



## Current Affairs of the Day

### ‘Great challenges for all democracies’

Inter-religious relations, media freedom, farmers’ protests, love ‘jihad’ violence and minority rights were part of the discussion that visiting U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had with a group of people, including a representative of the Dalai Lama.

#### Highlights:

1. The “civil society round-table” discussion, which is expected to raise some concerns from the Union government and a possible protest from China, was Mr Blinken’s first engagement during his day-long visit to India.
2. Sources said Tibet was not directly raised during the meeting, but the lack of progress in China’s dialogue on the issue was discussed at the round-table talks, which included Geshe Dorji Damdul, the Delhi-based Director of Tibet House.
3. While representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Authority, or “government in exile”, have met with U.S. diplomats in the past, the presence of Mr Damdul in the meeting with Indian civil society and with the U.S. Secretary of State in Delhi is a first.
4. The Indian people and the American people believe in human dignity and equality of opportunity, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion and belief.
5. We believe that all people deserve to have a voice in their government and be treated with respect no matter who they are.
6. During the 45-minute discussion, Mr Blinken received perspectives from the representatives on the status of religious freedom, including the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the anti-conversion (derogatorily referred to as love ‘jihad’) laws passed by some States, which have drawn international criticism.
7. In addition, the problems of farmers protesting at Delhi’s borders over the agriculture laws passed last year were part of the conversation.



## PM to roll out academic credit bank

On the first anniversary of the National Education Policy (NEP), the Centre plans to officially roll out some initiatives promised in the policy, such as a credit transfer system that will allow multiple entries and exit options in higher education, as well as engineering programmes in regional languages. However, other promised reforms such as the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), the four-year undergraduate degree, and the common university entrance test, are not ready yet.

### Highlights:

1. The Academic Bank of Credit will be rolled out for students in over 290 top institutions from the current academic year 2021-22 onwards.
2. All institutions in the top 100 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework as well as those who have achieved an A grade under the National Assessment and Accreditation Council will be allowed to participate in the credit transfer system, which will also allow multiple entries and exit options for students, according to senior Education Ministry officials.
3. However, the proposal for four-year undergraduate degrees has run into some opposition, especially from faculty at the premier University of Delhi, and will also have to wait for the National Higher Education Curricular Framework, which is still being prepared, they said.

### A mix of subjects

1. Multidisciplinarity is also being encouraged with guidelines to be issued to allow the merger of institutes as well as to give students the choice of taking subjects such as social sciences, music and sports while getting engineering degrees, or even get a minor degree in emerging areas while majoring in a different subject.
2. Although premier institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology have balked at the idea of introducing courses in Indian languages, Mr Modi will announce the launch of engineering degrees in regional languages in about 14 smaller institutions.
3. He will also announce the establishment of the National Digital Education Architecture and National Education Technology Forum.



## Chandrayaan-3 mission likely late next year

The Chandrayaan-3 mission is likely to be launched late next year.

### Highlights:

1. Chandrayaan-3 is likely to be launched during the third quarter of 2022, assuming normal workflow henceforth.
2. The Chandrayaan-2 mission, launched in July 2019, was scheduled to be an effort aimed at landing a rover on the Lunar South Pole. It was sent aboard the country's most powerful geosynchronous launch vehicle, the GSLV-Mk 3.
3. However, the lander Vikram, instead of a controlled landing, ended up crash-landing in September 2019 and stymied the effort.