

CURRENT AFFAIRS

04 September 2022



TOPIC: STATE EXECUTIVE

Soren to seek
trust vote
tomorrow

- ✓ A Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly and it remains in office till it enjoys the confidence of majority.
- ✓ Therefore, a motion of no-confidence is moved to remove the council of ministers and to remove the government from the office.
- ✓ According to the Article 75 of the Indian Constitution, council of ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha and as per Article 164, the council of ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly of the State.
- ✓ Lok Sabha/Legislative Assembly can remove the ministry from the office by passing a no-confidence motion.
- ✓ Lok Sabha Rule 198 specifies the procedure for a motion of no-confidence.

Procedure

- ✓ a motion of No-Confidence Motion can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha under rule 198.
- ✓ There should be a minimum of 50 members to accept the motion. If not, then the motion fails..
- ✓ The motion of no-confidence is read by the Speaker within the House and asks all those favouring the motion to rise.
- ✓ If 50 MPS are there in favour then the Speaker could allot a date for discussing the motion.
- ✓ But this has to be done within 10 days.
- ✓ Then, the motion is put to vote and can be conducted through Voice Vote, Division of Votes or other means.
- ✓ If the government loses a confidence motion or if the no-confidence motion is accepted by the majority then the government has to resign.

TOPIC: ARCHEALOGICAL DISCOVERIES

Broken piece of figurine unearthed

S. GANESAN
TIRUCHI

A small broken piece of a figurine, believed to be made of ivory, has been unearthed by archaeologists at Maligaimedu near Gangaikondacholapuram, the city built by King Rajendra Chola I (1012-1044) after his victorious expedition up to the Gangetic plains.

The object was found at a depth of 55-60 centimetres. The well carved piece of a human figure in ornamental attire suggests that it could represent a royal figure. The broken portion is that of the hip and thigh of a human. The object would be subject to further examination by experts, sources in the Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department told *The Hindu*.

Earlier this year, a broken piece of a bracelet made of gold and copper was found at the site within weeks of the start of phase-II of the excavation in February. It is widely believed that palaces of Chola kings had existed here about 1,000 years ago.

The second phase of the excavation is set to conclude by the end of this month.

- ✓ Gangaikondacholapuram was established by King Rajendra Chola after his victorious expedition to the Gangetic plains.
- ✓ Pottery, roof tiles, iron nails, ornate stones, bracelets, bells, ivory carvings and coins were unearthed.
- ✓ An ancient clay pot was recently unearthed at Maligaimedu excavation site in Ariyalur, in the state of Tamil Nadu.

TOPIC: ARCHEAOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

Underwater survey launched at Korkai

Project aims to shed light on ancient city's trade practices

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THOOTHUKUDI

The excavation at the ancient port city of Korkai in Thoothukudi district got a boost on Saturday with the launch of an underwater survey.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin earmarked ₹15 crore for undertaking excavations in the State, following which the Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department commenced work in at least seven locations, including Korkai, Sivakalai and Adichanallur in Thoothukudi district, according to Thangam Thennarasu, Minister, Department of Industries, Tamil Official Language, Tamil Culture and Archaeology.

He told reporters here that though the on-shore work had been going on at Korkai since 1968, it was for the first time that the State government had joined hands with the National Institute of Ocean Technology and other institutions to undertake underwater exploration.

He said that with divers and experts present here, the first one week could be



Ministers Thangam Thennarasu, Geetha Jeevan, Anitha R. Radhakrishnan launching the underwater survey. • N. RAJESH

dedicated to excavation under the sea between Thoothukudi and Tiruchendur. The objective of the excavation, he said, was to find out the trade practices that the region had in ancient times with the outside world. "There are many other interesting artefacts, which may help us understand the trade relations that the ancient people had with the rest of the world," he said.

Replying to a query, Mr. Thennarasu said the ancient port at Korkai was around eight kilometres into the sea or, to be precise, it was situated three kilometres north of the Tamirabharani. "The officials, who are here,

have rich experience in multiple disciplines, including history, architecture and Tamil culture. The excavations at Korkai have already unravelled a few shells, pots and other artefacts," he pointed out.

Land for museum

The Minister said the officials had identified land for building a museum at Porunai. Detailed plans and reports were being readied. Thoothukudi Collector K. Senthil Raj, Archaeological Survey of India officials, led by Sivanandam, and VOC Port Trust Chairman T.K. Ramachandran took part at the inauguration.

- ✓ **Korkai** is a small village in the Thoothukudi district in Tamil Nadu, India.
- ✓ It was called Pandya-Kavada in the Kapatapuram in Kalithogai.
- ✓ It is situated about 3 km north of the Thamirabarani River and about 6 km from the shore of Bay of Bengal.
- ✓ Korkai was the capital, principal center of trade and important port of the Early Pandyan Kingdom.
- ✓ At that time, it was located on the banks of the Tamiraparani River and at the sea coast, forming a natural harbour.
- ✓ Due to excessive sedimentation, the sea has receded about 6 km in the past 2000 years, leaving Korkai well inland today.
- ✓ The famous urn burial site, Adichanallur, is located about 15 km. from Korkai.

TOPIC:TRADE

Trade data flags testing time for goods exports

August exports dip 1.15%, imports rise above \$60 bn

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports shrank 1.15% year-on-year in August to \$33 billion, while inelastic imports of petroleum and coal continued to climb, lifting imports above the \$60 billion mark for the sixth successive month.

The country's goods trade deficit moderated slightly sequentially from the record \$30 billion in July, but remained the second highest on record at \$28.68 billion, and widened sharply from the \$11.7 billion in August 2021. Preliminary trade data for July had also shown a 0.8% dip in exports, which was revised to a 2.1% uptick. The last time India recorded a contraction in exports was in February 2021.

Global headwinds apart, Commerce Secretary B. V. R. Subrahmanyam attributed the dip in outbound shipments, which declined 9% sequentially, to a growing tendency among international buyers to seek deferrals in shipments of con-

Widening deficit | India's trade deficit widened last month from August 2021 as exports dipped by 1.15% while imports rose by 37%



firmed orders, as well as the gamut of measures taken by the government to try and curb elevated inflation.

"There is some concern about Christmas orders," Mr. Subrahmanyam observed. "Exporters' order books are full but there are cases where buyers are asking for shipments not to be despatched," he said, adding that restrictions akin to 'almost' being on a negative list for exports on items like wheat, steel and iron pellets to check inflation, had also impacted trade.

While goods exports have averaged \$38.5 billion a month between April and August, adding up to \$192.5 billion, Mr. Subrahmanyam forecast India's total out-

bound shipments in 2022-23 would touch \$470 billion, or at least \$450 billion in a 'worst case scenario'. To achieve that, exports need to average between \$36.8 billion and \$39.6 billion over the next seven months.

"The non-oil deficit accounted for nearly 60% of the total trade deficit in August, even though gold imports halved," noted Aditi Nayar, chief economist at rating firm ICRA. "The year-on-year dip in exports, led by sectors such as engineering goods, gems and jewelry and yarns and textiles, suggests a cautious outlook for external demand going ahead," she cautioned.

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Trade Deficit

- ✓ The balance of trade, commercial balance, or net exports, is the difference between the monetary value of a nation's exports and imports over a certain time period.

TOPIC: AGRICULTURE

Nano urea fast-tracked for approval despite incomplete trials

Three seasons of assessment by ICAR is required to approve a new fertilizer

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Nano urea, a product developed by the Indian Farmers and Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) and heavily advertised by the Central government as a panacea to reduce farmer dependence on packaged urea, is yet to be fully tested despite having been fast-tracked for commercial application. Normally, three seasons of independent assessment by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is required for

approving a new fertilizer, but in the case of nano urea this was reduced to two. Moreover scientists are still unclear if the product can on its own cut farmers' dependence on urea.

Crucial fertilizer

Nano urea is a patented and indigenously made liquid that contains nanoparticles of urea, the most crucial chemical fertilizer for farmers in India. A single half-litre bottle of the liquid can compensate for a 45 kg sack



Rushed process: Despite nano urea, packaged urea is vital for the initial stages of crop development. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

of urea that farmers traditionally rely on, it is claimed.

Minister of Health, Chemicals and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya has claimed

that by 2025, India's domestic urea production as well as production of nano urea would together mean India would be "self-sufficient"

and would no longer require the 90 lakh tonnes that it imported every year and would save the country close to ₹40,000 crore.

The standard practice in the cultivation of crops such as wheat, rice, mustard is to use at least two 45-kg sacks of urea, which is an inorganic compound and the crops' main source of nitrogen. The first packet is applied during the early sowing or transplantation stage of the crop. The second stage application is done when the plant has sprouted a canopy of leaves, and is approaching the reproductive phase of plant growth.

However, a crucial point omitted in government communication around nano urea is that the traditional, packaged urea is still necessary during the initial stage, as basal nitrogen, of crop development. The nano urea could be useful once the

SPECIAL

plant grew after which the product could be sprayed on its leaves.

"Based on the experiments, it was evident that 50% of the top-dressed urea (second stage application) could be replaced but not basal nitrogen," Dr. Trilo-

chan Mohapatra, former Director General of the ICAR, told *The Hindu*, "In most cases yields weren't affected and some instances the crop yield increased."

Based on a year (two seasons) of experiments, in 2019-2020, ICAR reported results of field trials on crops that benefited from nano urea, to the Central Fertiliser Committee, which decides on whether to approve a chemical fertilizer for commercial use. The approval came through, in February 2021, during Dr. Mohapatra's tenure.

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NANO UREA

- ✓ Recently, the Prime Minister inaugurated the first Liquid Nano Urea (LNU) plant at Kalol, Gujarat.
- ✓ It is Indigenous Urea, introduced firstly by the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) for farmers across the world.
- ✓ It is urea in the form of a nanoparticle. It is a nutrient (liquid) to provide nitrogen to plants as an alternative to the conventional urea.
- ✓ Urea is a chemical nitrogen fertiliser, white in colour, which artificially provides nitrogen, a major nutrient required by plants.
- ✓ It is developed to replace conventional urea and it can curtail the requirement of the same by at least 50%.

TOPIC:DEFENCE

At Vostok-22, why is India not joining naval drill?

What message does India's participation at the military exercises send to U.S.-EU and Russia-China groupings?

SUHASINI HAIDAR

The story so far: From September 1-7, Russia is holding annual military exercises in its eastern region, with about 13 countries including India and China sending contingents. While the exercises in Vostok-2022 are routine, they are the first such multilateral exercises to be held since the Russian war in Ukraine began. They include a maritime component near the disputed islands of South Kuril, claimed by both Russia and Japan.

Who is taking part in Vostok-22?

■ The countries that have sent military contingents are Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Syria and Tajikistan, according to the Russian Ministry of Defence, which estimates that “more than 50,000 troops and 5,000 units of military equipment” including 140 aircraft and 60 warships would participate in the exercises.

According to a statement issued by the Indian Defence Ministry, the Indian Army contingent is part of “joint manoeuvres to include joint field training exercises, combat discussions, and firepower exercises.”

However, India has only sent its army contingent of the 7/8 Gorkha Rifles, and will not take part in the maritime section of the two-part event.

This is because, while the first part of the land exercises will be held in Russian military training grounds in Siberia and the Far Eastern Federal District, the maritime part of the exercises would be held in the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan. These are near the disputed South Kuril islands.

Japan's Foreign Ministry issued a demarche calling on Russia to move the location of its maritime exercises, which the Russian Ambassador in Tokyo rejected, and India's decision not to take part in the naval exercises is believed to be in deference to Tokyo's sensitivities.



Unity drill: Participants attend the Vostok-22 military exercises at a firing ground in Russia on August 31. ■ REUTERS

Why has Washington criticised the exercises?

■ In a statement ahead of the exercises, U.S. White House Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said that the U.S. has “concerns about any country exercising with Russia while Russia wages an unprovoked, brutal war against Ukraine,” adding that the decision to participate was up to each country, and that the government had been “pretty public” about its opposition to the exercises in talks. The Biden administration is in the process of stitching together support for more sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, as well as a demand for price-caps on Russian oil exports, and the decision by India and other countries to participate in Vostok-2022 presents a divided approach towards Russia.

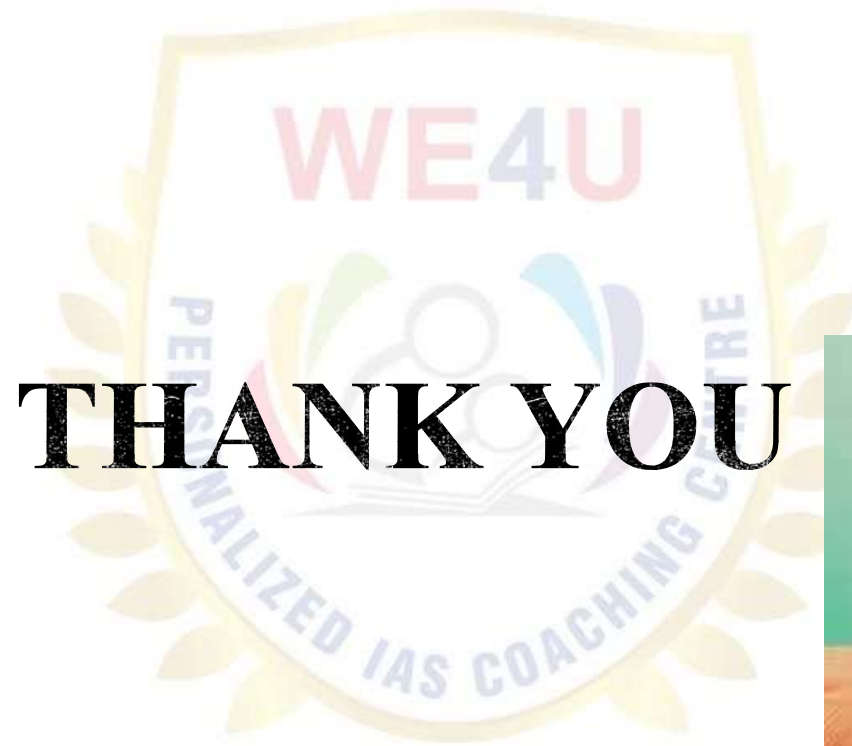
The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), however, rejected the concerns. “Let me just emphasise that India has been regularly participating in multilateral exercises in Russia, along with a number of other countries,” MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, adding that “there will be only army participation in the Vostok exercises this year.”

What does India's participation mean?

■ By sending an army contingent to join Russian and Chinese troops in the exercises at this time, New Delhi is aiming to send a four-pronged message. The first is its continuing relationship with Russia despite the Ukraine war, where the Modi government has decided not to join the Western sanctions regime, or to curb oil imports and other economic engagement with Moscow.

The second is to signal balance and non-alignment in the current crisis, given India has mostly abstained from votes at the United Nations seeking to criticise Russia. India also takes part in routine Indo-Pacific exercises with its Western partners including the Quad, as well as in bilateral exercises, like the India-U.S. “Yudh Abhyas” in Uttarakhand next month. These exercises will take place just after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Uzbekistan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in September, where he will participate alongside leaders of Russia, China, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, who have sent contingents for Vostok-22 as well. It is a way of signalling that India remains comfortable in both its engagement with the U.S.-EU coalition and its rival groupings led by Russia-China. Third, by staying away from the maritime exercises, New Delhi has shown both its sensitivity to Japan's concerns on maintaining the status quo over the disputed islands, as well as stressing the importance of territorial sovereignty and integrity for India. This coming week, India is hosting a Quad meeting on Indo-Pacific initiatives in Delhi and holding bilateral talks with the U.S. and Japan on trade and defence as well.

Finally, the message the government continues to give is that it is willing to engage with China on a number of fronts, even as military talks with China at the LAC (Line of Actual Control) remain stuck. The government, however, asserts that it cannot be “business as usual” with China until the latest logjam over Chinese troops' transgression since April 2020 is resolved.



THANK YOU

