ category (scoring 81-90% on a scale of 100) with Jhunjhunu scoring the maximum (236 out of 290) in learning outcomes.

Also, in the second grade ‘Ati-uttam’, Rajasthan is significantly ahead of the second and third top States with 24 of its districts in this category.

The PGI-D grades the districts into 10 grades with the highest achievable grade being ‘Daksh’, which is for districts scoring more than 90% of the total points in that category or overall.

‘Utkarsh’ category is for districts with score between 81-90%, followed by ‘Ati-Uttam’ (71-80%), ‘Uttam’ (61- 70%), ‘Prachesta-I’ (51-60%), ‘Prachesta-II’ (41-50%) and ‘Prachesta III’ (31-40%).

India, EU resume FTA negotiations (Page no. 12)
(GS Paper 2, International Organisation)

India and the European Union (EU) on Monday resumed negotiations, after a gap of over eight years, for a comprehensive free trade agreement, a move aimed at strengthening economic ties between the two regions. Senior officials from both the sides will hold discussions till July 1. "India and the EU today kick start 1st round of trade negotiations in #NewDelhi," Ugo Astuto, Ambassador of the EU to India and Bhutan, said in a tweet. India had started negotiations for a trade pact with the EU in 2007, but the talks stalled in 2013 as both sides failed to reach an agreement on key issues.

India, Malaysia discuss defence ties (Page no. 12)
(GS Paper 2, International Organisation)

In a video conference with Malaysian Defence Minister Hishammuddin Tun Hussein on Monday, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted the areas in which Indian defence industries could assist Malaysia. Mr. Singh suggested a visit of senior officers from Malaysia to India to get a firsthand experience of the facilities and products of Indian defence industry. Stating that the Malaysian Minister expressed the need for inducting women personnel in peacekeeping missions, the Ministry said, "Both sides agreed to engage each other on this issue. It was also agreed to upgrade capability for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations. The two Minister also discussed the existing defence cooperation activities and framework between the two countries, and ways to further enhance them under the existing Malaysia India Defence Cooperation Meeting (MIDCOM) framework. The next MIDCOM is scheduled to be held in July, and it was decided to use this platform for a deeper engagement in defence, the Ministry said. A wide range of issues concerning bilateral, regional and defence industrial cooperation were discussed during the meeting. Both Ministers expressed the intent to further boost the already strong India-Malaysia defence cooperation.

World Bank approves \$250-mn loan to boost India's road safety (Page no. 12)
(GS Paper 3, Economy)

The World Bank has approved a \$250 million loan to support the Government of India's road safety programme for seven States under which a single accident reporting number will be set up to better manage postcrash events. The India State Support Programme for Road Safety, financed by the World Bank, will be implemented in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. The \$250 million variable spread loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has a maturity of 18 years, with a grace period of 5.5 years. The project will also establish a national harmonized crash database system in order to analyse accidents and use that to construct better and safer roads. The project will also provide incentives to States to leverage private funding through public private partnership (PPP) concessions and pilot initiatives.

Business

GST panel may discuss States' compensation, e-com norms (Page no. 13)
(GS Paper 3, Economy)

The GST Council in its twoday meeting starting Tuesday is slated to discuss an array of issues, including a mechanism for compensating States for revenue loss, tax rate tweaks in some items and relaxed registration norms for small online suppliers. Further, the Council, chaired by the Union Finance Minister and comprising State counterparts, will also clear levying the highest tax rate of 28% on online games, casinos and horse racing. The GST Council will also consider a report of the panel of State ministers on making the e-way bill mandatory for intra-State movement of gold/ precious stones worth ₹2 lakh and above and e-invoicing mandatory for all taxpayers supplying gold/precious stones and having annual aggregate turnover above ₹20 crore. Besides, an interim report of a group of Ministers on rate rationalisation, which is likely to recommend correcting the inverted duty structure and removing some items from the exempted list, would also be taken up. The Council may see a stormy discussion around compensation to States with opposition-ruled States aggressively pushing for its continuation beyond the five-year period which ends in June.

World

NATO to raise response force from 40,000 to 3 lakh troops (Page no. 14) (GS Paper 3, Economy)

NATO will increase the strength of its rapid reaction force nearly eightfold to 3,00,000 troops as part of its response to an “era of strategic competition,” the military alliance’s secretarygeneral said Monday.

The NATO reaction force currently numbers around 40,000 soldiers which can deploy quickly when needed.

Coupled with other measures including the deployment of forces to defend specific allies, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the move is part of the “biggest overhaul of collective defence and deterrence since the Cold War.”

Mr. Stoltenberg made the remarks at a press conference ahead of a NATO summit later this week in Madrid when the 30 allies are expected to also agree on further support to Ukraine in its war against Russia.

Mr. Stoltenberg said he expects allies to make clear they consider Russia “as the most significant and direct threat to our security.”

In NATO’s new strategic concept, the alliance is also expected to address for the first time the security challenges posed by China, Mr. Stoltenberg said. In Madrid, allies will discuss how to respond to the growing influence of Russia and China in their “southern neighborhood.