India, U.S. tariffs on ICT prove sticking point

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

Despite Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal’s presence in New York to conclude a trade package with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, the two sides failed to bridge the gap in their positions.

The announcement of an agreement was expected to coincide with Tuesday’s bi-

an agreement unravelled due to the failure to reach an agreement on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) products.

The U.S. wants India to eliminate tariffs (20%) on ICT products, but New Delhi is concerned that this could open up the market to flooding by Chinese technology.

The U.S. wanted greater access to Indian markets for medical devices, such as stents and knee implants, ICT and dairy products and sought the removal of price

For keepsakes: PM Modi presents a photograph from the ‘Howdy Modi!’ event to President Trump in New York. PM
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*C – Chennai; D – Delhi; T – Thiruvananthapuram; B – Bengaluru; H – Hyderabad
‘Delhi govt. has compensated only 46 families of sewer victims so far’

There have been 64 sewer deaths since 1993, says Safai Karamchari panel chairman

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI:

National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) chairman Manohar Valijibhai Zala said of 64 sewer death victims since 1993, the Delhi government has given compensation of 60 lakh only to families of 46.

“At a meeting with Chief Secretary Vijay Dev today (Tuesday), he said that the issue will be fixed in a week’s time,” Mr. Zala said while addressing a press conference. Mr. Zala attacked the Delhi government for not doing enough to stop sewer deaths. The NCSK is a body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of Central government.

Reacting to the statements, AAP Social Welfare Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam said that workers have not benefited from a programme that distributes 200 smaller machines to clean sewers in narrow lanes. “Till now, about 116 such machines have been distributed and only 38 have been given to sewer workers. The idea was to give the machines to workers who clean sewers. We informed the Chief Secretary about it too,” he said.

“Despite receiving the machines and assurances from the Delhi government, people are still dying in sewers in Delhi,” the NCSK chairman said. Mr. Zala also said that 50 manual scavengers have been found in Delhi in 2018 during a survey.

A job that kills

Despite the 2012 ban on the employment of manual scavengers, a government survey identified 50,000 people engaged in the job as of July 2013. The figure is debated, as the survey was carried out only in areas where “there are reasons to believe evidence of manual scavenging”. The survey was only conducted in 17 districts in 18 States.

Sewer deaths

Tamil Nadu had registered 226 deaths of manual scavengers who turned into sewer or privy tanks between 1993 and July 2019. This was the highest among all States. Gujarat recorded 72 such deaths, the second highest. 15 States had 0 (zero) and 3 States had no recorded data on deaths.

Compensation rate

The chart plots the share of families of victims (in bold and blue) and the compensation paid by the government (in green and red) between 2014 and 2018. Those whose claims were approved were given the compensation of 1.5 to 2.5 times the minimum wage of Rs. 15,000. However, many cases faced delays, and the delayed payments were often not credited to the accounts of those who died.

Despite the Census recording a significant number of sewer deaths in these States, the number of manual scavengers was not reported.

Paper I—(200 marks)

- Current events of national and international importance.
- Indian Polity and Governance—Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.
- Economic and Social Development—Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Paper III

General Studies—II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

- Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.
- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Paper IV


- Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
Manual Scavenging
- Practice of manually cleaning, carrying, disposing or handling the human excreta from dry latrines and sewers in any manner.
- Tools → Buckets, brooms, baskets
- Manual Scavengers - poorest & most disadvantaged communities in India

Legislations
- Applicable in 1st instances in few states and UTs (Article 252(1))

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→ Article 252(1)

- Central law on State List
- State legislatures pass resolution
- Parliament enacts law

Applicable at 1st instance
States that have passed resolution

Applicable to other states
If a resolution is passed in both the houses of the states
```
• Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

➔ Basis:

* Uphold the dignity of the individual
  - Part III - Right to live with dignity (Implicit Right)

* Moral duty of the State to protect the weaker sections
  - Article 46 - Promote the interests of the weaker sections and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation

➔ Key features:

- Prohibits the construction and maintenance of insanitary toilets

- Prohibits the engagement or employment of any individual as a manual scavenger

- Violations ➔ Imprisonment/Fine/Both

- Prohibits a person from being engaged or employed for hazardous cleaning of a sewer or septic tank

- Offences ➔ Cognizable and non-bailable
National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)

- Constituted on 12th August, 1994 as a Statutory body
  - The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993
    - Lapsed in 2004
    - NCSK → Non-Statutory body

- Under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
  - Tenure → Extended through Government Resolutions

Composition
- Chairman
- 4 members (1 female)
- Secretary
- Supporting Staff

Functions
- Recommend specific programmes of action to Central Govt. towards elimination of inequalities of Safai Karamcharis
- Study and evaluate the implementation of programs and schemes relating to social and economic rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis
- Investigate specific grievances and take suo-motu notice of matters relating to non-implementation of
  * Programmes/schemes
  * Decisions/guidelines/instructions
  * Measures for social and economic upliftment
  * provisions of any law

- Study and monitor the working conditions of Safai Karamcharis and make recommendations

- Monitor the implementation of “The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

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National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation

- ‘Not for Profit’ company
- Works under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- Provides financial assistance & skill development trainings to ensure the socio-economic upliftment of Safai Karamcharis

News

- Chairman of NCSK
  - Delhi Govt. has given compensation only to 46/64 sewer death victims
  - Delhi Govt. has not taken enough steps to stop sewer deaths
Data Point:

- Survey conducted by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (At the behest of NITI Aayog)
- 170 districts in 18 states
- 54,130 people involved in manual scavenging (upto 18th July 2019)
- Insanitary latrines → 26.06 Lakh

Despite the Census recording a significant number of service latrines in these States, the number of manual scavengers was not reported.

- U.P.: 3.26 lakh service latrines; — 30,375 manual scavengers
- T.N.: 27,500 service latrines; 425 manual scavengers
- Rajasthan —
- Gujarat —
- Bihar —

Families of 83% victims were not compensated in Kerala.

68% of victims’ families in West Bengal were not compensated.

All victims’ families in Punjab, Gujarat, and Telangana were fully compensated.

2% of victims’ families were not compensated in Tamil Nadu.
Another chance in Afghanistan

Donald Trump’s calling off Taliban peace talks is to India’s advantage: an outreach to the outfit could secure a shot in the arm for Pakistan, and young Kashmiris who are willing to take up arms against the Indian state. "If a superpower like the U.S. can be pushed out of Afghanistan by the Taliban with help from Pakistan, would it be too difficult to beat India?" is the argument doing the rounds among sections of agitated Kashmiri youth. The manner in which talks between the Taliban and the U.S. were being conducted would have led to negative consequences for New Delhi. To that extent, the breakdown of the Trump-Taliban talks is advantage India. The U.S. and its international community, while picking up the threads of negotiations to the days ahead, will need to ensure that there are enough guarantees built into a deal to dismantle untenable external behaviour by the Taliban.

Back to square one:
The Taliban, having fought against and displaced the powerful coalitio

n forces over the past 10 years, has the luxury of time on its side, even as it is steadily increasing its political legitimacy within Afghan

i. Recall that this is not the first time. U.S. talks are breaking
down, and every time the Americans had come to close negotiations with Mr. Donald Trump on the other hand may not have the luxury of time. As for the international communit

y, it has grown tired of the Afghan

story. In any case, we are back to another season of heavy fighting

in Afghanistan with devastating at

tacks being mounted by the Talib

an in the south even more than be

fore.

What implications does the can

cellation of U.S.-Afghan talks have for the volatile South Asian region in general and for India in particular?

Implications for Afghanistan

The direct fallout of the American pullout from the negotiations is more bloodshed in the country. The news is not welcome for the Taliban as well, and the U.S.-initiated talks with the American troops show no sign of progress. However, the current situation in Afghanistan, marked by President Ashraf Ghani’s failure to initiate a political process, could have repercussions on India’s interests. India’s influence in Afghanistan could be undermined if the Taliban return to power in the country.

What it means for India

India has a strong interest in the stability of Afghanistan. If the Talib

an return to power, it could lead to an increase in terrorist activities in the region, which could have implications for India’s own security. Additionally, the return of the Taliban could bring about a change in the political landscape in the region, which could have broader implications for India’s foreign policy.

The Kashmir question

Kashmir is in many ways a complex issue, and it requires a nuanced approach. The Indian government has taken a strong stance on the issue, and it has been clear that it is not willing to compromise on the issue of Kashmir. The U.S., on the other hand, has been more muted in its approach, and it has been clear that it is not willing to take a sides in the dispute.

India and its neighbours: relations

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to national security.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I (200 marks)

Current events of national and international importance.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-III

General Studies-II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

India and its neighbours—relations

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

PAPER-IV


Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.
• History of US-Afghanistan relations
  ➣ 1979: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan
      - Mujahideens supported by US, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia
  ➣ 1989: Victory for Mujahideens
      - Emergence of Taliban
  ➣ 2001: 9/11 attacks in USA
      - US Invasion of Afghanistan

• US-Taliban peace talk - Called off
  ➣ Situation back to the beginning

• Impact on Afghanistan
  ➣ More bloodshed
  ➣ Afghanistan government - not unhappy
  ➣ If deal with Taliban in future - need commitments on its domestic behaviour

• Implications for India:
  ➣ US-Taliban deal: Would have strengthened Taliban and Pakistan
  ➣ Pakistan - use Taliban for anti-India activities
  ➣ Non-negotiated withdrawal of US - disastrous
  ➣ Best for India - Negotiated deal
  ➣ Taliban in power - Indian assets in Afghanistan under pressure
Impact on Kashmir:

- Taliban elements in Kashmir - Similar to 1989
- More Kashmiri youth to militancy

Future talks with Taliban - should involve guarantees to deter its undesirable behaviour.

India should engage in talks with Taliban without hurting Afghan Government.
City vendors to get legal status

CM announces implementation of Street Vending Act

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday announced that the Capital would soon become the “first State” to implement the Street Vending Act, 2014, which seeks to provide legal protection to street vendors and hawkers.

Though street vendors and hawkers play an important role in the economy of every country, India has not taken steps to organise them or give them legal status, Mr. Kejriwal said, adding that the Delhi government had constituted 28 Town Vending Committees (TVCs) and notified them to give legal status to street vendors.

“Because they do not have a legal status, whatever they do is deemed illegal leading to harassment by every department – be it the police or civic body officials. People extort money from them,” the CM said. Since street vending was not streamlined, it also led to traffic snarls and pollution, he said.

28 TVCs set up

“Delhi will become the first State to implement the Act. Under it, town vending committees have been set up and a notification has been issued,” he said.

Of the 28 TVCs which has been set up, each has 30 members; 12 members have been elected from among street vendors and hawkers. The other members are officials who have been nominated, Mr. Kejriwal said.

Civic bodies have been asked to start conducting surveys to identify vendors and vending spots through their respective town vending committees in 10 to 15 days. Those who have been removed from vending spots over the years would also be included in the survey.

Street vendors will be given certificates during the survey and thereafter, licences bearing the name of the owner, address and the place of vending will be issued, the Chief Minister said. The surveys are expected to be completed within one to two months which will, soon, ensure that no one will be able to harass street vendors and hawkers.

“With street vending being organised, no new person can come and occupy a spot randomly by bribing officials. For new vending spots, hawkers will have to apply with town vending committees,” Mr. Kejriwal said.

Hawkers' body hails move

SIDHARTH RAY
NEW DELHI

Members of the National Hawker Federation (NHF) welcomed the Chief Minister’s announcement directing municipal corporations to complete surveys of town vending committees within a month, on Tuesday.

NHF general secretary Manoj Kumar said that the current Town Vending Committee notice was temporary and the survey needs to be carried out to identify the number and location of various vendors to form electoral rolls.

Taking the instance of removal of vendors from the Daryaganj Sunday Book Market, Sandeep Verma, another NHF leader, said that they were evicted based on BC orders but procedures under the Street Vendors Act were not followed. However, once the survey is completed and vending certificates issued, such procedures would have to be followed. The burden of proving illegality or “encroachment” by a vendor would fall on authorities instead of the vendor.
Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014

- Enacted to protect the rights of urban street vendors and to regulate street vending activities
- Rights and obligations of the street vendors
  - Rights and duties of street vendors
  - Maintenance of cleanliness and public hygiene
  - Maintenance of civic amenities in vending zones
  - Maintenance charges
- Regulation of Street vending
  - Survey of street vendors and protection from eviction or relocation
  - Issue of vending certificates
    - Category - Criteria - Validity and renewal
- Provisions of this act not applicable to any land, premises and trains owned and controlled by the Railways
- Section 22 - Town Vending Committees (TVC)
  - State Govts. shall issue rules for constituting a town vending committee in each local authority
    - More than one TVC
    - TVC for each zone/ward

if necessary
Composition of Town Vending Committee
- Members nominated by the State Govts. who represent the local authority
  - NGO and community-based organisations
  - Representation shall not be less than 10%
- Street vendors: Not less than 40%,
  - \( \frac{1}{3} \) - Women vendors

Main function
- Regulation of street vending activities

Section 26(3)
- Each town vending committee shall carry out social audit of its activities under the Act/Rules or schemes made under the Act.

News
- Delhi: 1st to implement the Street Vendors Act, 2014
- 28 Town Vending Committees has been constituted by Delhi Government
- Disadvantages of not streamlining street vending
  - Traffic hindrances
  - Street vendors (considered illegal activities) → Harassment by Police or civic body officials
  - Extortion of money from street vendors
• Each TVC → 30 members
  → 12/30 members - Street vendors (40%)

• Section 3 of the Street Vendors Act, 2014
  ▶ TVC shall conduct a survey of all the existing
    street vendors within the area of its jurisdiction

  ▶ Delhi Govt. has asked civic bodies to
    conduct surveys
    - Expected to be completed in one or
      two months

• Street vendors to be given certificates
Senior citizens savings scheme needs full tax break, says SBI report

"Such a move will protect returns and have minimal impact on fiscal deficit"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Even as some banks are planning to link deposit rates with external benchmark, after linking retail floating lending rate to repo rate, a report by State Bank of India (SBI) suggested full tax breaks for senior citizens savings scheme to protect returns.

According to the report, authored by Soumya Kanti Ghosh, group chief economic adviser, SBI, such deposits formed 5.6% of private final consumption expenditure. Under the Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS), a senior citizen can deposit ₹15 lakh and the current interest rate is 8.6%. However, the interest on such SCSS is fully taxable.

“The March’18 outstanding under SCSS was ₹38,662 crore. It will be fair if such amount is given full tax rebate as the revenue foregone by the government could be only ₹3,052 crore, that will have the minimal 2 bps impact on government fiscal deficit,” the report pointed out.

Estimates suggest that there are about 41 million senior citizen term deposit accounts in the country with total deposits of ₹4 lakh crore or 7% of India’s GDP.

The average deposits size per account is about ₹3.3 lakh and interest income from such deposits formed 5.5% of private final consumption expenditure in FY18.

The report also said despite the cut in corporate tax, which will cost the exchequer ₹1.45 lakh crore, the fiscal deficit for the current financial year will be close to 3.5%.

The Centre has a target of 3.3% fiscal deficit for FY20. “We still believe that fiscal deficit estimates for Centre in current fiscal should be still close to 3.5%.

“We are surprised that the market has missed out that only 58% of the ₹1.45 lakh crore fiscal bonanza will be revenue loss for the Centre/ ₹4,100 crore,” the report said.

Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks)

- Current events of national and international importance.
- Economic and Social Development—Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-III

General Studies- II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes: mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

PAPER-IV

General Studies-III: Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management

- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.
- Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
- **RBI**: Personal loans to be linked to any one of the external benchmark rate of RBI. 
  *Eg: Repo rate*

- Public Sector banks linking lending rates to repo rate

- Plan to link deposit rates to benchmark rate
  - Economic slowdown - reduced repo rate to infuse more money - linking savings to repo rate will reduce interest return

- **SBI Suggested**: Full tax break for Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS)

  - SCSS → Senior citizens upto Rs.15 lakh deposit
    - Current interest rate - 8.6%
    - Tenure: 5 years + can be extended for three more years
    - Interest earned - ‘Taxable’
    - At present - 41 million senior citizen term deposit accounts
    - Total deposit - Rs. 14 lakh crores
      - 7% of GDP of India
• Interest income from SCSS deposits
  - 5.5% of Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE)
  - PFCE - Consumption expenditure of households
    + non-profit institutions serving households

• Corporate tax cut → Revenue loss of
  Rs.1.45 Lakh Crore
  - increase in fiscal deficit to 3.6% for
    FY 2019-20 from 3.3% target
  - Full tax rebate to SCSS earnings - very less
    revenue loss to govt - Rs. 3092 Crore
Q1. Consider the following statements about National Commission for Safai karmacharis.

1. It is a statutory body.
2. It functions under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Article 252 of Indian Constitution mentions the power of parliament to legislate

a) a matter in the state list in the national interest.
b) any matter in the state list if a proclamation of emergency is in operation.
c) any law for giving effect to international agreements.
d) any law for two or more states by the consent of those states.
Q3. Consider the following statements regarding town vending committees.

1. They are constituted as per the provision of Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014.
2. Street vendors are not the members of this committee.
3. This committee is mandated to carry out social audit of its activities under the above mentioned Act or the rules or the schemes made as per the above mentioned Act.

Which of the above statements is/are not correct?

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

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Under the Senior Citizens Savings Scheme, a senior citizen can deposit up to 50 lakh rupees.
2. The interest earned under SCSS is taxable.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 or 2
Q5. Consider the following statements.

1. The tax that is levied on the book profit of a company is called as Minimum Alternate Tax.
2. Surcharge denotes an additional tax levied on the amount of the income tax.
3. Cess is a permanent tax that is levied by the Government of India and usually this is for a specific purpose.

Which of the above statement(s) is or are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 1 and 2 only

Q6. Consider the following statements with respect to the Corporate Social Responsibility.

1. All the companies registered under Companies Act should mandatorily set aside certain proportion of their average net profits in every financial year for activities for the Corporate Social Responsibility Policy of the company.
2. The Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013, lists the activities that may be included by companies in their Corporate Social Responsibility Policies.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
Practice Question – Mains
GS – II

Q. Discuss the impacts of the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan on India.

Practice Question – Prelims
Answer

Q1. Option (b) – 2 only
Q2. Option (d) – any law for two or more states by the consent of those states.
Q3. Option (b) – 2 only
Q4. Option (b) – 2 only
Q5. Option (d) – 1 and 2 only
Q6. Option (b) – 2 only