

Italian PM Resignation

- Italian Premier Mario Draghi resigned after his ruling coalition fell apart, dealing a destabilising blow to the country and Europe at a time of severe economic uncertainty brought on by the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine.

THE HINDU

Nord stream

- Russia restored critical gas supplies to Europe through Germany via the Nord Stream pipeline after 10 days of maintenance,
- Germany, which is heavily dependent on Russian gas, had feared that Moscow would not reopen the pipeline after the scheduled work and accused Moscow of using energy as a "weapon"
- Some political commentators share the view that Russia is trying to use Nord Stream 2 as a political weapon to put pressure on European security and 'undermine the democratic resilience of European institutions'
- The construction of Nord Stream 2 began in 2015, when Russia's main energy company Gazprom took

ownership of the project's operator, the Switzerland-based company Nord Stream 2 AG.

About Nord stream

- Nord Stream is a pair of offshore natural gas pipeline sets in Europe that run under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany.
- It includes the Nord Stream 1 pipeline running from Vyborg in northwestern Russia, near Finland, and the Nord Stream 2 pipeline running from Ust-Luga in northwestern Russia, near Estonia.
- Both pipelines run to Lubmin in the northeastern German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Nord Stream 2 has been denied certification as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- The name "Nord Stream" occasionally refers to a wider pipeline network, including the feeding onshore pipeline in Russia, and further connections in Western Europe.
- Nord Stream 1 is owned and operated by Nord Stream AG, whose majority shareholder is the Russian state company Gazprom. Nord Stream 2 is owned and planned to be operated by Nord Stream 2 AG, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Gazprom.

- The first line of Nord Stream 1 was laid by May 2011 and was inaugurated on 8 November 2011.
- The second line of Nord Stream 1 was laid in 2011–2012 and was inaugurated on 8 October 2012.
- At 1,222 km (759 mi) in length, Nord Stream 1 is the longest sub-sea pipeline in the world, surpassing the Norway-UK Langeled pipeline.
- The laying of Nord Stream 2 was carried out in 2018–2021.[7] The first line of Nord Stream 2 was completed in June 2021, and the second line was completed in September 2021.
- According to data from 2015, Germany imported about 40% of natural gas from Russia, 29% from the Netherlands, 34% from Norway, with only around 10% from Germany's own gas fields.
- According to a media report, about a quarter of Germany's electricity now comes from coal, about another quarter from renewables, 16% from natural gas and around 11% from nuclear energy.
- The dispute over Nord Stream 2 takes place at a time when Germany has set out a plan to shut down its nuclear and coal power plants, with an objective of gradually moving towards renewable sources of energy.
- In order to fill the supply gap and diversify the sources, the country plans to build its first LNG terminal to receive gas from Qatar, the U.S., and others.

THE HINDU

Pegasus

- The story so far: The Supreme Court will be hearing the case pertaining to the alleged use of the Pegasus spyware software later this month.

What were the objectives of the committee?

- The committee overseen by Justice R.V Raveendran was mandated to inquire, investigate and determine, among other things, if Pegasus was used to eavesdrop on phones and other devices of Indian citizens.
- Details were sought on whether the government had taken any action after reports emerged in 2019 about WhatsApp accounts being hacked by the same spyware and if the government had indeed acquired such a suite.

What is Pegasus?

- The Pegasus spyware can not only mop up information stored on phones such as photos and contacts, but can also activate a phone's

camera and microphone and turn it into a spying device without the owner's knowledge

- However, it evolved into using “zero-click” attacks wherein the phones were infected without any action from the target individual.
- In 2019, WhatsApp released a statement saying that Pegasus could enter phones via calls made on the platform, even if they were not attended.

How was Pegasus used in India?

- Reports that appeared in July 2021 from the Pegasus Project, which includes The Wire in India, The Guardian in the U.K., and The Washington Post in the U.S., said that in India, at least 40 journalists, Cabinet Ministers, and holders of constitutional positions were possibly subjected to surveillance using Pegasus.
- The reports were based on a database of about 50,000 phone numbers accessed by the Paris-based non-profit Forbidden Stories and Amnesty International.

What do Indian laws outline?

- Section 5(2) of The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, states that the government can intercept a “message or class of messages”

when it is “in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence”.

- The operational process for it appears in Rule 419A of the Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951.
- Under Rule 419A, surveillance needs the sanction of the Home Secretary at the Central or State level, but in “unavoidable circumstance” can be cleared by a Joint Secretary or officers above, if they have the Home Secretary's authorisation.
- In the K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India verdict of 2017, the Supreme Court further reiterated the need for oversight of surveillance, stating that it should be legally valid and serve a legitimate aim of the government.
- Rule 419A was added to the Telegraph Rules after the verdict in the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) vs Union of India case, in which the Supreme Court said telephonic conversations are covered by the right to privacy, which can be breached only if there are established procedures.
- The second legislation enabling surveillance is Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

- It facilitates government “interception or monitoring or decryption of any information through any computer resource” if it is in the interest of the “sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order” or for preventing or investigating any cognisable offence.
- The procedure for it is detailed in the Information Technology Rules, 2009.
- Section 66 prescribes punishment to anyone who gains unauthorised access and “downloads, copies or extracts any data”, or “introduces or causes to be introduced any computer contaminant or computer virus,” as laid down in Section 43.
- In the first six months of 2022, Indian aid worth \$3.8 billion has flowed to Sri Lanka through loans, swaps and grants.
- This is India’s largest bilateral aid programme in recent times.
- Supporting Sri Lanka could be in India’s best interests. Stabilising Sri Lanka’s economy could prove to be a major win for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ‘neighbourhood-first’ policy.
- Moreover, once the Sri Lankan economy stabilises, India can deepen its trade and investment linkages with Sri Lanka, transcending the current humanitarian aid relationship.
- This could spur regional integration and prosperity. On the other hand, an unstable Sri Lankan economy could pose security risks to India and lead to a flood of refugees across the Palk Strait.

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India and Sri Lanka- G2 economy, neighbourhood first policy

- Opportunity for India India was the first responder to Sri Lanka’s desperate calls for foreign aid to help tackle its crippling debt and economic crisis.
- India has been motivated by the unfolding humanitarian crisis affecting the Sri Lankan people and the political pressure from South India for Indian intervention.
- Despite gaining benefits from commercial loans for Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects in Sri Lanka which has fuelled a ‘debt trap’ narrative, China faces a dilemma in bailing out Sri Lanka.
- China worries that unilaterally restructuring Sri Lanka’s debt or giving it moratoria would set a new precedent in its lending practices, leading to a queue of similarly

distressed countries seeking debt relief from Beijing.

- Furthermore, China, which is a G2 economy, and wanting to challenge the U.S., does not want its reputation to be tarnished by bailing out a floundering economy.
- The government must show that it is serious about stabilizing the economy by concluding talks on an IMF programme which will increase taxes and utility prices to raise revenue and increase interest rates to control inflation while preserving social welfare expenditures to protect the poor.
- It has to implement structural reforms to make the economy more open to trade and investment and allow market forces to determine resource allocation.
- This means reducing barriers to trade and investment, cutting red tape hampering business and privatising loss-making state-owned enterprises
- It has to restore the rule of law and enforce strong anti-corruption policies (including asset declarations for all parliamentarians and a strong anti-corruption office supported by the United Nations).

G2 economy

- The Group of Two (G-2 or G2) is a proposed informal special relationship between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America.
- Originally initiated in 2005 by C. Fred Bergsten as primarily an economic relationship, it began to gain wider currency and scope from foreign policy experts as a term recognizing the centrality of the Sino-American relations near the beginning of the Obama Administration
- As two of the most influential and powerful countries in the world, there have been increasingly strong suggestions within American political circles of creating a G-2 relationship where the United States and China would work out solutions to global problems together, and to prevent another cold war.
- Salient features of India's Neighbourhood First' policy:

Immediate priority to neighbours:

- Dialogue: It focuses on vigorous regional diplomacy by engaging with neighbouring nations and building political connectivity through dialogue. First initiative in this direction was extending an invitation to all heads of government of SAARC countries for the oath taking

ceremony of the Prime minister in 2014.

- Resolving bilateral issues: Focus is on resolving bilateral issues through mutual agreement. For instance, India and Bangladesh have signed a pact to operationalize the historic Land Boundary Agreement (LBA).
- Connectivity: India has entered into MoU with members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). These agreements ensures a free flow of resources, energy, goods, labour, and information across borders.
- Economic Cooperation: One such example is the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) grouping for energy development i.e. motor vehicles, waterpower management and inter-grid connectivity.
- Technical Cooperation: Recently a dedicated SAARC satellite was developed to share the fruits of the technology like telemedicine, e-learning etc. with the people across South Asia.
- Disaster management: India's offer cooperation on disaster response, resource management, weather forecasting and communication and also capabilities and expertise in disaster management for all South Asian citizens. For example, India provided immense assistance to its

neighbour Nepal in the aftermath of the 2016 earthquake.

- Military and defence cooperation: India is also focusing on deepening security in the region through military cooperation. Various exercises like Surya Kiran with Nepal, Sampriti with Bangladesh aim to strengthen defence relations. Also, India has committed to play a greater role in capacity building of the Afghan National Army by providing training to them.

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NetWare

- NetWare is a remote access Trojan focused on password stealing and keylogging, as well as including remote control capabilities.
- This threat has been used by malicious groups since 2012 and distributed through various social engineering campaigns (malspam).
- NetWare is often launched via social engineering campaigns or as a later payload of another malware chain.
- Criminals send emails with malicious files attached to a wide number of users and expect at least someone to open the infected file.
- Once a victim clicks on it, the malware file is downloaded onto the

victim's computer. The shared files often used by crooks are PDF, Word and IMG files.

Prevention measures

- Network campaigns target users and companies via social engineering schemas. In general, these kinds of waves could be prevented by taking the following precautions:
- Train users frequently to be aware of potential phishing schemas and how to handle them in the right way
- Be wary of emails from unfamiliar sends or unknown sources and with suspicious attachments related to financial or delivery correspondence, documents and URLs
- Verify the source via alternative means for instance, by phone or in person before opening or downloading the content
- Use anti-malware software such as antivirus or any endpoint protection software
- Keep updated all the installed software and the operating system.

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