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CIVIL SERVICES ACHIEVERS' POINT

A ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR UPSC/APSC/SSC & BANKING

THE ASSAM TRIBUNE ANALYSIS

DATE - 21ST APRIL 2021

For Preliminary and Mains examination

As per new Pattern of APSC

(Also useful for UPSC and other State level government examinations)

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Leadership through knowledge...

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India, US to promote stability in Afghanistan

- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar have agreed that the two nations will coordinate on efforts to promote stability in Afghanistan, from where Washington and NATO will be withdrawing their troops, according to State Department spokesperson Ned Price.
- Blinken spoke to Jaishankar "to reaffirm the importance of the US-India relationship and cooperation on regional security issues", Price said in a readout of their conversation on Monday.
- They "agreed to close and frequent coordination in support of a lasting peace and development for the people of Afghanistan", he said. Myanmar, where the military has flouted the results of parliamentary elections, imprisoned the democratically elected leaders and cracked down on protesters since the February 1, figured in their talks.
- They "reaffirmed their shared commitment to democratic values and mutual support for the restoration of democracy in Burma", Price said using the old name for Myanmar.
- Other issues discussed were cooperation on climate change, for which President Joe Biden is convening a global summit, Covid-19 and "other global challenges", he said. Jaishankar said in a tweet that their "conversation covered recent developments in India's immediate and extended neighbourhood.
- Exchanged views on the UNSC agenda. Also discussed issues pertaining to our health cooperation Reports that the US was going to lift the embargo on exporting raw materials needed for making Covid-19 vaccines followed the mention of health and the pandemic as topics of their conversation.
- However, President Joe Biden's Spokesperson Jen Psaki would not confirm if there was an agreement on allowing the vaccine raw materials export. Announcing his decision to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan ending a 20 year-old war, Biden last week asked India and other regional countries to pitch in to help stabilise the country.
- India, which was mostly on the sidelines of the US efforts to make a deal with the Taliban to facilitate the troop withdrawal by the September 11 deadline, has been invited at Washington's suggestion to an Afghanistan peace conference in Turkey this month.

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- New Delhi has given Afghanistan economic assistance of over \$3 billion since 2001 and also provided security assistance through training over 4,000 Afghan military and security personnel and supplying helicopters.
- India also built Afghanistan's Parliament and is constructing a network of roads that would also provide a link for the landlocked country to a port it has constructed in Chabahar, Iran.

Digitalisation to play key role in growth of MSMEs: Gadkari

- Digitalisation across areas like marketing and manufacturing would play a critical role in development of small businesses in the country, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Nitin Gadkari said (Klay). He also emphasised the need for technologies that can help expand economically viable MSMEs in the rural and tribal areas.
- "Digitalisation in MSMEs is the most important subject... digitalisation is a solution by which we can make our system transparent and time bound," he said at an event organised by Microsoft. He noted that marketing is an important arena for MSMEs and a number of small companies that have started marketing online are seeing excellent results.
- Also, digitalisation can play an important role for the manufacturing sector in enhancing processes, he said, urging the technology sector to collaborate with MSMEs to help them in these processes. The minister pointed out that NISMEs account for 30 per cent of the GDP, 48 per cent of the exports and have created 11 crore jobs.
- The government aims to take this to 40 per cent GDP contribution, 60 per cent exports and create 5 crore new jobs. The most important agenda for the government is development of MSMEs in the rural, agricultural, tribal areas and 115 aspirational districts, he said.
- "This area is where GDP contribution is very negligible... So we need to find technology which is useful for making economically viable MSMEs in the village, rural, agricultural and tribal areas," he noted. He added that while these areas have raw materials, a digital system that is result oriented can be brought in and that will create a win-win situation for all.
- Microsoft today announced the general availability of Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central in India. This is an end-to-end cloud business management solution for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs)

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that enables management of finance, operations, sales and customer service on the go in a secure manner.

- Rajiv Sodhi, Chief Operating Officer at Microsoft India, said SMBs are the backbone of the Indian economy and are driving the country's digital transformation wave with rapid cloud adoption.
- "With Dynamics 365 Business Central, we aim to empower and strengthen the SMB ecosystem in the country. "It offers customers affordable and easily manageable tools that simplify and expedite everyday business processes. We believe it will help small and medium-sized organisations move to the cloud confidently and be future-proof," he added.

EDITORIALS

Public relations in modern-day communications

- Public relations (PR) as an activity is as old as the human race. There are instances of archaeologists finding farm bulletin in Iraq dating back to 1800 BC which carried information regarding how to sow crops and how to irrigate.
- The iron pillars installed by Indian king Ashoka inscribing the obligations of the government towards its people sending his children to Sri Lanka to spread Buddhism can be considered as some of the early examples of public relations.
- Despite the numerous instances of PR activities since time immemorial, there had been a lack of a proper definition for PR which would describe all its functions and significance and its status in the modern-day communications.
- Significantly, at the first meeting of the World Assembly of Public Relations in 1978 at Mexico, all agreed upon a definition which came to be known as 'Ille Mexico Definition', that defined PR as "the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organization leaders and

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implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization's and the public interest".

- PR that we understand and practice (Ivy has its origins in the works of two influential figures of the field, Ivy Ledbetter Lee and Edward Louis Bernays. Lee demonstrated through his work the benefits of being more open or transparent and the power of communication, which set up new standards in relationships between PR practitioners and the media and in turn, the public.
- He advised his clients, which were mostly the major businesses of the early 20th century, to admit to and own the accidents that their companies were involved in by granting access to journalists and sharing information setting examples of openness and honesty which would in turn build public trust.
- Lee is also credited for the introduction of the first official 'Press Release' which almost all the organizations today abide by as a means communication with the public.
- Over the years we have also seen the emergence of the so-called 'spin doctor'. In the context of public relations, spin is actually a form of propaganda whereby biased interpretation of an event or a campaign is put forward to influence public opinion. History is replete with numerous instances where the individuals concerned put a spin to a story by making use of deceptive and manipulative tactics.
- Edward Louis Bernays, the father of Public Relations, often indulged in such kinds of practices. During his stint at the American Tobacco Company in the 1920s, he was given the responsibility to increase the sales of 'Lucky Strike', a cigarette brand, among womenfolk.
- At the point of time, the voices of the women were seldom heard in public, leave alone smoking in public places. However, Bernays worked on this weak point and used it to the company's advantage by promoting the fact that women should smoke cigarettes if they want to maintain a svelte figure.
- The trick worked and women could be seen smoking unabashedly in public places (though that is nothing to be debated upon) which bolstered up the sales of 'Lucky Strike' in the long run. Such kinds of practices are usually not acceptable in the present day context as it contradicts the very essence of public relations.
- Another worrying trend that is commonly seen is the creation of 'front organization' by companies/countries that are able to in bigger resources for various campaigns. Such an organization is said to represent one specific agenda but in reality, it serves the interests of other parties, the information of which is concealed.
- Ethics in PR are constantly challenged, be it by clients or by the public. The general belief that has been placed on the industry since its inception has created the perception that PR is about image management where altering or concealing the truth to benefit the client is a practice.

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- But, in the due spirit of PR this is not the case. Though a public relations officer has the responsibility to create the image of the organization based on mutual understanding, he or she has to do it by sharing proper information based on truth and honesty, not based on lies or selective representation of concocted story.
- Having said that, a change in the relationship between industry and the public is visible partly because of the growing interest in corporate social responsibility. Overall, the PR practitioner has to take utmost care in cementing this relationship and in acting as a link to the community.
- In India, professional public relations is believed to have started in the pre-Independence era when the British colonial government tried to get the support of India during the First World War. Mahatma Gandhi can be credited as one of the efficient PR practitioners for his ability to attract millions of Indians right from the poverty-stricken lots to the elite sections through his well-crafted communication strategies.
- The Public Relations Society of India was established in 1958 on this very day to promote and strengthen public relations as a profession.
- The first All India Public Relations Conference was held on April 21, 1968 which also witnessed the adoption of the Code of Ethics for PR profession. Since then, April 21 is celebrated every year as the National Public Relations Day by public relations and communication professionals across the country to recognize the growth of PR and the significance of ethics in its practice.
- The most effective PR programmes need both communication and action, which at times require the organization to change its actions and behaviours to improve relations with its stakeholders along with maintaining strong communications.

Electric vehicles

- With the world's fossil fuel reserves getting exhausted and global concern over increasing carbon footprint on the rise, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari's announcement that lithium-ion batteries would be manufactured fully in the country in the next six months and India would become the number one electric vehicle maker in due course of time reflects our country's commitment to protect the environment and also in the process cut down the nation's whopping oil import bill amounting to Rs 8 lakh crore.

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- The minister expressed confidence that India would be able to make lithium-ion battery and that there is no shortage of lithium.
- This is a welcome development as electric vehicles can reduce emissions and save money. Using electricity offers advantages not available in conventional internal combustion engine vehicles because electric motors react quickly.
- EV batteries differ from starting ignition batteries as they are designed to give power on a sustained period of time and are deep-cycle batteries. EV batteries are also characterized by their relatively high power-to-weight ratio, specific energy and energy density. Smaller lighter batteries are preferred because they reduce the weight of the vehicle and add to improved performance.
- The silver lining is that the country has been able to develop indigenous technology for manufacturing lithium-ion batteries and most of the reputed global brands are already present in the country. It is important that the Government and the industry ensure that the EV batteries manufactured in the country are of international standard. In a country like India, government support in terms of policy and encouragement is essential for the success of any venture.
- The increasing oil bill is a growing headache for the Government reeling under the Covid pandemic-hit economy. An early transition to electric vehicles from the conventional fuel-consuming vehicles will be a big money saver for the nation.
- However, this will require a complete revamp of the existing EV infrastructure. More energy recharging stations are a must on the highways so that EV owners feel confident to venture out on long drives without worrying about being stranded. It is expected that with increasing demand the prices of electric vehicles will come down and be more affordable.
- With the Government planning to phase out old vehicles, incentives to purchase EVs will make them more popular among the people. As India has a driving auto industry, the Government would also do well to motivate the auto manufacturers to change over to EVs.
- It must be remembered that there would be a number of obstacles in the Government's endeavour to make EVs popular in the country. The traditional auto industry would not so easily switch over to the new technology unless they gain substantially from it.
- There must be sufficient incentives to motivate them to make the necessary changes. Moreover, the powerful oil producing countries which have a lobby of their own would see this as a threat to their revenues and income and try to scuttle the move.
- As such the Government will have to display immense political will and commitment to usher in the change overcoming such roadblocks in its path.

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