

## **EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS—OCTOBER 28, 2021**

### **TAMIL NADU**

- **On October 27, the Tamil Nadu government - reconstituted the State Export Promotion Committee (SEPC) to include representatives from export associations and councils of various sectors.**
- ✓ The committee will have the chief secretary to the government as its chairman
- ✓ It comprises of principal secretary of the industries department, secretaries of the finance, animal husbandry, handlooms, MSME, and agriculture departments, the MD and CEO of Guidance Tamil Nadu, and additional director general of foreign trade.
- ✓ Further, export council representatives from seven sectors have also been nominated to the committee.
- ✓ The committee will review all trade related issues, including issue of logistics, agriculture exports and service exports at the state level
- ✓ It shall meet at least once in every six months to review progress of export strategy.

### **NATIONAL**

- **On October 27, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - participated in the 16th East Asia Summit (EAS) hosted by Brunei as Chair through video conference**
- ✓ Addressing the Summit, the PM stressed the importance of free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific and the principle of ASEAN Centrality in the region
- ✓ The PM reiterated India's commitment to provide Quad sponsored COVID-19 vaccines to Indo-Pacific countries in his virtual address
- ✓ He also recalled India's support of \$1 million to the ASEAN COVID-19 Recovery Fund.
- ✓ The 16th East Asia Summit witnessed participation of leaders from ASEAN countries and other EAS participating countries including Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, USA and India



- ✓ The Summit discussed important regional and international issues including Indo-Pacific, South China Sea, UNCLOS, terrorism, and situation in Korean Peninsula and Myanmar.
- ✓ The EAS leaders adopted three statements on mental health, economic recovery through tourism, and sustainable recovery, which have been co-sponsored by India.
- ✓ The summit saw participation by a US President for the first time since 2017 with President Joe Biden reiterating the US commitment to the international rules-based order
- ✓ The East Asia Summit is the premier forum in the Asia-Pacific region to deal with issues relating to security and defence, since its inception in 2005
- ✓ The 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is considered one of the most influential groupings in the region
- ✓ Apart from the ASEAN member states, the East Asia Summit includes India, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Russia.
- ✓ India, being a founding member of the East Asia Summit, is committed to strengthening the East Asia Summit to deal with contemporary challenges.
- ✓ PM Modi attended the 17th ASEAN-India summit held virtually in November last year

## **SUPREME COURT VERDICT**

- **On October 27, the Supreme Court - formed an independent committee to look into allegations of unauthorised spying by Pegasus, a flagship spyware product of Israel's NSO Group.**

- ✓ The Committee is tasked with investigating whether the Pegasus spyware was used on phones or other devices of the citizens of India to access stored data, snoop on conversations and intercept information
- ✓ The bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) NV Ramana, and Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli criticised the government's refusal to divulge, on the grounds of national security, any details of what the software was used for and why
- ✓ The order reinforces India's commitment to privacy, a concept less than explicitly defined in the Constitution but enshrined as a fundamental right in a landmark 2017 SC judgment

## REASONS FOR SETTING UP OF PANEL

The SC order listed seven compelling reasons to set up the expert committee

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|--|--|
| <b>1</b> Right to privacy and freedom of speech alleged to have been impacted                        | private entity is involved in placing citizens of this country under surveillance  |
| <b>2</b> Entire citizenry affected by allegations due to potential chilling effect                   | <b>6</b> Allegations that the Union or state governments are party to rights' deprivation of citizens  |
| <b>3</b> No clear stand taken by Union of India  | <b>7</b> Limitation... to delve into factual aspects. For instance, even question of usage of technology on citizens, ...the jurisdictional fact, is disputed and requires further examination |
| <b>4</b> Seriousness accorded to allegations by foreign countries and involvement of foreign parties |  |
| <b>5</b> Possibility that some foreign authority, agency or  |  |

The order started with a George Orwell quote from his book 1984

- 6** If you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself

## FIVE YEARS OF PEGASUS

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|---|--|
| <b>2016</b>   Researchers at <b>Canadian cybersecurity organisation Citizen Lab</b> found Pegasus on a cell phone of human rights activist <b>Ahmed Mansoor</b> | journalists and human rights activists in India had been targets of surveillance by operators using Pegasus  |
| <b>Sept 2018</b>   Citizen Lab released a report of <b>45 countries</b> in which Pegasus was being used; list included India                                    | <b>July 2021</b>   Journalistic investigation Pegasus Project revealed among other details that Indian government used it to spy on around <b>300 people</b> between <b>2017</b> and <b>2019</b> |
| <b>Oct 2019</b>   WhatsApp revealed   |  |

- ✓ The top court was hearing a batch of 12 petitions which sought an independent probe into the alleged illegal use of the Israeli spyware Pegasus

- ✓ Pegasus is a cyber-weapon capable of hacking a target's smartphone, extracting its contents and turning on the device's microphone and camera.
- ✓ The three-member expert technical committee will be headed by Justice RV Raveendran, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, who served as a judge from 2005-2011
- ✓ Justice RV Raveendran served as Chairman of the News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) from 2013 to 2019.
- ✓ Most recently, he was appointed by the Andhra Pradesh High Court to lead an inquiry into allegations of a conspiracy against the Chief Justice of the High Court and a sitting judge of the Supreme Court.



**Five Hearings Till Wednesday's Order**

**Aug 10:** Copy of petitions served to Solicitor General (SG). SG took adjournment

**Aug 16:** Centre filed 'limited affidavit'

**Aug 17:** Court told Centre limited affidavit insufficient. SG brought up natsec concerns

**Sept 7:** SG requested adjournment

**Sept 13:** SG told court placing info sought on affidavit would be "detrimental to security interests". Petitioners sought independent probe team led by ret'd judge

**Members Of The Independent Probe Team**  
 Led by **Justice Raveendran** (Retd) aided by **Alok Joshi**, former IPS officer (1976 batch) and **Sandeep Oberoi**, chairman, sub-committee in (International Organisation of Standardisation/International Electro-Technical Commission/joint technical committee)

**And The Tech Team**

**NAVEEN KUMAR CHAUDHARY**  
 Professor of cybersec & digital forensics and dean, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar  
**Expertise:** Cybersec policy, network vulnerability assessment & penetration testing

**PRABAHARAN P**  
 Professor in School of Engineering, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, Kerala  
**Expertise:** Malware detection, critical infrasec, AI, machine learning

**ASHWIN ANIL GUMASTE**, chair associate professor of computer science & engineering, IIT-Bombay  
**Expertise:** Holds 20 US patents, awarded Vikram Sarabhai Research Award (2012) Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Science and Technology (2018). Former visiting scientist at MIT, US. Has written over 150 papers and three books

**The team will 'enquire, investigate and determine'...**

- If GoI/ state govt/ any central or state agency bought Pegasus to use against Indian citizens
- If Pegasus was used on phones/ devices of Indian citizens to eavesdrop, intercept info, access data
- If Pegasus was deployed by state, under what law, rule, guideline, protocol was done
- Was such use authorised
- What steps GoI took after 2019 news reports about hacking of WhatsApp accounts of Indian citizens using Pegasus
- Details of victims of such spyware attacks

- ✓ Apart from Justice Raveendran, the two members others who will assist in the investigation include Alok Joshi, former IPS officer and Sandeep Oberoi, Chairman, Subcommittee of international relations

- ✓ Joshi was part of the 1976 batch of the Indian Police Services (IPS) and has worked as the Joint Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Secretary of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and Chairman of the National Technical Research Organisation.
- ✓ Dr Sundeep Oberoi is the Chairman of ISO/IEC JTC1 SC7 (International Organisation of Standardisation/International Electro Technical Commission/Joint Technical Committee)
- ✓ It is a sub-committee which develops and facilitates standards within the field of software products and systems.
- ✓ He is a globally recognized cyber security expert and was until recently the Global Head of Cybersecurity Services, TCS.
- ✓ The committee will also be assisted by three technical experts – Dr Naveen Kumar Chaudhary, Dr P Prabhakaran, and Dr Ashwin Anil Gumaste - in the area of cybersecurity, digital forensics, and network and hardware.
- ✓ The committee is expected to submit a report to the apex court in eight weeks.

### THE STORY SO FAR



<p><b>1</b> A Chief Justice N V Ramana-led three-judge Supreme Court bench gave its order on a batch of 12 petitions that sought a probe into allegations that the Indian govt used Pegasus for unauthorised surveillance</p>	<p>customers \$650,000 to infiltrate 10 devices, plus an installation fee of \$500,000</p>	<p>media companies</p>
<p><b>2</b> Petitioners sought protection under the Constitution's fundamental right to privacy and freedom of expression in Articles 14, 19 an 21</p>	<p><b>6</b> Pegasus can steal, record any data on phone/ device. Can delete material too. Most dangerously, it can implant documents and evidence too on a mobile or a device</p>	<p><b>9</b> Pegasus is in use in 50 countries, the maximum numbers reportedly from Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and UAE</p>
<p><b>3</b> Pegasus is a spyware classed as a 'weapon' that Israeli company NSO sells to governments</p>	<p><b>7</b> Numbers of about 300 Indian journalists, legislators, politicians, lobbyists &amp; advocates among others reportedly on the list of 50,000 phone numbers of Pegasus-infected and suspected potential targets of Pegasus</p>	<p><b>10</b> Several govts set up committees to probe the scandal. Indian govt denied reports, alleged Pegasus was 'fake news'</p>
<p><b>4</b> A single licence, which can be used to infect several smartphones, can cost up to Rs 70 lakh</p>	<p><b>8</b> The list was released as part of a gobal news investigation by 17</p>	<p><b>11</b> Justices Ramana, Surya Kant &amp; Hima Kohli held five hearings. On October 27, they set up a technical committee to probe the Pegasus scandal</p>
<p><b>5</b> NSO Group charged</p>		<p><b>12</b> Petitioners included former Union minister Yashwant Sinha, CPM MP John Brittas, Supreme Court advocate ML Sharma, Editors Guild of India and individual journalists</p>

Sources: SC Order, TOI archives, Media reports

- ✓ In July, an international media consortium had reported that over 300 verified Indian mobile phone numbers were on the list of potential targets for surveillance using Pegasus spyware.

- ✓ Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, political strategist Prashant Kishor and two Union ministers, Ashwini Vaishnaw and Prahlad Patel, were among those whose phone numbers figured in the leaked list
- ✓ Since the list of those targeted was leaked in July, 2021, several countries, including France and Hungary, have launched investigations of their own
- ✓ NSO Group has maintained that the software was only sold to governments and not to private players.

## CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi - will address the leaders' summit at UN climate change conference (COP26) in Glasgow on November 1**
- ✓ On the next day, PM Modi, along with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, will jointly launch the ambitious trans-national solar grid initiative — One Sun One World One Grid
- ✓ Other key points to be highlighted at COP26 include India's ambitious 450 GW renewable energy goal by 2030, its hydrogen mission, plan to move Indian railways to 'net-zero' emission by 2030, land degradation neutrality and massive programme to increase forest cover (natural carbon sink)
- ✓ At the conference, India is expected to stick to its position of strictly adhering to principles of the UN convention and the Paris Agreement

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **India - successfully test-fired a surface-to-surface ballistic missile, Agni-5, from APJ Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast on October 27**

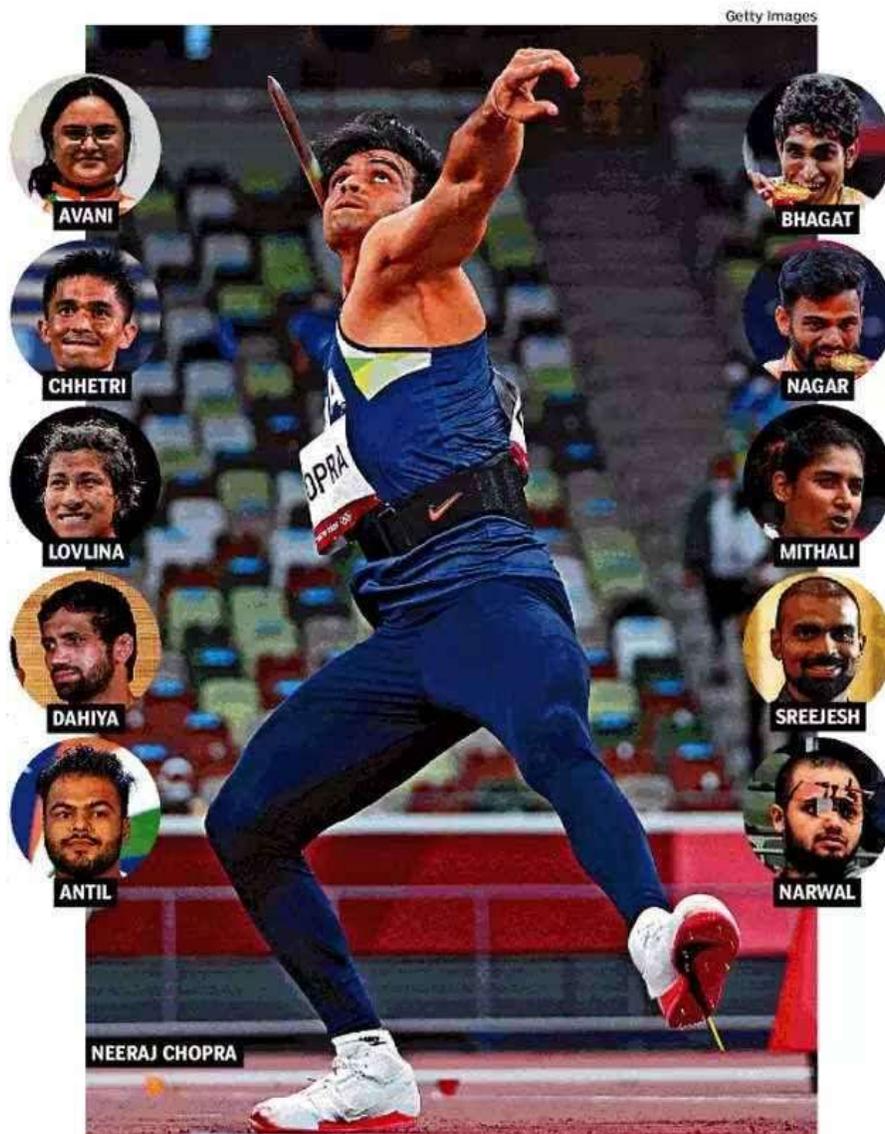


- ✓ The Intercontinental-range missile, which uses a three-stage solid-fuelled engine, is capable of striking targets up to a 5,000-km range with a very high degree of accuracy.
- ✓ The user launch test was conducted by the Strategic Forces Command of the Indian Army to validate the night operations with the missile with a 1.5-tonne warhead
- ✓ This was the eighth successful trial of the ballistic missile, which was tracked by telemetry and radar ships of the DRDO

- ✓ The first successful test of the Agni-V was conducted on April 19, 2012, followed by six other trials on September 15, 2003, January 31, 2015, December 26, 2016, January 18, 2018, June 3 2018, and December 10, 2018.
- ✓ The Agni-V ICBM has been developed by the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) and Bharat Dynamics Limited
- ✓ It weighs close to 50,000 kilograms and is 1.75 meters tall with a diameter of 2 metres
- ✓ At its fastest, the ICBM will be 24 times faster than the speed of sound, travelling 8.16 kilometres per second, achieving a high speed of 29,401 kilometres per hour.
- ✓ The Agni V test comes after the DRDO successfully test-fired the new generation nuclear-capable Agni Prime missile from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast on June 28, 2021 with range between 1000 and 2000 km.
- ✓ At present, apart from the Agni-5, other Agni missiles that India has in its armoury are Agni-1 with a 700-km range, Agni-2 with a 2,000-km range, Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500 km to more than 3,500 km range

## SPORTS

- **For the first time ever, 11 sportspersons - have been recommended for this year's rechristened Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna by the national sports awards selection committee**
- ✓ Tamil Nadu's Bhavani Devi has also been recommended for the Arjuna award.
- ✓ Bhavani had made history at Tokyo this year when she became the first Indian fencer to be part of the Olympics.
- ✓ Bhavani had earlier this month won the Charlellville National competition in France in the individual women's sabre event.
- ✓ Indian women's cricket team's Test and ODI captain, Mithali Raj, has become the first woman cricketer to be recommended for the Khel Ratna.
- ✓ Indian football team captain Sunil Chhetri has also become the first footballer to be nominated for the country's highest sporting honour.
- ✓ This is the first time 11 players have been recommended for a single edition of the awards ceremony.
- ✓ Last year, the government had honoured a total of 74 sportspersons with the national sports and adventure awards in different segments.
- ✓ The awardees included five in the Khel Ratna category and 27 for Arjuna.
- ✓ This year, a total of 72 names have been recommended for the Khel Ratna, Arjuna (35), Dhyan Chand, Dronacharya (regular) and Dronacharya (lifetime).
- ✓ Among those who have been recommended for the Khel Ratna – India's highest sporting honour – include Tokyo Olympics gold medallist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, silver-winning men's freestyle wrestler Ravi Dahiya, Tokyo bronze medallist woman welterweight boxer Lovlina Borgohain and men's hockey team's goalkeeper P R Sreejesh.



- ✓ For the Arjuna award, the committee recommended a total of 35 names, including all 16 members of the men's hockey team which created history after winning an Olympic medal in Tokyo following a gap of 41 years.

### THE AWARDEES

- ✓ **KHEL RATNA** - Neeraj Chopra (athletics), Ravi Dahiya (wrestling), PR Sreejesh (hockey), Lovlina Borgohain (boxing), Sunil Chhetri (football), Mithali Raj (cricket), Pramod Bhagat (para-badminton), Sumit Antil (para-javelin), Avani Lekhara (para-shooting), Krishna Nagar (para-badminton) and Manish Narwal (para-shooting).
- ✓ **ARJUNA AWARD** - Arpinder Singh (triple jump), Simranjit Kaur (boxing), Shikhar Dhawan (cricket), Bhavani Devi (fencing), Monika (hockey), Vandana Katariya (hockey), Sandeep Narwal (kabaddi), Himani Uttam Parab (mallakhamb), Abhishek Verma (shooting), Ankita Raina (tennis), Deepak Punia (wrestling), Dilpreet Singh (hockey), Harmanpreet Singh (hockey), Rupinder Pal Singh

(hockey), Surendra Kumar (hockey), Amit Rohidas (hockey), Birendra Lakra (hockey), Sumit (hockey), Nilakanta Sharma (hockey), Hardik Singh (hockey), Vivek Sagar Prasad (hockey), Gurjant Singh (hockey), Mandeep Singh (hockey), Shamsher Singh (hockey), Lalit Kumar Upadhyay (hockey), Varun Kumar (hockey), Simranjeet Singh (hockey), Yogesh Kathuniya (para-athletics), Nishad Kumar (para-athletics), Praveen Kumar (para-athletics), Suhash Yathiraj (para-badminton), Singhraj Adhana (para-shooting), Bhavina Patel (para-table tennis), Harvinder Singh (para-archery) and Sharad Kumar (para-athletics).

- ✓ **DHYANCHAND AWARD** - O P Jaisha (athletics), Divya Singh (basketball), K C Lekha (boxing), Abhijeet Kunte (chess), Davinder Singh Garcha (hockey), Vikas Kumar (kabaddi), Nir Bahadur Gurung (para sports athletics), P S Abdul Rassak (volleyball) and Sajjan Singh (wrestling)
- ✓ **DRONACHARYA REGULAR** - Jai Prakash Nautiyal (para-shooting), Mahaveer Prasad Saini (Para-athletics), Pritam Siwach (hockey), Radhakrishnan Nair (athletics), Sandeep Sangwan (hockey), Sandhya Gurung (boxing), Sujeet Maan (wrestling) and Subramanian Raman (table tennis).
- ✓ **DRONACHARYA LIFETIME** - Ashan Kuamr (kabaddi), Bhaskar Chandra Bhatt (hockey), C R Kumar (hockey), Jagrup Rathi (wrestling), S Muralidharan (badminton), Sarkar Talwar (cricket), Sarpal Singh (hockey), Tapan Kumar Panigrahi (swimming) and T P Ouseph (athletics).

