



## Current Affairs of the Day

### SC asks govt. if it wants tribunals closed

The Supreme Court asked the Central government point-blank to come clean on whether it intends to “close” tribunals across the country by not filling up vacancies that have been pending for years.

#### Vacancies:

1. The court pointed out that with tribunals defunct and High Courts having no jurisdiction over the areas of law wielded by tribunals, litigants have nowhere to go for justice.
2. Chief Justice Ramana read out in open court the details of over 240 vacancies in key tribunals, making them redundant in their slow death. The court said certain tribunals do not even have presiding officers.
3. Recommendations of names by the selection committees led by sitting Supreme Court judges to fill up the vacancies have been largely ignored by the government.
4. The CJI, accompanied by Justice Surya Kant, read out the exact vacancies in each tribunal, including the National Green Tribunal, Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, Central Administrative Tribunal, only to name a few.
5. If you don't want these tribunals, allow us to restore their jurisdictions to the High Courts. On the other hand, if you want these tribunals to continue, fill up the vacancies. You can't take away the right of the people to access justice. Court highlighted.

### Celebrations begin to mark 150 years of iconic artist

#### Abanindranath Tagore

Abanindranath, a nephew of Rabindranath Tagore and a decade younger to the poet, helped shape modern Indian art and was the creator of the iconic ‘Bharat Mata’ painting. The celebration titled Abanindranath at 150: Bichitra Revisited is being organised.

#### Swadeshi in painting:

1. Abanindranath Tagore was arguably the first major exponent of an artistic idiom that sought to modernise the Mughal and the Rajput styles in order to



counter the influence of Western models of art under the colonial regime. His unique interpretation of swadeshi themes created a new awakening and heralded a revival of Indian art.

2. Abanindranath's work is timeless, we continue to be amazed and delighted by it. He witnessed an important point in the nation's history when there were questions around the identity of India, and he responded by creating a new language for art that was so wide-ranging and diverse that even today it is a powerful reminder of the syncretic tradition we have inherited and need to safeguard.

## India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives to collaborate on security

India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives have agreed to work on "four pillars" of security cooperation, covering areas of marine security, human trafficking, counter-terrorism, and cybersecurity, in a recent virtual meeting of top security officials of the three countries.

### Intelligence sharing

1. The discussion comes nine months after National Security Adviser Ajit Doval visited Colombo for deliberations with Sri Lanka and the Maldives in which the three countries agreed to expand the scope of intelligence sharing.
2. Their meeting marked the revival of NSA-level trilateral talks on maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region after a gap of six years.
3. Following up on that, the Deputy NSA-level meeting this week identified "four pillars" of cooperation in Marine Safety and Security, Terrorism and Radicalisation, Trafficking and Organised Crime, and Cybersecurity.
4. The 'Colombo Security Conclave' among the three neighbouring countries seeks to "further promote" maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.
5. The initiative, grounded in military and security collaboration, assumes significance in the region, in the wake of the current geostrategic dynamic that India shares with Sri Lanka and the Maldives.



## Engagement with Quad

1. On the other hand, the Maldives's engagement with members of the India-United States-Japan-Australia grouping, known as the 'Quad', has been growing over the last year, especially in the area of defence cooperation.
2. The Ibrahim Mohamed Solih government signed a 'Framework for a Defence and Security Relationship' agreement with the United States last year, an initiative that India welcomed.
3. In November 2020, the Maldives received a Japanese grant of \$7.6 million for the Maldivian Coast Guard and a Maritime Rescue and Coordination Center. Meanwhile, Male's foreign policy choices are increasingly being challenged by sections, mostly opposition groups, wary of "Indian boots on the ground".

## Biden govt. non-committal on support for India's UNSC bid

The administration says it does not support the expansion of the veto.

### UNSC bid of India

1. While the U.S. has in the past backed India's bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the Biden administration has continued to remain non-committal on the issue.
2. A reformed Security Council that is representative, that is effective, and that is relevant is in the best interest of the United States and all of the UN member states.
3. The Obama and Trump administrations had supported a permanent seat for India on the Security Council.
4. The U.S. offered qualified support for building a consensus for enlargement of the UNSC — in terms of permanent and non-permanent members.
5. However, the U.S. would not support an expansion of the veto — given to the P-5, the current five permanent members: China, France, Russia, the U.K and the U.S.

### Aspirants and roadblocks:

1. Recently, the U.S. refrained from supporting India and other members of the G4 (Japan, Germany and Brazil) for a permanent UNSC seat, citing regional disagreements on who should get the seat.



2. The US was possibly alluding to the Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group — Pakistan, South Korea, Italy and Argentina — which opposes the G4 plan. China also opposes the bids of India and Japan.
3. India is currently (in 2021 and 2022) a non-permanent member of the UNSC and is president for the month of August.

## RBI holds rates, MPC splits on stance

One member votes against staying 'accommodative' for as long as necessary to support growth.

### Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

1. The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted unanimously to keep the repo rate unchanged at 4% as part of the RBI's sustained effort to help the economy recover from the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. One member, however, voted against the MPC's majority decision to retain the 'accommodative stance as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis, while ensuring that 'inflation remains within the target going forward.
3. The central bank retained its projection for real GDP growth in the current fiscal year at 9.5% as it pegged Q1 growth at 21.4% followed by 7.3% in Q2, 6.3% in Q3 and 6.1% in Q4.
4. The MPC, however, raised its forecast for retail inflation for the year to 5.7%, from the 5.1% pace it had projected earlier.
5. Going forward, the revival of the southwest monsoon and the pick-up in Kharif sowing, buffered by adequate food stocks should help to control cereal price pressures.

### Inflation:

1. Input prices are rising across manufacturing and services sectors, but weak demand and efforts towards cost-cutting are tempering the pass-through to output prices.
2. With crude oil prices at elevated levels, a calibrated reduction of the indirect tax component of pump prices by the Centre and States can help to



substantially lessen cost pressures, it added, reiterating an exhortation it has been repeatedly making to the governments.

### **‘Conditions still weak’**

1. Mr Das said the outlook for aggregate demand was improving, but the underlying conditions were still weak.
2. “Aggregate supply is also lagging below pre-pandemic levels. While several steps have been taken to ease supply constraints, more needs to be done to restore supply-demand balance in a number of sectors of the economy,” he stressed.