

# The Indian Express

## Front Page

### **12 killed, 25 injured in Amarnath camp as cloudburst triggers flash flood (Page no: 3)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Disaster Management)**

At least 12 persons were killed and 25 injured in a flash flood triggered by a cloudburst that hit a camp near the Amarnath cave shrine in J&K's Ganderbal district.

The cloudburst occurred around 6 pm, and the flash flood washed away a part of the camp with officials estimating that at least 25 tents were hit.

Divisional Commissioner (Kashmir) K Pandurang Pole told The Indian Express: "At least 12 persons have lost lives at the camp, and 25 are injured and receiving treatment. The routes from both Anantnag and Ganderbal are open. The yatra has been stopped overnight as per routine.

Pole said communication and electricity supplies at the camps are functional. "The camp accommodates approximately 3,000 people. The incident took place around 6 pm when the majority of pilgrims were either on the trek or proceeding for dinner.

IGP (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said rescue operations were being conducted by J&K Police, NDRF and security forces. He said those injured are "being airlifted for treatment" and that the situation is "under control". The identities of the deceased are yet to be ascertained.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed anguish at the loss of lives and said "all possible assistance is being provided" to the affected. Modi said he spoke to J&K L-G Manoj Sinha "and took stock of the situation". "Rescue and relief operations are underway," he posted on Twitter.

Sinha said rescue teams have been rushed to the spot and instructions have been issued to provide "all necessary assistance to the pilgrims". He said Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have "assured all the help".

### **Shinzo Abe, former Japan PM, dies after being shot in Nara (Page no: 3)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, International Relations)**

Former Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated in Nara while campaigning for the upcoming election, reported Reuters quoting public broadcaster NHK.

The 67-year-old world leader was rushed to hospital in grave condition, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said in an address to the nation. A suspect has been taken into custody.

Former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo collapsed during a speech in the city of Nara, in western Japan. Initial reports say he may have been injured.

An NHK reporter on-site heard something that sounded like a gunshot, and saw Abe bleeding. The Nara city fire department said that Abe was in cardiopulmonary arrest before he was taken to the hospital.

Photographs published by the Japanese agency Kyodo showed Abe lying face-up on the street by a guardrail, blood on his white shirt. Some showed people crowding around him as he lay unconscious.

Nara city's emergency services said he had been wounded on the right side of his neck and left clavicle, reported Reuters. It added that his brother, Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi, said Abe was getting blood transfusions.

### **Shaped India-Japan ties, was key person behind Quad (Page no: 3)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, International Relations)**

Calling Shinzo Abe one of his "dearest friends", Prime Minister Narendra Modi **announced a day-long national mourning** for the former Japanese Prime Minister on Saturday.

"I am shocked and saddened beyond words at the **tragic demise** of one of my dearest friends, Shinzo Abe. He was a towering global statesman, an outstanding leader and a remarkable administrator.

He dedicated his life to make Japan and the world a better place... Abe made an immense contribution to elevating India-Japan relations to the level of a Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

Today, whole India mourns with Japan and we stand in solidarity with our Japanese brothers and sisters in this difficult moment," Modi tweeted.

Abe was one of the most consequential leaders of Japan in its post-war history. He was Japan's longest serving Prime Minister, staying in the post from 2006 to 2007, and then from 2012 to 2020.

During his time in office, Abe was a great friend of India — a relationship that he invested personally in – and shared a special rapport with Modi.

During his first stint in 2006-07, Abe visited India and addressed Parliament. During his second stint, he visited India thrice — in January 2014, December 2015 and September 2017.

No other Prime Minister of Japan has made so many visits to India. Abe was the first Japanese PM to be chief guest at the Republic Day parade in 2014.

This reflected his commitment towards an India-Japan relationship – he was being hosted by a government that would be facing elections in May 2014.

While the foundation for a “Global Partnership between Japan and India” was laid in 2001, and annual bilateral summits were agreed upon in 2005, Abe accelerated the pace of ties since 2012.

## **Editorial Page**

### **With India ,for Indo-Pacific (Page no: 10)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, International Relations)**

When Shinzo Abe, the former Japanese prime minister who died of an assassin’s bullet on Friday, came to India on his first trip in 2007, he recalled in a speech to the joint session of Parliament that it was exactly 50 years earlier that his grandfather Nobusuke Kishi had visited Delhi, the first-ever Japanese prime minister to do so.

Jawaharlal Nehru, then India’s prime minister, had introduced him thus: “This is the Prime Minister of Japan, a country I hold in very high esteem.” As a little boy, said Abe, he heard this story from his grandfather.

It was 1957, just 12 years after World War II came to a close with the US dropping Little Boy and Fat Man over Hiroshima and Nagasaki respectively. “As the leader of a defeated nation, he must have been very much delighted,” Abe recalled.

Drawing deep from family ties — his father was foreign minister of Japan — history and geography, and quoting from Swami Vivekananda and Dara Shikoh, the speech by Abe that day was a landmark not just in India-Japan ties, but for the earliest articulation of the geopolitical construct of the Indo-Pacific, which he described as the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” on the outer rim of Eurasia, and the Quad.

Passionately, he made the case for the coming together of India and Japan, two democratic nations, one in the Indian Ocean, the other in the Pacific, a “broader Asia” that would evolve “into an immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the US and Australia. Open and transparent, this network will allow people, goods, capital and knowledge to flow freely”.

Japan-India ties are 70 years old this year. For the first five post-war decades of the 20th century, bilateral ties were friendly.

Japan saw India as one of the few nations that had treated it with respect after the war. India was not among the signatories of the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, which brokered post-war relations between the defeated Axis power and the Allies.

Instead, Delhi established an independent peace treaty and bilateral relations with Japan. The Japanese leadership is to this day appreciative of the dissenting judgment of Indian judge Radhabinod Pal at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.

Nehru’s decision to accept Japanese Overseas Development Aid, the first country to do so, also generated a lot of goodwill in the bilateral relationship.

### **Rising cost of delays (Page no: 10)**

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

Anecdotal evidence overwhelmingly suggests that delayed payments to suppliers who are often MSMEs is a norm set by buyers who are often big companies and public sector units.

Our estimates based on Dun & Bradstreet’s proprietary data and Prowess IQ suggest that payments worth Rs 6.3-10.7 lakh crore were delayed to MSMEs during 2020-21 with the average days for the delays for micro, small and medium enterprises estimated to be 194, 68 and 46 days respectively. (The wide range of estimates can be attributed to the different methodological approaches adopted.)

For every day that a payment is delayed, there is an erosion of value. It locks in capital that could have been deployed gainfully. The fact that this is a problem largely faced by cash-strapped and credit-starved MSMEs, makes the erosion of value even more acute.

Micro and small enterprises borrow at comparatively higher costs and often operate in very competitive environments, surviving on razor-thin margins. In our interviews with entrepreneurs, the direct impact observed was that of foregoing

business opportunities due to lack of liquidity. This is not just detrimental to the specific firm or enterprise but is a deterrent to the overall growth of MSMEs.

The other types of costs incurred by such supplier firms include the time spent and the personnel costs employed to recover payments as well as the business forgone due to disrupted cash flows.

For instance, a distributor of processed food finds bearing the salary expenses of three full-time employees more cost-effective than bearing the interest and losses of delayed payments. The case is emblematic of the level of erosion of value to be expected from delayed payments.

The issue needs to be addressed at multiple levels. First, a call from the highest levels of government is needed, that such delays are not in the nation's interest. For the country to achieve economic progress, the MSME sector must grow.

This kind of intervention should aim at changing the business culture and thereby strengthening all enterprises across the supply chain.

On this front, the MSME 2006 Act and the SAMADHAN platform are both steps in the right direction, but there are gaps. There are close to one lakh complaints at present on the portal, amounting to Rs 25,000 crore.

But the disposal rate is low, suggesting that the mechanism is not backed by the necessary wherewithal to address the issues. Secondly, regulatory interventions are needed to shift the onus of timely payments onto the buyer firms.

Second, in addition to TReDS, there is supply chain financing and in-time credit. Market-based solutions lead to efficiency gains and maintain amicable supplier-buyer relations while easing cash flows for MSMEs.

## **Idea Page**

### **The problem of energy poverty (Page no: 11) (GS Paper 2, International Relations)**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke for all the energy-poor countries, from Chile to Indonesia to Rwanda, when he invoked the need for the impoverished to be able to access energy as much as the rich global north at the recently-concluded G-7 Summit in Germany.

Experts estimate the total number of energy-poor people in Latin America, Asia and Africa to be in the region of three billion people. In South Asia alone, over one billion people are struggling with extremely limited access to energy, despite the LPG and the LED revolutions in India.

“All of you will also agree with this that energy access should not be the privilege of the rich only — a poor family also has the same rights on energy. And today when energy costs are sky-high due to geopolitical tensions, it is more important to remember this”, Modi reminded the leaders of the richest economies in the world.

India's oil import bill soared to \$119 billion in the fiscal that ended on March 31, as global energy prices exploded, following the return of demand and the Ukraine conflict.

Some refiners, including the Indian Oil Corporation, have turned to buying “discounted” Russian crude oil in their efforts to insulate the ordinary Indian from rising petrol, diesel and turbine fuel prices to the extent possible.

The government also went along with the refiners to meet the domestic energy demand and, importantly, to control inflation.

The G-7 countries, however, now want to completely curb the flow of Russian oil in the global supply system, which could lead to even higher oil prices and, possibly, Sri Lanka-like energy shocks and disruptions in several countries.

Further sanctions could also strengthen the emergence of a parallel international oil market led by Russia and allegedly, quietly though, supported by China.

The international anger against Russia over Ukraine is understandable. No country has the right to disrespect or violate the sovereignty of another.

But the G-7 could have, however, explored if there were some other ways to tighten the sanctions on Russia without weaponising oil to such high levels so that the energy deficit economies could be insulated to the extent possible.

Many energy economists claim that there is at least a \$22 “Ukraine premium” — thanks to the Western sanctions on Russian oil — in the current high prices of crude in global markets.

## **Network Express**

### **Slight decline in edible oil prices but still higher than last year (Page no: 12) (GS Paper 3, Economy)**

The retail prices of five edible oils – mustard oil, vanaspati, soya oil, sunflower oil and palm oil – have declined by 2-8 per cent in the past one month but they are still 3-21 per cent higher than their last year’s levels, according to official data.

The data on all-India Daily Weighted Average Prices of Major Edible Oils, available on the Department of Consumer Affairs’ website, shows that among the five edible oils, the maximum decline of 7.83 per cent has been recorded in the all-India retail prices of palm oil, which came down to Rs 143.81 per kg on Friday – from Rs 156.02 per kg a month ago.

However, the retail price of palm oil is still 9.70 per cent higher than Rs 131.09 per kg a year ago.

The minimum decline of 2.01 per cent has been recorded in the retail prices of vanaspati, which has come down from Rs 165.74 per kg a month ago to Rs 162.41 per kg on Friday. In fact, retail prices of vanaspati are 21.36 per cent higher than their level (133.83 per kg) a year ago.

The average retail price of soya oil slightly came down to Rs 164.43 per kg on Friday, from Rs 169.7 per kg a month ago — a 3.11 per cent decline. However, soya oil prices are 10.49 per cent higher than Rs 148.82 per kg recorded on the same day last year, show the data reported by the State Civil Supplies Department of the respective state governments to the Department of Consumer Affairs.

The retail prices of sunflower oil declined by 3.30 per cent to Rs 185.6 per kg on Friday, while compared to Rs 191.93 per kg a month ago. However, the retail price of sunflower is still 12.31 per cent higher than the same day last year.

## **Economy**

### **States on board Gati Shakti, govt looks to cut project time (Page no: 13)**

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

In a boost for the Centre’s Gati Shakti scheme — a digital platform initiative to bring together 16 core sector ministries for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects — states are being onboarded for real-time project coordination and collective decision-making.

The aim is to reduce the time taken to plan and award a project by at least a third. At a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and state chief secretaries last month, all state governments are learnt to have agreed to support the project.

All key Central ministries were already part of it and now state governments have also given their consent to support it. The state chief secretaries, in a meeting with the Prime Minister, have all agreed to support and become part of this initiative,” said a top official at an infrastructure ministry.

Following the meeting, the focus is on reducing the time taken to award a project — starting from preparation of a detailed project report (DPR) till the project is assigned.

While the process usually takes about 16-18 months, it is estimated that it could take just five-six months under the Gati Shakti scheme if a coordinated, real-time approach is implemented.

A DPR and finalisation of alignment would take around six-seven months normally, and approvals for a railway overbridge (ROB) could take years under the present arrangement. Under Gati Shakti, these approvals should come down to three-four months,” said the official.

Explaining the benefits of the Gati Shakti scheme, officials said the portal is designed to enable project implementers plan better, and since all stakeholders (various central ministries and now state governments too) are onboard, each will have access to the portal. Besides planning and awarding the project, issues related to construction and work on the project will also be streamlined.

## **Explained**

### **Who are Pasmada Muslims, focus of BJP outreach? (Page no: 15)**

#### **(GS Paper 1, Diversity of India)**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was reported to have asked the BJP national executive in Hyderabad last weekend to **reach out to “deprived and downtrodden sections”** in communities other than Hindus, which was understood to be a message to the party to focus on groups such as Pasmada Muslims in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The direction came after the BJP’s victories in the Lok Sabha by-elections in Azamgarh and Rampur, where Muslims are an important part of the electorate.

The party is also thought to have gained some Pasmada votes in the 2022 Assembly elections, and Danish Azad Ansari, a Pasmada leader, was subsequently inducted into the second Yogi Adityanath government.

A Persian word, 'Pasmanda', means the 'ones left behind', and is used to describe depressed classes among the Muslims, while underlining their deliberate or conscious exclusion. Pasmanda has become an umbrella identity used by backward, Dalit, and tribal Muslims to push back against caste-based discrimination against them within the community.

The term 'Pasmanda Muslims' was first used in 1998 by Ali Anwar Ansari when he founded the Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz," Khalid Anis Ansari, associate professor of sociology at the School of Arts and Sciences, Azim Premji University.

Ali Anwar Ansari, a former Rajya Sabha MP and national president and founder of the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, said: "Pasmandas include Dalits as of now, but all Pasmandas are not Dalits.

Constitutionally speaking, we are all in one category — the OBCs. But going forward, we want Dalit Muslims to be recognised separately."

Muslim society in India consists of several status groups or biradaris that are broadly sorted in three categories: the Ashrafs (the 'noble' elite or the 'honourable ones'), the Ajlafs (backward Muslims), and the Arzals (Dalit Muslims).

Ashrafs in India are Muslims who either claim to have a foreign pedigree — descendants of Muslims from Arabia, Persia, Turkey, Afghanistan (Syeds, Sheikhs, Mughals and Pathans,) — or who are upper-caste converts from Hinduism (Rajput, Gaur, Tyagi Muslims among others).