

DAILY PT POINTERS

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Misri to visit Beijing as India, China look to revive dialogue

Foreign Secretary will meet Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong and discuss resumption of direct flights between the two countries, visas, and the Mansarovar yatra; trade issues and concerns over hydropower project may also come up

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI



Vikram Misri during an event in Thailand in December 2024, China's Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, right, was present. AFP

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will travel to Beijing on Sunday, in another indication that India and China are reviving all dialogue mechanisms after the four-year break over the military stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The meeting follows the October 21 agreement to end the stalemate at the LAC, which was ratified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping during a summit in Russia, followed by meetings between the Foreign Ministers and the Defence Ministers of the two countries.

Mr. Misri, who served as India's Ambassador to Beijing (2019-2021) and Deputy National Security Adviser (2021-2024), will meet Chi-

sumption of direct flights between India and China, which remain suspended since the pandemic; issuance of visas particularly for businesspersons and journalists; ironing out trade issues; and arrangements for the resumption of the Mansarovar Yatra for pilgrims.

and people-to-people domains," the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement, indicating that the talks are part of the revival of regular dialogue.

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not commented on the visit thus far. On Tuesday, the Ministry spokesperson had

public Day parade in New Delhi, officials said.

The Foreign Secretary's visit comes just before the Chinese New Year holidays that begin on January 28. Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong is already in Beijing, understood to be in preparation for the visit.

At a reception for the New Year in Delhi this week, Chinese Charge d'Affaires Wang Lei said India and China would hold "dozens" of celebratory events to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India.

He said that India-China economic exchanges had grown 2% in the past year, with trade figures reaching \$126.6 billion in the first 11 months of 2024 and 2,80,000 visas being issued by China during the year.

that Chinese manufacturers were withholding technology and exports to India, including for Tunnel Boring Machines manufactured in China and Germany. Beijing has also been asking New Delhi to issue more visas and facilitate travel links.

Despite a declaration after a meeting between Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Wang in November 2024 over resumption of visas, flights, and the Mansarovar Yatra for pilgrims, there has been little movement on the ground on these issues thus far.

In addition, a Chinese hydropower project on the upper riparian area of the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Zangpo in Tibet) has caused concern about flooding downstream.

"We must convey that any reset in ties would require a lot of hard work be-

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will travel to Beijing in another indication that India and China are reviving all dialogue mechanisms after the four-year break over the military stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is the boundary separating Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory. India considers it to be 3,488 km long, while China claims around 2,000 km.
- The LAC is divided into three sectors: the eastern sector (Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim), the middle sector (Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh), and the western sector (Ladakh). The LAC in the eastern sector is known as the McMahon Line, spanning 1,140 km.

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President of Indonesia arrives for Republic Day fete, to meet PM tomorrow

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto arrived here on Thursday to attend the 76th Republic Day event on Sunday as the chief guest.

This is the first state visit to India by Mr. Subianto. He is the fourth Indonesian President to be the chief guest at the Republic Day function.

As a special gesture, a 352-member marching and band contingent from Indonesia will take part in the parade.

Mr. Subianto will be hosted at Hyderabad House on Saturday, where he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the respective delegations at an official-level dialogue.

During the meeting, the two sides will sign a number of memorandums of understanding, sources said. Mr. Subianto will attend the "At Home" reception by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar will call on the visiting dignitary.

Official engagements for Mr. Subianto will begin on Friday, when External Af-



Dry run: The Indonesian contingent during the full dress rehearsal for the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

international level in the late 1940s.

The relation received an early boost when President Sukarno was invited to be the chief guest at the first Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 1950, following the adoption of the Constitution of India.

Over the past decades, Indonesia has emerged as an important pillar of India's Act East Policy and regular interactions have been held between officials and military personnel of the two sides. Indonesia is one of the largest trading partners of India in the ASEAN region, with bi-

tion in the Indo-Pacific region. The same year, India and Indonesia signed the Defence Cooperation Agreement, which has boosted defence ties and led to staff-level talks between the Air Forces, the Navies, and the Armies of both sides.

Review collaboration
Indonesia is home to one of the oldest Indian diaspora communities in the ASEAN region, and the two sides are ancient cultural partners. The visit by Mr. Subianto, according to sources, will give an opportunity to review collabora-

- Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto is in India as the chief guest for the 76th Republic Day event.
- This is his first state visit to India, and he is the fourth Indonesian President to attend the Republic Day celebrations.
- India and Indonesia share a long-standing relationship, with Indonesia being a key partner in India's Act East Policy. The visit aims to strengthen ties in defence, trade, security, and cultural collaboration. The third India-Indonesia CEO Forum will take place during the visit.

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The hidden dangers of Rhodamine B: a global and local perspective

Rhodamine B is a synthetic dye utilised in industries such as textiles, paper, and leather. Its application extends to scientific research due to its fluorescent properties. However, its use in consumable products is fraught with health risks. Studies indicate it can cause DNA damage, leading to mutations and potentially triggering cancerous growths.

Anshika Madhwarita

Remagine indulging in an appetising looking, sweet treat, only to discover it contains a dye primarily used in textiles and banned for use. This alarming reality has prompted significant health interventions worldwide, including recent directives in India.

Rhodamine B is a synthetic dye known for its bright pink hue, commonly utilised in industries such as textiles, paper, and leather. Its application extends to scientific research due to its fluorescent properties. However, its use in consumable products is fraught with health risks. Studies indicate that Rhodamine B can cause DNA damage, leading to mutations and potentially triggering cancerous growths.

Animal research has demonstrated tumour development in organs like the liver and bladder following prolonged exposure to the dye.

Recognising its potential dangers, many countries have put in place strict regulations on the use of Rhodamine B. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has long prohibited its use in food products, classifying it as unsafe for human consumption. A recent ban issued by the FDA in January 2025 further reinforces these restrictions, prohibiting the use of Rhodamine B in any food-related applications due to emerging evidence of its carcinogenic properties.

The FDA cited growing concerns over children's exposure to high levels of the dye in candies, baked goods, and other processed foods, prompting an urgent call for manufacturers to reformulate their products. This ban stems from studies indicating its potential carcinogenicity and other health risks. Similarly, the European Union classifies Rhodamine B as a substance of very high concern, restricting its use in cosmetics and other consumer goods.

Indian perspective

In India, the rampant use of Rhodamine B in food items has raised significant health concerns. The dye has been illegally applied to enhance the visual appeal of



Animal research has demonstrated tumour development in organs such as the liver and bladder following prolonged exposure to the dye, rat micro.

vendors. Health Minister Mr. Subramanian emphasised that the use of Rhodamine B in food violates the Food Safety and Standards Act of 2006, categorising such products as unsafe. The ban aims to raise public awareness about the hazards associated with coloured candies and ensure that only safe, colour-free cotton candy is available.

Following Tamil Nadu's lead, other Indian states and territories have taken similar measures. Karnataka, in March 2024, prohibited the use of Rhodamine B in popular street foods like "Golgappa" and "Machhliyan" and cotton candy. Minister for Health and Family Welfare in the Government of Karnataka, Dinesh Gundu Rao, announced stringent penalties for violators, including imprisonment of up to seven years and fines reaching ₹10 lakh. Laboratory tests revealed the presence of harmful chemicals in numerous samples collected across the state.

Producers also followed suit by banning the sale of cotton candy containing Rhodamine B. Food safety officers have been directed to conduct inspections and take strict action against violators to safeguard public health. In May 2024, Haryana Pradesh instituted a one-year ban on the production, sale, and storage of cotton candy after detecting



Synthetic dyes, when used in concentrations approved by regulatory bodies, are generally safe. However, in sensitive individuals, they can lead to allergic reactions such as itching, redness, and skin thickening.

can break down into aromatic amines, which are known carcinogens. Laboratory studies have shown that specific synthetic dyes can induce DNA damage, oxidative stress, and promote tumour growth in animal models. While concrete evidence in humans is limited, long-term exposure to unregulated products remains a concern. It is further noted that certain groups, such as children, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals, are more susceptible to these harmful effects due to their body's reduced ability to metabolise and detoxify harmful substances.

Ashwini Rajakumar, consultant dermatologist at Connolly Hair Transplant and Skin Clinic, Chennai, states, "Synthetic dyes, when used in concentrations approved by regulatory bodies, are generally safe. However, in

proper labeling."

She further notes, "The European Union was among the first to ban Rhodamine B in cosmetics in the early 1990s due to concerns about its potential carcinogenic effects and skin sensitisation risks. This move has paved the way for stricter global regulations on synthetic dyes in personal care products."

India's food safety ecosystem
Prasadashini Chidambaram, Community Health Specialist and Researcher, Bengaluru, says, "The ecosystem in India for research into food dye safety is weak. There is a need for proactive funding and commissioning of independent research by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to study the impact of additives, especially synthetic dyes, on public health based on Indian diet practices through collaboration with academic and research institutions. We must build a robust system of rapid scientific reviews and proactive policy implementation to be on par with international recommendations on food safety instead of reacting to a public health crisis or just joining the bandwagon of international bans." She adds, "There needs to be active testing for harmful food dyes and enforcement of strict action against both street vendors and small establishments and vendors. The fact that a state-level ban was necessary to bring attention to harmful dyes like Rhodamine B is a wake-up call. It underscores the need for FSSAI to play a more visible role in educating the public about unsafe food practices. There is a definite knowledge gap among the public on food standards. We must harness the growing digital and social media influence to disseminate information on safe food additives and food label warnings. Community education and engagement are needed to tackle the menace of harmful additives."

The case of Rhodamine B serves as an important reminder of the hidden dangers that lurk in seemingly innocuous products. It underscores the collective responsibility of governments, industries, and consumers to prioritise health over aesthetics. By staying informed and vigilant, we can ensure that the foods we enjoy are not only appealing but also safe.

THE GIST

In the US, the FDA has long prohibited Rhodamine B in food due to evidence of its carcinogenic properties. The FDA cited growing concerns over children's exposure to high levels of the dye in candies, baked goods, and other processed foods.

In February 2024, Tamil Nadu banned production and sale of cotton candy after it detected Rhodamine B. Such products are geared up for use and substantial. The ban aims to raise public awareness and ensure only safe, colour-free cotton candy is available.

According to doctors, "Synthetic dyes can induce DNA damage, oxidative stress, and promote tumour growth in animal models. While concrete evidence in humans is limited, long-term exposure to unregulated products remains a concern."

Rhodamine B serves as an important reminder of the hidden dangers that lurk in seemingly innocuous products. It underscores the collective responsibility of governments, industries, and consumers to prioritise health over aesthetics. By staying informed and vigilant, we can ensure that the foods we enjoy are not only appealing but also safe.

- Rhodamine B, a synthetic dye linked to cancer due to DNA damage, has been banned in many countries, including by the FDA in 2025.
- In India, it has been illegally used in foods like cotton candy and street food, prompting state-level bans in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Experts warn of health risks, especially for vulnerable groups, and call for better regulation, research, and public education on food safety in India.

The Hindu-GS2(Governance)

Use of loudspeakers not crucial for any religion, says Bombay High Court

Directs law enforcement agencies to take prompt action against violation of noise pollution norms, asks State govt. to direct religious institutions to adopt mechanisms for controlling noise levels

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Use of loudspeakers is not an essential part of any religion, the Bombay High Court said on Thursday, directing the law enforcement agencies to take prompt action against loudspeakers that violate the noise pollution norms and rules.

A Division Bench of Justices A.S. Gadkari and S.C. Chandak said noise was a major health hazard and no one can claim that their rights are affected in any manner if he or she is denied permission to use loudspeakers.

The High Court asked the State government to direct religious institutions to adopt mechanisms for controlling noise levels, including calibrated sound systems with auto-decibel



Loud and clear: The court said common citizens are helpless victims of obnoxious use of loudspeakers and amplifiers. FILE PHOTO

Residents' Welfare Association and Shivrushthi Co-operative Housing Societies Association Ltd – alleging police inaction against noise pollution caused by loudspeakers installed on mosques in the area.

The petitioners contended that the use of loudspeakers for religious purposes, including the

the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

The Bench, in its order, said Mumbai was a cosmopolitan city and obviously there are persons of different religions in every part of the city.

"It is in public interest that such permissions should not be granted. By denying such permissions, rights under Article 60 or 25

The court said it was the "bounden duty" of the State government and other authorities to enforce the law by adopting all the necessary measures, as may be prescribed by the provisions of law.

"In a democratic State, there cannot be a situation that, a person/group of persons/association of persons would say that, it will not follow or adhere to the law of the land and the law enforcers would be meek or silent spectators to it," the judgment said.

'Noise pollution'

It added that common citizens are "hapless and helpless victims of these obnoxious use of loudspeakers and/or amplifiers".

The court said the police must act on complaints against loudspeakers violating the noise pollution

- The Bombay High Court ruled that loudspeakers are not essential to any religion and directed authorities to act against noise pollution violations.
- It emphasized the health risks of noise and urged religious institutions to control noise levels. The court also stressed that complaints should be acted on without requiring identification for safety reasons.

Right to Freedom of Religion

- ✓ Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion
- ✓ Freedom to manage religious affairs
- ✓ Freedom to pay taxes for promotion of any particular religion
- ✓ Freedom to attend religious instruction or worship in certain educational institutions

The Hindu –GS3(Economy)

Digital economy to constitute fifth of Indian GDP by 2030: ICRIER report

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

India's digital economy will grow twice as fast as the rest of the economy, and constitute 13.42% of national income by the end of 2024-25, as against 11.74% in 2022-23, according to a report prepared by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) based on a study by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

By 2030, the report says, India's digital economy will account for nearly a fifth of overall GDP. This is the first such attempt by

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To quantify the size of the digital economy, ICRIER has combined definitions by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), but also included the "Digital share of traditional in-

ing, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) and education," essentially casting a wider net to measure the share that digitally-enabled services and activities have in the economy.

Under this framework, "The digital economy in 2022-23 was equivalent to ₹28.94 lakh crore (-\$368 billion) in [Gross Value Added (GVA)] and ₹31.64 lakh crore (-\$402 billion) in GDP," the report says. Even under the expanded definition that includes digitising industries, the "traditional ICT" sector remains the largest portion included in these measures and

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Ad hoc judges in HC: When and how can they be appointed?

JOY SINHA KARPURAM
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

ON TUESDAY, the Supreme Court suggested temporarily appointing retired judges on an ad hoc (as required) basis to address the growing backlog of pending criminal cases before several High Courts.

Article 224A of the Constitution allows the Chief Justice of a High Court to request retired HC judges to perform the duties of a judge again, with the permission of the President of India. Although it has rarely been invoked, there is a detailed procedure for such appointments, with the SC previously weighing in on the practice.

The SC on Tuesday also suggested modifying the top court's 2021 decision, which held that ad hoc judge appointments could

only be made in certain situations.

Provision for appointments

Article 224A, titled "Appointment of retired judges at sittings of High Courts", states: "The Chief Justice of a High Court for any State may at any time with the previous consent of the President, request any person who has held the office of a Judge of that Court or of any other High Court to sit and act as a Judge of the High Court for that State".

Such appointees are entitled to allowances as determined by the President's order and have the jurisdiction, powers and privileges of a Judge of that High Court. Both the retired judge and the President of India are required to consent to the appointment.

The detailed procedure can be found in the 1998 Memorandum of Procedure (MOP) for the appointment of High Court judges, which

was prepared after the creation of the collegium system for appointing judges. It states that after the retired judge has consented to the appointment, the Chief Justice must forward her name and appointment details to the Chief Minister. The CM will pass this recommendation to the Union Law Minister, who will consult the Chief Justice of India before forwarding the recommendation and the CJ's advice to the Prime Minister of India. The PM will advise the President on whether to give her approval.

However, in the case of *Lok Prahari Through its General Secretary S.N. Shukla IAS (Retd.) v. Union of India* (2021), the Supreme Court held that this recommendation "has to be routed through the collegium of the Supreme Court". This collegium includes the CJ and the two senior-most judges of the

Supreme Court. The court also provided guidelines for such appointments.

Criteria to prevent overuse

In *Lok Prahari*, the SC was considering measures to address pending cases before the courts and the vacancies in posts of HC judges, having noted that the "number of vacancies arising every year are barely filled in by fresh appointments". At the time, there were almost 40% vacancies across all High Courts. The court also took note of some earlier reports of the Law Commission suggesting that temporarily appointing retired judges who have decades of experience is a viable solution to tackle the mounting backlog.

However, the court expressed concern that Article 224A would encourage "inaction

in making recommendations" for regular appointments. Thus, it gave directions on when the process could be initiated. Most importantly, the court held that ad hoc judges can only be appointed when recommendations have not been made for less than 20% of the vacancies, after considering both the number of active judges and pending proposals for appointments. This is so that Article 224A can be "resorted to only on the process having been initiated for filling up of the regular vacancies and awaiting their appointments".

The court also held that there has to be a "trigger point" for appointing judges under Article 224A, such as if the HC has vacancies of more than 20% of the sanctioned strength (excluding any proposals for appointment) and if more than 10% of the backlog of pending cases is over five years. It further recommended that ad hoc judges should generally

be appointed for 2-3 years, with two to five ad hoc judges in a court.

Rarely invoked provision

In 2021, the SC noted that there have only been three recorded instances of ad hoc judges being appointed under Article 224A, and called it a "dormant provision". These were:

■ The appointment of Justice Suraj Bhan to the Madhya Pradesh HC in 1972 for one year to hear election petitions;

■ The appointment of Justice P Venugopal to the Madras HC in 1982. His term was renewed for another year in August 1983;

■ The appointment of Justice O P Srivastava to the Allahabad HC in 2007 to hear the Ayodhya title suits.

There are no recorded instances of ad hoc judges being appointed since the 2021 decision of the top court.

- The Supreme Court suggested appointing retired judges on an ad hoc basis to address the growing backlog of criminal cases in High Courts. Article 224A of the Indian Constitution allows retired judges to be reappointed with the President's consent.
- The Supreme Court also proposed modifying its 2021 decision, which set conditions for such appointments, allowing them only when certain vacancies and case backlogs are present.
- Ad hoc judges can serve for 2-3 years, with periodic reviews.
- This provision has been rarely used, with only three recorded instances of ad hoc judge appointments in the past.

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CBP ONE APP

A mobile app that allowed US-bound asylum-seekers to schedule appointments with immigration authorities

ANAGHA JAYAKUMAR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

IN ONE of his first moves after becoming the US President, Donald Trump shut down the mobile app designed to help schedule appointments for people seeking asylum in the US.

The CBP One entry program was instituted by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden, and has enabled nearly one million people to enter into the US since January 2023, the *Associated Press* reported.

In a press release on Monday, the US Customs and Border Protection said that it had initiated "removal of the scheduling functionality" for the app and "existing appointments have been cancelled".

How CBP One worked

The CBP One app worked as a lottery system that awarded 1,450 people with appointments at eight border crossings daily. It allowed migrants to plan interviews with immigration authorities to seek immigration parole before reaching the US border.

Before the app was introduced, asylum-seekers waited in large camps in Mexico while they hoped to secure exemptions to Title 42, a pandemic-era public health order used by the US government to turn away migrants. Others tried to cross the border illegally.

Since January 2023, CBP One has served as the sole route for asylum-seeking amidst a larger crackdown by the Biden administration on illegal border



The office of the National Institute of Migration at Piedras Negras, on the US-Mexico border. *Reuters*

Once approved, migrants were allowed to stay in the US for up to two years, be shielded from deportation, and get a work permit.

The CBP One program has long been touted by Homeland Security staff as having driven down unlawful migrant crossings at the Mexico border.

Trump & immigration

Throughout his presidential campaign, Trump maintained that Biden allowed an influx of undocumented migrants, and promised to launch a massive deportation program after coming to power.

"All illegal entry will immediately be halted, and we will begin the process of

- Donald Trump's administration has ended the CBP One app, which allowed migrants to schedule asylum appointments at the US-Mexico border, cancelling over 1 million appointments.
- The app, introduced under Biden, helped asylum seekers from various countries apply for asylum in an organized manner. Trump's decision to end the app is part of his focus on reducing illegal immigration, but critics warn it could lead to more illegal border crossings. The ACLU has challenged the move in court.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air –GS3(Environment)

India To Deploy 1st Human-Operated Underwater Submersible



- India is gearing up to deploy its first human-operated underwater submersible as part of the Deep Ocean Mission
- the submersible, designed for a depth of up to 500 meters, is expected to launch this year, with plans to extend its reach to 6,000 meters by next year.
- The Deep Ocean Mission aims to explore underwater resources, improve knowledge of deep-sea ecosystems, and advance India's blue economy. The mission's objectives include identifying critical minerals, rare metals, and undiscovered marine biodiversity, which have economic and environmental implications.