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THE HINDU
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Daily News Analysis

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Page 01 : Prelims Fact

Ustad Zakir Hussain, a legendary tabla maestro and cultural icon, passed away at 73 due to idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

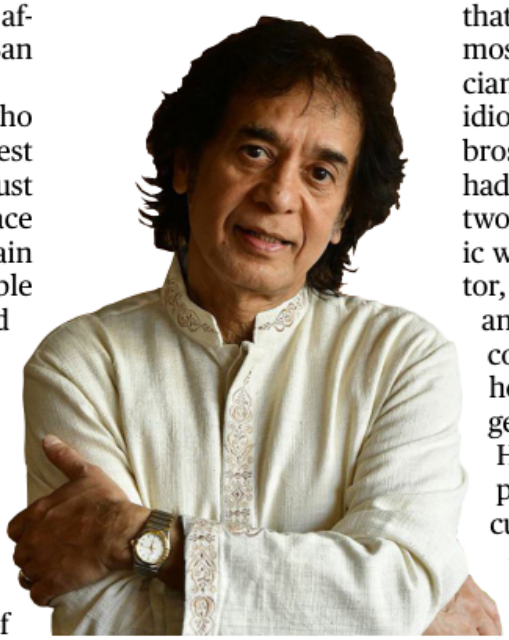
- Renowned for his global impact on Indian classical music, he embodied India's syncretic culture.

Zakir Hussain, who beat a syncretic rhythm, passes away at 73 in the U.S.

Anuj Kumar
NEW DELHI

The tabla fell silent as Ustad Zakir Hussain (1951-2024), one of India's greatest cultural ambassadors, passed away on Monday after a brief illness in a San Francisco hospital.

A genteel virtuoso who transformed the modest instrument into a robust voice for universal peace and humanity, Hussain was known for incredible speed, dexterity, and creativity, mesmerising audiences across cultures and making him one of the greatest musicians of all time. As the son of table maestro Ustad Alla Rakha, Hussain had a natural affinity towards the thump of the instrument and the composite culture. Having grown up singing devotional hymns to Mother Saraswati, reciting verses of the Koran, and hymns of the Bible as a daily ritual in his Mahim home in Mumbai, Hussian embodied India's syncretic soul.



Unparalleled legacy

In a statement, the family of Hussain, 73, confirmed that one of the world's most transcendent musicians passed away from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a lung disease. He had been hospitalised over two weeks ago. "His prolific work as a teacher, mentor, and educator has left an indelible mark on countless musicians. He hoped to inspire the next generation to go further. He leaves behind an unparalleled legacy as a cultural ambassador and one of the greatest musicians of all time," the statement said.

The untimely demise sent shock waves across the world. Describing the four-time Grammy Award winner as a "true genius", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Hussain revolutionised the world of Indian classical music. "He also brought the tabla to the global stage, captivating millions with his unparalleled rhythm," the PM wrote on X.

The Padma Vibhushan is survived by his wife and Kathak exponent Antonia Minnecola, daughters, Anisa and Isabella Qureshi, his brothers and tabla players, Taufiq and Fazal Qureshi, and his sister, Khurshid Aulia.

TRIBUTES
» PAGE 6

Ustad Zakir Hussain:

- Ustad Zakir Hussain (1951-2024) was a globally celebrated tabla maestro and cultural ambassador of India.
- Everything You Need To Know About

- Known for blending Indian classical music with global genres, he revolutionized the perception of tabla as a melodic and rhythmic instrument.
- Born to tabla legend Ustad Alla Rakha, he inherited the Punjab gharana tradition and elevated it with his creativity and showmanship.
- A child prodigy, he began playing tabla at the age of three and became a professional performer by his teenage years.
- He co-founded the Shakti band in 1973 with John McLaughlin, blending Indian classical music with Western jazz.
- Hussain composed music for films like Mr. and Mrs. Iyer and Manto and worked on international projects such as Apocalypse Now.
- A four-time Grammy Award winner, he was a recipient of the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honor.
- His humility and curiosity continued to define his journey, inspiring musicians worldwide.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2020

Ques : With reference to Indian music and culture, consider the following pairs:

Instrument	**:**	**Artist**
1. Sitar	:	Ustad Amjad Ali Khan
2.Tabla	:	Pandit Ravi Shankar
3.Mridangam	:	T. V. Gopalakrishnan

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only
(d) None of the above
Ans: c)

Page 07 : GS 2 & 3 : International Relations & Environment

The UNCCD's COP16 in Saudi Arabia concluded without a binding drought protocol, despite increasing global drought challenges costing $300 billion annually.

- African nations strongly advocated for binding agreements, but developed countries pushed for a less stringent framework.
- Negotiators plan finalization at COP17 in 2026.

Conclusion of COP16 without a Binding Protocol

- The 12-day UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) conference, COP16, hosted in Saudi Arabia, ended without an agreement on a binding protocol to address drought.
- Negotiators required more time to finalize the approach, according to UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw.

Significance of a Binding Protocol

- African nations advocated for a binding protocol to ensure governments devise robust drought preparation and response plans.
- Developed countries, however, preferred a "framework," which many deemed insufficient.
- Indigenous groups supported a protocol to enhance monitoring and planning for drought responses.

Global Context and Challenges

- COP16 followed recent partial or failed environmental negotiations, such as biodiversity talks in Colombia, plastic pollution discussions in South Korea, and climate finance agreements at COP29 in Azerbaijan.
- Droughts, exacerbated by human-induced environmental destruction, cost over $300 billion annually and are projected to impact 75% of the global population by 2050.

Financial Commitments and Future Plans

Residents transport drinking water from Humaita to the Paraizinho community along the Madeira river, a tributary of the Amazon, during a dry spell in Amazonas state, Brazil. AP

UN talks on drought deal in Saudi fail to produce pact

Agence France Presse

Negotiators failed to produce an agreement on how to respond to drought at Saudi-hosted UN talks, participants have said, falling short of a hoped-for binding protocol addressing the scourge.

The 12-day meeting of parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), known as COP16, concluded early on Saturday morning, a day later than scheduled, as parties tried to finalise a deal.

Prior to the talks, UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw said the world expected negotiators "to adopt a bold decision that can help turn the tide on the most pervasive and the most disruptive environmental disaster: drought."

But addressing the plenary session before dawn, Thiaw acknowledged that "parties need more time to agree on the best way forward."

A press release on Saturday said the parties – 196 countries and the European Union – had "made significant progress in laying the groundwork for a future global drought regime, which they intend to complete at COP17 in Mongolia in 2026."

The Riyadh talks came after the partial failure of biodiversity talks in Colombia, the failure to reach a UN deal on plastic pollution in South Korea, and a climate finance deal that disappointed developing nations at COP29 in Azerbaijan.

Droughts "fuelled by human destruction of the environment" cost the world more than $300 billion each year, the UN said in a report published on December 3, the second day of the talks

Developed nations seek a framework that does not commit them to a course of action, something nations most affected by droughts find is an unsatisfactory solution

in Riyadh.

Droughts are projected to affect 75% of the world's population by 2050, it said.

A delegate at COP16 from a country in Africa, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations, said African nations had hoped the talks would produce a binding protocol on drought.

That would ensure "every government will be held responsible" for devising stronger preparation and response plans, the delegate said.

"It's the first time I've seen Africa so united, with a strong united front, with respect to the drought protocol."

Two other COP16 participants, also requesting anonymity, said developed countries did not want a binding protocol and instead were pushing for a "framework," which African countries deemed inadequate.

Indigenous groups also wanted a protocol to better monitor progress and develop response plans, said Praveena Sridhar, chief technical officer for Save Soil, a global campaign backed by UN agencies.

Yet the absence of a protocol from COP16 "shouldn't delay progress," as national governments can still allocate "budgets and subsidies to financially support farmers in adopting sustainable soil and land management."

Ahead of the Riyadh talks, the UNCCD said 1.5 billion ha of land must be restored by the decade's end and that at least $2.6 trillion in global investments was needed.

The first week saw pledges of more than $12 billion from national and regional institutions and the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, which is meant to mobilise public and private money to help at-risk countries.

- During the conference's first week, pledges of over $12 billion were made by national and regional institutions.
- The Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership aims to mobilize public and private funds for at-risk countries.
- The UNCCD emphasized the need to restore 1.5 billion hectares of land by 2030, requiring $2.6 trillion in global investments.

Next Steps

- Significant progress was made in preparing for a global drought regime, which is expected to be finalized at COP17 in Mongolia in 2026.
- Despite the absence of a protocol, countries can allocate budgets and subsidies to support sustainable land management and farming practices.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

- **Established:** 1994, legally binding since 1996Objective: Combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, particularly in drylands.
- **Focus:** Sustainable land management, land degradation neutrality
- **Scope:** Arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, often home to vulnerable ecosystems and communities.
- **Parties:** 197, including 196 countries and the European Union.
- **Key activities:** Promotes scientific research and knowledge sharing.Supports community-based initiatives for land restoration.Facilitates technology transfer and capacity building.Encourages policy reforms and sustainable land use planning.
- **Collaboration:** Works closely with other Rio Conventions (CBD and UNFCCC) for integrated solutions.
- **Significance:** Vital for achieving food security, poverty reduction, and climate change adaptation.

UPSC Mains PYQ : 2021

Ques : Desertification is a major environmental challenge. What are the causes and impacts of desertification in India, and what measures have been taken to address it under UNCCD?

Page 10 : GS 1 : Geography

La Niña, a cooler Pacific Ocean phase, influences global weather, including robust monsoons and colder winters in India.

How does La Niña affect India's climate?

How do the La Niña and El Niño influence global atmospheric circulation and weather patterns? What is a Triple Dip La Niña? If a La Niña was to form now, how would it affect the current Indian winters and subsequent summers and monsoons as well?

EXPLAINER

Mohammad Rafiuddin
Shikhar Tiwari
Rishikesh P.

The story so far:

While the La Niña was expected to emerge by July this year, it is yet to. The India Meteorological Department now expects a La Niña to set in by late 2024 or early 2025, plus a milder winter due to this delay.

What is La Niña?

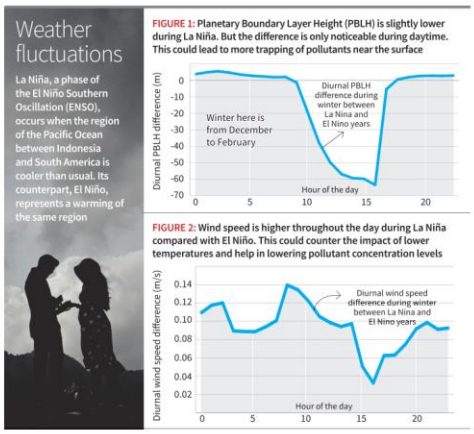
La Niña, a phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), occurs when the region of the Pacific Ocean between Indonesia and South America is cooler than usual. Its counterpart, El Niño, represents a warming of the same region. These two phases significantly influence global atmospheric circulation and weather patterns. During La Niña years, India receives normal or above-normal rainfall during the monsoon season. Yet the same phenomenon causes droughts in Africa and intensifies hurricanes over the Atlantic Ocean. Conversely, the El Niño brings extreme summers and droughts in India while increasing rainfall in the southern U.S.

This decade began with three consecutive La Niña events (2020-2022), a rare occurrence known as Triple Dip La Niña, followed by an El Niño in 2023. Climate change may increase the frequency and intensity of both La Niña and El Niño events, as rising sea and land temperatures disrupt the Pacific's balance. This could also amplify extreme La Niña events, which generally lead to harsh winters in India.

Will a La Niña emerge this winter?

2024 is different; the La Niña has not emerged as expected. Historically, the La Niña has usually formed during the monsoon or the pre-monsoon period, and it has formed only twice between October and December since 1950. Global forecasts had also predicted its emergence this monsoon. But in December, there remains only a 57% chance of it forming in 2024. It will be weak if it still does but it could affect global weather.

The onset of La Niña or El Niño can be declared on the basis of many indices. For instance, the oceanic Niño index (ONI) compares the three-month average sea surface temperatures in the East-Central Tropical Pacific with the 30-year average. When the difference between the two is 0.5° C or higher, it is an El Niño, and when it is -0.5° C or lower, it is a La Niña. Currently, it is around -0.3° C. To be classified as a full-fledged La Niña or El Niño, ONI values need to exceed the thresholds at least five times consecutively.



What is the meteorology?

Cities in southern India like Bengaluru and Hyderabad are experiencing a colder than usual winter this year, while north India is witnessing a delayed winter with above-normal temperatures. Some reports have linked the southern chill to a La Niña, but the current ONI values suggest otherwise. Had a La Niña developed already, north India would likely be experiencing a colder winter than usual.

An analysis of meteorological data over 35 years by researchers at the Council on Energy Environment and Water, New Delhi, has revealed that while La Niña winters feature colder nights compared to El Niño, daytime temperatures tend to be higher. Meteorological parameters like wind speed and planetary boundary layer height (PBLH) – the lowest atmospheric layer directly influenced by land-atmosphere interactions – also vary during ENSO phases, affecting air quality.

The team found the average wind speed is higher throughout the day during La Niña winters. Faster winds help reduce air pollution by transporting pollutants away. They also found that the average PBLH is slightly lower during La Niña winters. If La Niña sets in, lower temperatures in north India may lead people to burn more biomass for heating, worsening air pollution. A lower PBLH could also trap more pollutants near the ground. But higher wind speeds could disperse the pollutants, potentially leading to better air quality.

What about La Niña and monsoons?

El Niño summers are relatively harsher, as was the case in April this year, when India experienced intense, record-breaking heat waves. If a La Niña arrives and persists into the summer of 2025, it may offer relief from high heat. Additionally, an El Niño often disrupts monsoons, with India historically receiving below-average rainfall during at least half of all El Niño years since 1871. But the same figures also indicate evolving patterns since 1980.

Both north and south India, for instance, have received less rainfall during more intense El Nino events while central India has been barely affected. A La Niña, on the other hand, promotes robust monsoons as evidenced by the "normal" or "above-normal" rainfall in the La Niña years of 2020, 2021, and 2022. There were "below normal" rains in the El Niño year of 2023.

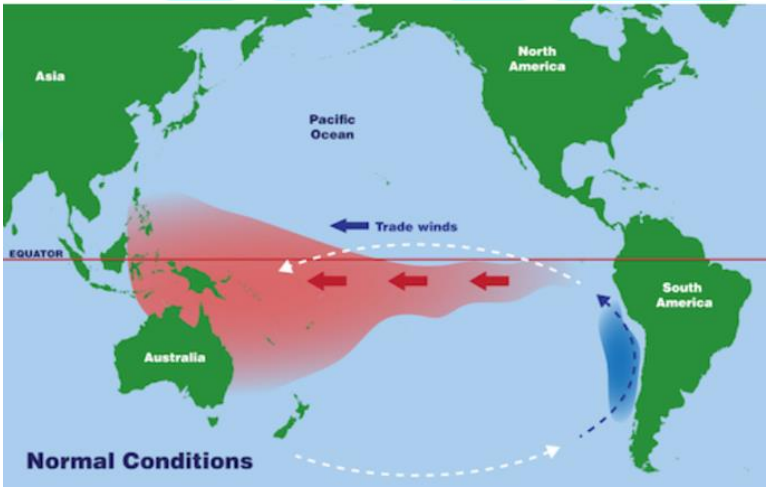
Thus it would be a welcome development if a La Niña forms now or early next year and continues until the monsoon season.

Mohammad Rafiuddin is programme associate, and Shikhar Tiwari and Rishikesh P are consultants – all at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

THE GIST

- During La Niña years, India receives normal or above-normal rainfall during the monsoon season. Yet the same phenomenon causes droughts in Africa and intensifies hurricanes over the Atlantic Ocean.
- An analysis of meteorological data over 35 years by researchers at the Council on Energy Environment and Water, New Delhi, has revealed that while La Niña winters feature colder nights compared to El Niño, daytime temperatures tend to be higher.
- El Niño summers are relatively harsher, as was the case in April this year, when India experienced intense, record-breaking heat waves. If a La Niña arrives and persists into the summer of 2025, it may offer relief from high heat.

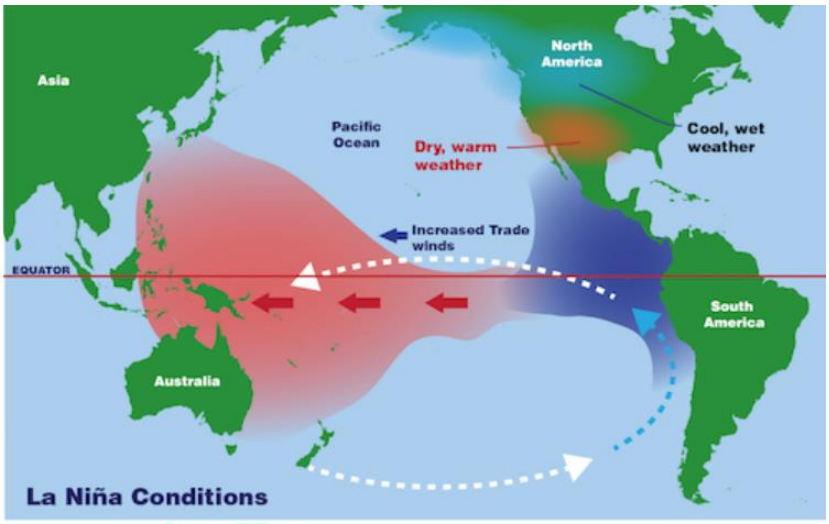
- Despite predictions, La Niña has not emerged in 2024, raising questions about its impact on weather and air quality.
- Its absence also highlights evolving climate patterns influenced by ENSO phases and climate change.



What is La Niña?

- La Niña is a phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) characterized by cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean between Indonesia and South America.
- Its counterpart, El Niño, represents warmer-than-normal temperatures in the same region.

- La Niña typically brings normal or above-normal rainfall to India, causes droughts in Africa, and intensifies Atlantic hurricanes.
- Conversely, El Niño leads to extreme summers and droughts in India but increases rainfall in the southern United States.
- Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of both La Niña and El Niño events, potentially amplifying extreme weather patterns.



Current Status of La Niña

- La Niña, expected to emerge by July 2024, has not materialized yet.
- Historically, La Niña typically forms during the monsoon or pre-monsoon periods, with only two occurrences between October and December since 1950.
- As of December 2024, there is only a 57% chance of its emergence, and even if it does form, it is likely to be weak.
- Oceanic Niño Index (ONI) values, currently around -0.3° C, need to drop below -0.5° C for at least five consecutive three-month periods to confirm a La Niña event.

Meteorological Implications

- Southern Indian cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad are experiencing colder winters, while north India faces delayed and warmer winters.
- La Niña winters generally feature colder nights, higher daytime temperatures, faster wind speeds, and a lower planetary boundary layer height (PBLH).
- Lower PBLH could trap pollutants near the ground, worsening air quality, but faster winds might disperse them.

Impact on Monsoons and Heatwaves

- El Niño often disrupts monsoons, with India receiving below-average rainfall during most El Niño years.
- La Niña promotes robust monsoons, as seen in 2020-2022, which brought above-normal rainfall.
- If La Niña persists into 2025, it could mitigate heat waves and improve monsoon rainfall.

UPSC Mains PYQ : 2014

Ques : Drought has been recognised as a disaster in view of its party expense, temporal duration, slow onset and lasting effect on various vulnerable sections. With a focus on the September 2010 guidelines from the National disaster management authority, discuss the mechanism for preparedness to deal with the El Nino and La Nina fallouts in India. **(200 words/12.5m)**

Page 11: GS 1 : Indian History – Personalities

Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar criticized Jawaharlal Nehru, accusing him of subverting the Constitution and implementing flawed foreign policies.

Why the legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru endures even now

The belittling of Nehru is odd, because the standing of the current Prime Minister is not validated by writing out a previous PM from the annals of history. The future will judge both leaders on their own merit

Neera Chandhoke

At the end of a two-day debate on the Indian Constitution in Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi critiqued previous Congress governments stating that former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru started the "subversion" of the Constitution with his amendment to the fundamental right to expression. The External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, in another venue, similarly critiqued Nehru saying that the current government was trying to correct the 'Nehru foreign policy'. This article, dated December 4, 2021, by Neera Chandhoke tries to explain why Nehru is more important than ever now.

An otherwise ordinary 'first' speech given by India's fourteenth President, Ram Nath Kovind, would have gone unremarked, except for one notable omission. The name of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, arguably the foremost leader of the freedom struggle, and India's first Prime Minister, was spectacularly missing from the inventory of prominent Indians listed by the President. Though the government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gone to extraordinary lengths to eliminate references to the architect of democratic India, we expect the head of state to stand above partisan party politics. There is cause for disappointment.

A few days after Mr. Kovind's speech, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) published a largish booklet to celebrate the birth centenary of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. In the section on great leaders of India, 'Mahapurush', the names of Nehru as well as Mahatma Gandhi are conspicuous by their absence. Almost 10 lakh senior school students in Uttar Pradesh are forced to study the booklet, appear for an exam, and be rewarded if they perform well. Many of the 'great men' listed in the booklet have never taken part in the freedom struggle, and never been jailed for combating colonialism, unlike Nehru and the Mahatma. But their names occupy pride of place in oral and written histories authored by the BJP. Leaders who fought for Independence are simply written off.

In remembrance: School students pay homage to former Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his 135th birth anniversary, in Kolkata on November 14. ANI

The historical perspective

The belittling of Pandit Nehru is odd, because the standing of the current Prime Minister is not validated by writing out a previous Prime Minister from the annals of history. The future will judge both leaders on their own merit, their success or their failure in managing a complex and plural society, their credentials as democrats, and their political, economic, and strategic visions. Both have a place in modern India. What that place is, will be decided by history. The current dispensation should take the art of history writing seriously and not reduce it to pamphleteering. History is important for collective self-understanding, because it enables us to understand where we have come from, and how we got from 'there' to 'here'. Without competent histories that allow us to understand our collective past and present, and help us generate visions for the future, entire generations will lose their bearings.

What the philosopher Jürgen Habermas calls the 'public use of history' should be, for this reason, subjected to strong evaluations. Since the craft has a bearing on the human condition, we ought to distinguish between histories that inspire a democratic, critical sensibility to contain and challenge authoritarianism, from those that feed appetites for absolute power. History, of course, must narrate tales of tyrants and despots, so that we take care not to repeat the errors of the past. But it must also chronicle tales of the triumph of the human spirit, and inspire us to struggle against totalitarianism and suppression of individual freedom.

For the ruling class, history should be important, because it reminds them that absolute power, often won at the expense of human freedom, does not endure. Unexpected moments arise in the life of a society when its members clamour for change, when existing gods are brought down, and new ones erected in their place, condemned to wait for their own downfall. All of us should be wary of changing tides of fortune.

Fortune, wrote the 16th century political theorist of Florence, Niccolò Machiavelli, is unpredictable and inexplicable. She is an active sharer in man's making of history, she produces the unforeseen, and she will never be dominated, but will dominate men. That is why Machiavelli advised the Prince of Florence to study history. The public role of history is to remind rulers that fortune is fickle. After all, Nehru, who once led India to freedom, is vilified in his own country by the benighted cyberspace industry. This is short-sighted, because to unremember the man is to forget that there is an alternative to narrow and energy-consuming nationalism.

Despite all attempts, Nehru continues to be remembered by many for his contribution to the institutionalisation of democracy, establishing institutions of excellence, and his conviction that poverty and inequality in India cannot be tackled by the market. There is, however, more to a good society: solidarity with struggling people within and outside the country.

Nehru, as one of the most distinguished leaders of Third World solidarity, reached out to the rest of the colonised world, and forged a joint front against colonialism and a reinvented imperialism. He was, by temperament and experience, a cosmopolitan. His frequent visits to Europe, his deep familiarity with the past, and his understanding of the contemporary ideologies of the day, from liberalism to Fabian socialism, to communist internationalism, had convinced him that the future of India was incomplete without the liberation of other colonies.

Role of intellectual journeys

Nehru's commitment to the independence of the Third World had been shaped by intellectual journeys through history, as well as participation in a number of international conferences such as the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels in 1927. He played a prominent role in the 1955 Bandung Conference, which set the stage for the emergence of a new bloc, and a new ideology in global affairs. Representatives of 29 countries from the global South, comprising well over a billion people, met to consider and debate on how they could help each other to neutralise the harmful effects of colonialism, and bring economic and social well-being to their people. Towering over leaders who had won their political spurs by piloting their countries to independence were Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, the Prime Minister of Ghana, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the President of Egypt, Zhou Enlai, the Premier of China, and Ho Chi Minh, the Prime Minister of Vietnam. The agenda included every topic over which the colonised and the newly decolonised world had agonised for decades – religion, colonialism, sovereignty, and world peace. The Bandung meeting sparked off reflections on the distinct attractions of non-alignment, and of the strengths that a movement of the non-aligned could acquire in global forums.

A deep cosmopolitanism

Interestingly, if one strand of anti-colonial nationalism focussed on the idea and the imaginaries of the nation, the second moved away from processes of closed identity formation towards other ways of being in the world. Nehru's cosmopolitanism acknowledged that our political identities are forged in and through conversations not only with people who are like us, but people who belong to other cultures, other countries, other societies, and other traditions, but who are like us in many ways.

Contemporary history has not treated this statesman kindly. This is a great pity because today's generation might know what globalisation is, but not what cosmopolitanism is about. Even as our society globalises at a frenetic pace, it has turned inwards and become claustrophobic. History must remember Nehru, he taught us to look outwards, to express solidarity, and to become, in the process, cosmopolitans. We must remember him because we have lost out on something that is rather important, teaching our children that our imaginations and our energies should be harnessed to the cause of the oppressed over the world, that closed-in societies lead to stagnation if not to certain death, and that such societies circumscribe imaginings and truncate visions.

We have, perhaps, become lesser human beings.

Neera Chandhoke is a former Professor of Political Science, Delhi University

- President Kovind's omission of Nehru's name in a speech highlights a trend to diminish his legacy.
- This marks a shift in historical narratives.

Jawaharlal Nehru's Contributions to India

Institutionalization of Democracy

- Played a key role in drafting and implementing the Indian Constitution, ensuring democratic governance.
- Established parliamentary democracy as India's political framework, fostering a culture of debates and elections.
- Strengthened democratic institutions, ensuring the separation of powers and individual rights.

Economic Vision

- Advocated for a mixed economy combining public and private sector efforts to promote growth and equity.
- Initiated the Five-Year Plans, focusing on industrialization, self-reliance, and reducing economic disparities.
- Established major public sector enterprises to build India's industrial base, such as Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and Hindustan Steel.

Focus on Education and Scientific Development

- Founded institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).
- Promoted scientific research by establishing the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Atomic Energy Commission.
- Introduced free primary education and emphasized the role of education in national development.

Foreign Policy and Non-Alignment

- Championed the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), advocating neutrality during the Cold War.
- Played a pivotal role in the Bandung Conference of 1955, uniting newly independent countries against colonialism and imperialism.
- Promoted global peace and disarmament through diplomacy and peaceful conflict resolution.

Social and Cultural Contributions

- Advocated for secularism, promoting unity in India's diverse religious and cultural fabric.
- Encouraged land reforms to reduce inequality and empower rural populations.
- Promoted gender equality by supporting progressive laws on women's rights.

Global Solidarity

- Acted as a voice for the Third World, building alliances with other decolonized nations to address global inequalities.
- Worked towards poverty eradication and social justice both within and beyond India.

Legacy

- Nehru's leadership set the foundation for modern India's democratic, scientific, and economic growth.
- His contributions continue to shape India's development trajectory and global standing.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Discuss the contributions of Jawaharlal Nehru in shaping post-independence India, focusing on his policies in the fields of democracy, economic development, and foreign relations. How did his vision influence India's global standing? **(250 Words /15 marks)**

In News : SLINEX 2024

SLINEX 2024 is a bilateral naval exercise between India and Sri Lanka, fostering maritime cooperation since 2005.

- The event enhances interoperability through professional exchanges and joint operations at Visakhapatnam.

Analysis of the news:

- SLINEX 2024 will take place from 17 to 20 December 2024 at Visakhapatnam under the Eastern Naval Command.
- The exercise will have two phases: Harbour Phase (17-18 December) and Sea Phase (19-20 December).
- Initiated in 2005, SLINEX strengthens maritime cooperation between India and Sri Lanka.
- **Indian participants:** INS Sumitra (Naval Offshore Patrol Vessel) and a Special Forces team.
- **Sri Lankan participants:** SLNS Sayura (Offshore Patrol Vessel) with a Special Forces team.
- The Harbour Phase will include professional and social interactions to foster mutual understanding.
- The Sea Phase will involve joint drills such as Special Forces operations, gun firings, seamanship, and helicopter operations.
- The 2024 edition aims to enhance interoperability and promote a rules-based maritime environment.

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Daily News Analysis

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

The hidden cost of greenwashing the Indian Railways

K. Balakesari

formerly of the Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers, was Member Staff, Railway Board

According to a recent report published in this daily, RITES Ltd., the consultancy arm of the Indian Railways, has won two contracts for the repurposing of six broad gauge diesel electric locomotives for export to some African railways. These locomotives will be converted for use on railways that use the Cape Gauge of 1,067 mm as against the 1,676 mm used on the broad gauge of the Indian Railways. While the Indian Railways, in collaboration with its consultancy public sector undertakings such as RITES and IRCON, has exported locomotives to countries in Asia and Africa in the past, this is probably for the first time that second-hand (used) locomotives are proposed to be exported after "gauge conversion''. While there is no doubt that this is a commendable effort in re-engineering that involves virtually rebuilding the locomotives on a narrower platform, the story that lies hidden is a sordid saga of the humongous wasting of costly assets and profligacy unmatched in the annals of railways anywhere in the world, in pursuit of a wholly fictitious goal.

RTI data and policy justification

The report mentions "soon to be redundant diesel locomotives'. The fact is that even as far back as March 31, 2023, according to information obtained by this writer under the Right to Information (RTI) Act more than a year ago, there were 585 diesel locomotives stabled (kept idling/stored) in various locations across the Indian Railways' network due to electrification. Further over 60% of those locomotives had a residual life of more than 15 years. Today, the figure is reported to be about 760 locomotives. How and why did the Indian Railways end up in a situation where hundreds of diesel electric locomotives in good working order with years of service still left in them became redundant? The answer lies with the policy of the government to electrify the entire broad gauge network of Indian Railways in mission mode, at a frenetic pace.

Railway electrification in India has long ago transcended mundane considerations such as economic and financial viability and joined the pantheon of universal desiderata such as world peace and universal brotherhood (*Vasudeiva Kutumbakam*). Today, railway electrification is generally justified broadly on two grounds: a saving of foreign exchange by reducing the import of crude oil and reducing environmental pollution, and, as a corollary of the second point, the adaptability to switch over to renewable sources of energy such as solar and wind. In fact in an official pamphlet issued by the Ministry of Railways in February 2021, entitled 'Mission 100% Electrification - Moving Towards net zero carbon emission', the objectives of the mission have been spelt out thus: to provide environment friendly, green and clean mode of transport to the people; and to unleash its potential to use of renewable energy, especially solar, by making use of the huge land parcel available along the railway tracks.

> The 'mission 100% electrification' project is about chasing a mirage of turning into a green railway; a large number of serviceable diesel locomotives will also become redundant

Let us examine these justifications in greater detail. The benefit of saving in foreign exchange is true in absolute terms. But viewed in the context of the total consumption of high speed diesel (HSD) oil in the country, the consumption for railway traction is minuscule. According to a study conducted by AC Nielsen and published by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (January 2014), when electrification of the Indian Railways was proceeding at a sedate "conventional" pace, 70% of of total diesel oil consumption in the country was by the transport sector. Out of this, the share of the Railways was just 3.24%. In comparison, trucks consumed 28% and agricultural sector consumed 13.2%. The share of the Railways reduced further to about 2% in 2021-22. So, 100% rail electrification will eliminate one of the smallest segments of diesel consumption, leaving the elephants in the room to roam free.

Truth about environmental considerations

The claim of environmental benefits is even more untenable in the Indian context. Consider the following facts. Electricity is a secondary source of energy, except when generated by lightning. It needs to be generated by expending a primary source of energy from fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas, nuclear energy or the kinetic energy of water stored at a height (as in hydroelectric projects), or through solar or wind power.

What is the situation in India? Nearly 50% of the electricity generated today in the country is through coal-fired thermal plants and the Indian Railways plays a crucial role in transporting the coal from the pit heads to the thermal power plants. In fact, nearly 50% of the Railways' total freight earnings of about ₹1.7 lakh crore in 2023-24 (revised estimates) was generated by transporting coal for various purposes of which 80%, i.e., 40% of total freight earnings was generated only by transporting coal to thermal generating plants.

Replacing diesel locomotives with electric locomotives will only result in electric locomotives powered by electricity – about 50% of which is generated by burning coal – being used to move more coal to coal-fired thermal plants to generate more electricity, to transport more coal. Coal is considered the dirtiest fuel, environmentally, on the planet. A complete switchover by the Indian Railways to electric traction merely shifts the pollution caused by diesel locomotives near the railway tracks to the source of power generation in a more concentrated form, ultimately polluting the same atmosphere. Unless and until about 80% of the total electricity generated in the country comes from non-fossil fuels – and that day seems far off – any claim of 100% electrification of the Indian Railways, making it a "Green Railway'', is in the realm of fantasy. Incidentally, before that situation becomes a reality, the Railways will have to find alternative commodities to coal – which, today, is the single highest freight earner – to avoid a financial meltdown.

This article is not intended to reopen the time-worn debate of electric traction versus diesel traction. The issue is about chasing a mirage of converting the Indian Railways into a "green railway'', and, in the process, rendering a large number of serviceable diesel locomotives redundant. If all the locomotives already stabled are lined up today end to end, they will stretch for a length of almost 16 kilometres, a majority of them heading prematurely to the scrapyard.

'Disaster management, strategic purposes'

Mission 100% electrification of the Railways will also result in a dichotomy in the near term. The Indian Railways today has more than 4,000 diesel locomotives. With the impending 100% electrification of the system, all of them will not become redundant overnight. According to a recent news report in a reputed financial daily, quoting a senior official, 2,500 diesel locomotives are proposed to be retained by the Railways for "disaster management and strategic purposes''. It is beyond comprehension what disaster will require such a large number of diesel locomotives to be set aside, unless this is a ruse to avoid sending locomotives with considerable residual service life prematurely to the scrapyard. Further, it is reported that another nearly 1,000 locomotives will continue in service for the next few years to meet traffic commitments. In other words, a 100% electrified "green'' railway will continue to use about 3,500 "dirty diesels" in the foreseeable future, financially sustained to a large extent by transporting a not-so-green commodity: King Coal. That raises the question: what was the ultimate purpose of the tearing hurry to electrify 100%?

The Indian Railways' Mission 100% electrification is a sterling example of what happens when headline-grabbing slogans promoting vanity projects substitute for well-thought out policies, finally resulting in colossal wastage of tax-payers' money.

But does anyone care?

GS Paper 03 : Indian Economy – Infrastructure

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Discuss the implications of Indian Railways' Mission 100% Electrification on asset management, environmental sustainability, and financial efficiency. How can India reconcile green objectives with energy realities?. (250 Words /15 marks)

Context :

- RITES Ltd. has won contracts to repurpose redundant Indian Railways diesel locomotives for export after gauge conversion, highlighting wastage due to rapid electrification policies.
- The Indian Railways' Mission 100% Electrification raises concerns about environmental, financial, and strategic implications.
- It underscores the gap between green claims and actual coal-based energy dependency.

RITES Ltd. Wins Contracts for Repurposing Locomotives

- RITES Ltd., a consultancy arm of Indian Railways, has won two contracts to repurpose six broad-gauge diesel-electric locomotives for export to African railways.
- These locomotives will be converted from the Indian broad gauge (1,676 mm) to the Cape Gauge (1,067 mm).
- While India has previously exported locomotives, this marks the first export of repurposed second-hand locomotives after gauge conversion.
- Despite the engineering achievement, the situation highlights wastage of operational diesel locomotives due to policy decisions.

Diesel Locomotives Made Redundant

- **Current Status:** As of 2023, 585 diesel locomotives were idling due to railway electrification, a number that has since risen to about 760.
- **Residual Life:** Over 60% of these locomotives have a service life of more than 15 years.
- **Policy Impact:** The redundancy stems from the government's mission to achieve 100% railway electrification at an accelerated pace.

What Is Greenwashing?

- Greenwashing is the practice of presenting misleading or exaggerated claims about a product, service, or organization's environmental benefits to appear environmentally friendly.
- It involves marketing strategies that mask environmentally harmful practices, such as focusing on minor eco-friendly features while ignoring significant environmental damage.
- Greenwashing can mislead consumers and undermine genuine sustainability efforts by prioritizing image over substantive environmental action.

Justifications for Electrification

Saving Foreign Exchange

- **Minuscule Diesel Usage:** Railways' diesel consumption constituted only 3.24% of total transport-related diesel use in 2014, reducing to about 2% by 2021-22.
- **Limited Impact:** While reducing crude oil imports saves foreign exchange, the overall impact on national diesel consumption is negligible compared to sectors like trucking and agriculture.

Environmental Claims

- **Energy Source Dependency:** Nearly 50% of India's electricity is generated from coal, which Railways itself heavily transports.
- India's reliance on coal-fired electricity contradicts claims of creating a "Green Railway."
- A shift to 80% non-fossil fuel electricity generation is necessary to make electrification genuinely green.

Implications of 100% Electrification

- **Asset Mismanagement:** Hundreds of serviceable locomotives are prematurely made redundant, representing colossal asset wastage. Stabled diesel locomotives, if lined end-to-end, would stretch 16 kilometers.
- **Disaster Management Argument:** Indian Railways plans to retain 2,500 diesel locomotives for "disaster management and strategic purposes," raising questions about the rationale behind this redundancy.
- Another 1,000 diesel locomotives will continue in service for traffic needs despite electrification.
- Railways' financial sustainability remains tied to transporting coal, undermining claims of environmental benefits.

Critique of Electrification Strategy

- **Policy Concerns:** The rush to achieve 100% electrification reflects a preference for vanity projects over sound policy-making.
- **Economic Impact:** This approach leads to the wastage of taxpayers' money while failing to achieve significant environmental or economic benefits.
- Until renewable energy dominates India's electricity mix, claims of environmental benefits from railway electrification remain untenable.
