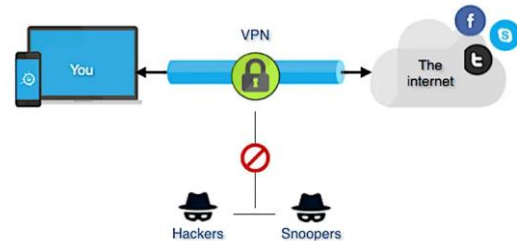


## Partial ban & VPN

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) sought inputs on whether it would be possible to have “selective” app bans instead of internet shutdowns, in order to reduce the impact that a wholesale communications lockdown can entail
- Internet shutdowns are imposed in States and districts across India from time to time in order to prevent the rapid spread of provocative content during communally charged periods.
- The approach suggested by TRAI would require telecom operators and messaging app firms like WhatsApp to cooperate with each other and stop access to services during a shutdown.

### What is VPN??

- A virtual private network, or VPN, is an encrypted connection over the Internet from a device to a network.
- The encrypted connection helps ensure that sensitive data is safely transmitted.
- It prevents unauthorized people from eavesdropping on the traffic and allows the user to conduct work remotely.



### Can VPNs be blocked?

- Blocking VPNs is not straightforward, as companies operating them tend to frequently change the IP addresses associated with their servers.
- While VPN services’ websites may be blocked, the installation files can be found elsewhere online
- Internet rights activists say that blocking VPNs would be a damaging move for online privacy.
- “VPNs help secure digital rights under the Constitution of India, especially for journalists, whistle-blowers, and activists,” the Internet Freedom Foundation wrote in 2021.

### THE HINDU

#### National research foundation

- The Union Cabinet has approved the

introduction of the National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill in Parliament,

### **What is the NRF?**

- Setting up the NRF was one of the key recommendations of the National Education Policy 2020.
- The NRF intends to act as a coordinating agency between researchers, various government bodies, and industry, thus bringing industry into the mainstream of research.
- In addition to providing research grants to individuals, the NRF plans to seed, grow and facilitate research in India's universities, especially State universities, by funding research infrastructure and research.

### **How will it be funded?**

- The NRF will operate with a budget of ₹50,000 crores for five years, of which 28% (₹14,000 crores) will be the government's share, and the remaining 72% (₹36,000 crores) will come from the private sector.

### **How can the NRF facilitate the "ease of doing science"?**

- First, the time between applying for a research grant and receiving the money must be minimal, preferably

within six months.

- Second, all the paperwork must be digitally processed without sending stacks of papers in hard copies to the NRF.
- Third, all finance -related queries, paperwork, approval, and acceptance need to be between the NRF and the finance department of the university/research institution keeping the scientist free to focus on research.
- Fourth, the NRF needs explicit spending guidelines away from the General Financial Rules (GFR) and the government's marketplace (GeM) usage

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## **THE HINDU**

### **Welfare scheme and brain development**

- The relationship between socioeconomic status and hippocampal development might not be "so simple".
- While the hippocampal size is correlated to cognitive development and the incidence of psychopathologies, a smaller hippocampus wouldn't necessarily indicate that "a child will experience significant impairments in these

areas”.

- “The brain is a complex and adaptable organ, and compensatory mechanisms can sometimes mitigate these effects,” he added.
- According to the new paper, more generous anti-poverty policies could “amplify or reduce stressors associated with low income”.
- That is, having access to more financial resources could “shield families from experiencing some of the chronic stressors associated with low income that can influence hippocampal development”.
- Finally, ‘generous’ anti-poverty policies don’t just increase family income; they can also allow “families to make decisions that lead to a decrease in wages but that also reduce stress, such as working fewer hours,” per the new paper

## **THE HINDU**

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### **Quiet diplomacy**

- Quiet diplomacy” refers to one state’s efforts to influence the behavior of another state through discreet negotiations or actions.
- Quiet diplomacy operates behind the scenes and may rely on back-channeling rather than on public talks. It may also involve deal-making and strategic partnerships, involving more carrots than sticks.
- Quiet diplomacy can also bring indirect influence to bear on a nation’s leaders through meetings with members of civil society.
- Small nations often rely on quiet diplomacy, because they don’t have the military or economic clout to intimidate other nations
- Quiet diplomacy allows powerful countries to offer carrots while still reminding others that the stick is still there.

### **India & Philippine**

- The decision to open the resident defense attaché office in Manila; boosting cooperation between the Coast Guards of the two countries; acquisition of naval assets by Manila under a concessional line of credit from Delhi;
- Expansion of training and joint exercises on maritime security and disaster responses, and commencing a maritime dialogue are some examples of the evolving strength of this nautical partnership.
- However, the most notable

development was the agreement on regional and multilateral issues, particularly on maritime highways such as the South China Sea.

- While India reiterated its consistent position on adhering to international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), its unambiguous call to respect the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea is a departure from India's earlier position.
- From 'noted' to 'adherence to the 2016 Arbitral Award' is a candid recognition of its legitimacy.
- The Philippines had submitted a case of arbitration to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in order to settle disputes with China.
- Despite China's formal withdrawal from the arbitration on February 19, 2013, the proceedings continued as scheduled under UNCLOS guidelines.
- The UNCLOS' Annex VII stipulates: "The absence of a party or the failure of a party to present its case shall not be a bar to the proceedings."
- The South China Sea is a crucial maritime gateway and junction for shipping between the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

- Any confrontation in the South China Sea, one of the world's most vital oceans in terms of geopolitics, economy, and strategy, will be a danger to regional and global security.

## THE HINDU

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### Change in CPI BASKET

- The CPI basket should not be viewed as an unchangeable artifact frozen in time. On the contrary, the real consumption basket of a common Indian is fluid and continually evolving, mirroring the shifts in societal needs, preferences, and economic conditions.
- As time progresses, the consumption patterns of individuals and households inevitably change.
- Technological advancements introduce new products and services. It is not just these items that make the CPI flawed.
- In the current CPI (the base year 2012), weights of various groups are as follows: food and beverages (45.86); paan, tobacco, and intoxicants (2.38); clothing and footwear (6.53); housing (10.07); fuel and light (6.84); miscellaneous (28.32).

- The weightage of food in the CPI basket has decreased from 60.9 (in 1960) to 57.0 (in 1982) and to 46.2 (in 2001).
- This gradual decline indicates that as the economy grows, the proportion of income spent on food decreases.
- This is a common trend known as Engel's Law, which suggests that as income rises, the proportion of income spent on food falls, even if the absolute expenditure on food rises.
- Over-reliance on food inflation today distinguishes Indian inflation from many other developed countries where the food weight is much smaller.
- These shifts imply that as people's income rises, they tend to allocate a larger proportion of their spending towards non-food items such as housing, education, healthcare, personal care, entertainment, and digital services such as the Internet.
- This reflects a general improvement in living standards and a broadening of consumer demands.
- Further, the startlingly high weight of 9.67 assigned to cereals in the current CPI is undoubtedly excessive and casts a stark light on two critical issues.
- First, as nations undergo economic advancement and societal progress, a typical trajectory involves diversifying food intake and embracing a broader range of nutrient-rich options beyond cereal
- Weights for CPI can only undergo a significant shift after we have data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (CES) data.

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### THE HINDU