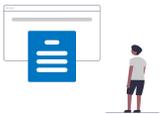

Law, Policy and Governance



Daily snippets

1. [PM calls for water conservation drive](#)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said there was a need to start conserving water right away and that the **Jal Shakti Ministry** would be launching a 100day “*catch the rain*” campaign soon.

2. [Swiss neutrality in world affairs attractive again: envoy](#)

- Switzerland’s traditional foreign policy of neutrality has become attractive again because of the changing political reality in the world, said its Ambassador Ralf Heckner at a think tank event. He said neutrality has become necessary as a foreign policy tool as the phase of power politics has returned in world affairs.

3. [HC flays police report on Tanha ‘confession’ leak to media](#)

- The Delhi High Court expressed displeasure at the city police’s vigilance inquiry report on the allegation of leaking to the media a confessional statement of a Jamia Millia Islamia student arrested in connection with the north-east Delhi riots. The court’s direction came while hearing the **plea of Asif Iqbal Tanha**, who was aggrieved by various news reports appearing in electronic media that alleged that he had confessed to organising and inciting riots in north east Delhi last year.

4. [Haryana seeks permission for mining in the Aravali Hills](#)

- The Haryana government has appealed to the Supreme Court to permit it to resume mining in the Aravali Hills on the grounds that the pandemic had ground the State’s economy to a halt. The Supreme Court is slated to hear the petition on Thursday.
- Mining in the region has been **banned since 2002 under the Supreme Court orders**, unless expressly permitted by the Union Environment Ministry.

5. [Government examining WhatsApp's new policy](#)

- The Central government informed the Delhi High Court that it was examining **WhatsApp's controversial new privacy policy**, which is scheduled to come into effect from May 15, at the highest level.
- Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva granted three weeks' time to the Centre to submit a status report on the issue. The court was hearing a petition filed by advocate Chaitanya Rohilla, who has claimed that WhatsApp's new privacy policy **violates the right to privacy guaranteed under the Constitution**.

6. [NHRC issues notices on Hirakud displacement](#)

- The **National Human Rights Commission** issued notices to the Chief Secretaries of Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the action taken to alleviate the sufferings of people **displaced by the construction of the Hirakud dam** over the **Mahanadi river** about six decades ago. Human rights lawyer Radhakant Tripathy had moved NHRC alleging that **26,561 families were displaced for the project** and due compensation was not paid to evictees.

7. [Chief Justice of India - Master of Roster](#)

- This is the singular power of the CJ as the Master of the Roster – i.e., the vesting of exclusive discretion in the Chief Justice to constitute benches and allocate cases. It makes the CJ the **sole point of defence of the Court** against executive interference.
- This power is predicated upon the CJ's seniority in the top court and the resultant presumption of propriety. In *Asok Pande v. Supreme Court of India (2018)*, a three judge bench of the Court held that **Master of the Roster is the CJ's exclusive power**.
- Thereafter, a two-judge bench in *Shanti Bhushan v. Supreme Court of India (2018)* rejected the plea that the Master of the Roster should be interpreted as the collegium. Therefore, while the CJ's other powers such as recommending appointments to constitutional courts are shared with other senior judges, the power of **Master of the Roster is enjoyed without scrutiny**.
- When Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister ordered punitive transfers of High Court judges and superseded judges to appoint the CJ, the Supreme Court formulated the collegium system in response. However, this system has failed to keep executive interference at bay from the Supreme Court. This is for two reasons: first, there is an attractive lure of postretirement jobs; and as the privilege of Master of the Roster shows, the CJ's allocation of cases is an unchecked power.

National News/ Interventions



[Daily snippets](#)

1. [Eviction of prawn gherries restarts at Chilika Lake](#)

- After a hiatus, the Odisha government has started evicting illegal prawn enclosures in **Chilika Lake**, which is likely to improve the ecological health of **Asia's largest brackish water lagoon**. The Chilika Development Authority (CDA), the regulatory body for the lake, has begun **planned eviction of prawn gherries** (enclosures).
- **Endangered Irrawaddy dolphins** were the first beneficiaries of the eviction drive. The mammals could move unhindered in Chilika Lake. In the Rambha sector, dolphins were sighted for the first time in three decades.

Besides, there was a sudden increase in the population of ducks who prefer to dive in open water. Their population was noticed during the current season, particularly in the prawn gherries evicted areas.

2. [Need to reset IndiaChina trade ties: Foreign Secretary](#)

- Remarking that a normal bilateral trade relationship with China was contingent on peace and tranquillity on other fronts, **Indian Foreign Secretary H.V. Shringla** said the country was looking to diversify its trade dependencies. *“The **current bilateral trade with China at \$78 billion** is heavily tilted in the latter’s favour and that will need a reset. India on its part is simultaneously working on diversifying its sourcing to ensure a more resilient supply chain in the future,”* said the Foreign Secretary. Mr. Shringla was speaking during the penultimate panel discussion titled 'India as Global Partner' at the fifth **Asia Economic Dialogue (AED) 2021**, jointly hosted by the **Ministry of External Affairs and the Pune International Centre (PIC)**.

3. [Chinese cyber attack foiled: Power Ministry](#)

- *“State-sponsored” Chinese hacker groups targeted various Indian power centres*, the Union Power Ministry said, but added that these groups have been thwarted after government cyber agencies warned about their activities. While the government refused to confirm or deny *The New York Times* report, based on a U.S. cybersecurity firm's claim that the **Mumbai power outage in October 2020 was part of a coordinated cyberattack by China**, it said it has suffered *“no data breach”*.
- Specifically naming the **Chinese group “Red Echo”**, which has been identified in the U.S. company Recorded Future’s report as responsible for the Mumbai outage, officials said they had been warned by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology’s (MeitY’s) **Cyber Emergency Response Team (India) (CERTin)** about the threat from **malware called “ShadowPad” in November 2020**, and by the **NTRO’s National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC)** in February 2021, of the threats, weeks before the Recorded Future report was released. China’s Foreign Ministry hit out at the report, calling it *“irresponsible”*, and attacked it for not offering evidence. *“China firmly opposes and cracks down on all forms of cyber attacks,”* spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.



International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

[Daily snippets](#)

1. [China Parliament to mull expanded border drone use](#)

- The annual convening of **China’s National People’s Congress (NPC), or Parliament**, on March 5 will hear a proposal for the **wider deployment of more advanced drones along border areas**, with a legislator proposing the move in the wake of last year’s clash between Indian and Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- The Communist Party of China exercises control over all branches of state, including the legislature. The NPC convenes every year and approves policies, including a government work report that sets the policy agenda, and the defence budget for the military.

- While the PLA would not necessarily require the NPC to approve the deployment of drones, the proposal comes amid renewed public attention in China on last year's border clash. The **June 15, 2020, clash in the Galwan Valley** has been **among the most widely discussed subjects in the leadup to this year's Congress**, having received belated attention in the wake of the PLA, on February 19, honouring five soldiers, four of them posthumously.
- **Twenty Indian soldiers died in the clash**, that marked the **worst violence along the border since 1967**. The PLA announcement, eight months after the clash and a week after India and China announced disengagement along some areas of the LAC, triggered an outpouring of sentiment on Chinese social media. Some NPC proposals in the past have often grappled with topics in the public spotlight, with the broader aim of underlining how the government was addressing those issues.

2. [New York Governor faces sex harassment charge](#)

- A second ex-employee of powerful **New York state Governor Andrew Cuomo** has accused him of sexual harassment, charges the Governor denied on Saturday. A 25-year old former aide alleged that he sexually harassed her in the spring of 2020.

3. [Navalny begins serving time for parole violation](#)

- **Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny** has been transferred to a penal colony east of Moscow to serve a term for violating parole, a public commission that monitors detainees' rights has said. He was sentenced to two and half years last month.
- **Alexei Anatolievich Navalny** is a Russian opposition leader, lawyer, and anti-corruption activist. He came to international prominence by **organizing anti-government demonstrations** and running for office to advocate reforms against corruption in Russia, and against President Vladimir Putin and his government.

4. [Trump hints at 2024 run for presidency](#)

- Donald **Trump told conservatives he was considering running for president again in 2024**, as he reasserted dominance over the Republican Party and warned of a "*struggle*" for America's very survival. Echoing the grievance politics of his 2016 campaign and the harsh rhetoric of his one-term presidency, the 74-year old fired up an enthusiastic crowd at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando.
- In a keynote speech, his first since leaving the White House on January 20, he repeated his claims that he won the election instead of President Joe Biden, and hammered establishment Republicans who voted against him in the latest impeachment drama.

5. [U.S. to keep hard line on China trade](#)

- The **Biden administration's trade agenda will make pandemic recovery a top priority** and focus on the American worker, according to the **2021 President's Trade Agenda** and **2020 Annual Report**, an annual document submitted by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to Congress. The administration will push for labour standards in its trade agreements, negotiate environmental standards and **address China's "coercive and unfair" trade practices**, the document said.
- The Biden administration's trade priorities will also include negotiating and implementing "*strong environmental standards*". It will also seek to **promote equitable economic growth through trade**. The **impact of trade policy on racial minorities within the U.S.** will also be a priority. The new administration is also likely to follow an **aggressive agricultural trade policy**.

- Addressing **human rights abuses against the Uighurs** and others will be a top priority for the administration, as per the report. It will also collaborate with allies to address the **market distortions created by industrial overcapacity issues**.
- The U.S. will work with allies to “*implement necessary **reforms to the World Trade Organisation’s (WTO) substantive rules and procedures to address the challenges facing the global trading system, including growing inequality, digital transformation, and impediments to small business trade***”, the report said

6. Nomadland, Borat 2 win top Golden Globes

- Drama **Nomadland** and satire **Borat Subsequent Moviefilm** won movie honours at the **Golden Globes** on Sunday in a mostly virtual bicoastal ceremony. *Nomadland*, a moving drama about van dwellers in recession hit America, also took the **best director prize for Chloe Zhao**. It made Ms. Zhao only the second woman to win at the Globes in that category, and the first woman director of Asian descent to win.
- **Sacha Baron Cohen**, the creator of Borat Subsequent Movie film from Amazon Studios was named best comedy movie actor, while **Andra Day** was a surprise winner for playing singer *Billie Holiday* in **The United States vs Billie Holiday**. British royal drama *The Crown*, comedy *Schitt's Creek*, and *The Queen's Gambit* won the **top awards in television**.

7. Former French President Sarkozy gets 3-year jail term for corruption

- **Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy was found guilty of corruption** and handed a three year prison sentence, in a ruling that deals a **major blow to any lingering political ambitions**. The sentence includes two years suspended and the remaining one year would be converted into a non-custodial sentence, meaning it is unlikely Mr. Sarkozy will end up behind bars over this case.
- He is almost certain to appeal and remains free, with no arrest warrant issued, but he faces several other corruption investigations over campaign financing and alleged influence peddling. The **sentence for seeking to illegally influence a judge** is the latest twist in the tumultuous political career of the 66-year old who **remains a favourite for many on the right for his combative style** and tough talk on crime and immigration. Only one other modern French President, Mr. Sarkozy’s political mentor **Jacques Chirac**, has been convicted of corruption.



Opinions and Analysis

Commentary : A murder, and business as usual

1. The declassified version of the **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report on journalist Jamal Khashoggi’s murder** states in no uncertain terms “*that Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved [the] operation ...to capture or kill Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.*”
2. The U.S. Congress had been demanding for over a year that the report be declassified but former President Donald Trump had refused to do so because of his and his son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner’s cosy relationship with MBS as well as Mr. Trump’s interest in selling massive amounts of arms to the petrostate.

However, the release of the report does not mean a major reversal or even re-evaluation of America's relationship with Saudi Arabia. It only signifies a short term "*recalibration*" of Washington's approach towards the Kingdom. This was indicated by the fact that although some sanctions were imposed on a few Saudis, **MBS was not subjected to any penalties.**

3. **Saudi Arabia's strategic importance for Washington** derives from the fact that it is America's principal regional partner in its efforts to **contain Iranian influence in West Asia**. Riyadh's strategic value has increased with the sequential **normalisation of Israel's relations with Arab countries** allied to it since the success of this process is heavily dependent upon Saudi approval. Such normalisation suits Washington, for it **relieves pressure on it to address the Palestinian issue**. Furthermore, Mr. Biden cannot afford to alienate the Saudi regime beyond a point because this could intensify Riyadh's opposition to his stated intention of returning to the **Iran nuclear deal**.

Commentary : The vital but delicate task of reviving the Iran deal

1. Story so far

- Of all the foreign policy challenges facing the Joe Biden administration, none is more critical than salvaging the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, or the Iran nuclear deal)**. It also seems the most straightforward because Mr. Biden has consistently advocated a return to the JCPOA provided Iran returns to full compliance; **Iran has always reiterated its commitment to the JCPOA** maintaining that the steps it took are reversible as long as the United States lifts the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration since 2018.

2. Making of the Deal

- The JCPOA was the result of prolonged negotiations from 2013 and 2015 between **Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union, or the EU)**. It happened, thanks to the back channel talks between the U.S. and Iran, **quietly brokered by Oman**, in an attempt to repair the accumulated **mistrust since the 1979 Islamic revolution**. Former U.S. **President Barack Obama** described the JCPOA as *his greatest diplomatic success*.

3. Aftermath of Deal reversal:

- Trump pulled the plug on it in May 2018 and embarked on a **policy of 'maximum pressure' to coerce Iran** back to the negotiating table. The U.S. decision was criticised by all other parties to the JCPOA (including the European allies) because Iran was in compliance with its obligations, as certified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). By end 2020, the **U.S. had imposed nearly 80 rounds of sanctions** targeting close to 1,500 individuals and entities.

4. Iran's response

- As the sanctions began to hurt, **Tehran shifted to a strategy of 'maximum resistance'**. In January 2020, following the **drone strike on Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Gen. Qasem Soleiman**, Tehran announced that **it would no longer observe the JCPOA's restraints**, though its cooperation with the IAEA would continue.

5. Mayhem in Iran

- This came on top of COVID-19 that affected Iran badly. The **Iranian economy contracted** by 7% in 2019 and another 6% in 2020. In mid-2020, Iran was shaken by a **series of unexplained fires and blasts** at a number of sensitive sites including one at the Natanz nuclear facility and another at Khojir, a missile fuel fabrication unit. Last November, **Mohsen Fakhrizadeh**, a senior nuclear scientist and head of the Research and Innovation Organisation in the **Iranian Defence Ministry** was killed outside Tehran in a terrorist attack amid rumours of external intelligence agencies' involvement. The **E3 (France, Germany, the U.K.)** and the EU's promised relief

Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), created in 2019 to facilitate limited trade with Iran, has been a disappointment.

6. **The way ahead**

- If the U.S. waits for Iran to return to full compliance before lifting sanctions or Iran waits for the U.S. to restore sanctions relief before returning to full compliance, it can only lead to one outcome - **the collapse of the JCPOA with Iran going nuclear like North Korea**; an outcome that would create major reverberations in the region and beyond.
- The Biden administration has made a good start by appointing **Robert Malley as the U.S. Special Envoy for Iran**. Clearing Iran's applications to the International Monetary Fund for COVID-19 relief and for supply of vaccines under the international COVAX facility can be done relatively easily. After the **Al Ula summit**, Qatar and Kuwait too are well placed to play a diplomatic role and together, they can urgently explore the possibilities for forward movement in Yemen, with help from the EU and the **UN Secretary General's Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths**. Brussels has long wanted to be taken seriously as an independent foreign policy actor; it now has the opportunity to take a lead role.



Economics and Finance

Daily snippets

1. NSE glitch

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the recent technical glitch at the National Stock Exchange (NSE), which led to **trading being halted for several hours** on the bourse, had cost India 'immensely'. She called for a look at the **interoperability norms** in payment systems to ensure seamless payments. The NSE had halted trading on its platform just before noon on February 24, and informed market participants at 3:17 p.m. that trading would resume from 3:30 p.m. for extended hours.
- The NSE though stated that its **interoperability framework allowed traders** to continue transacting on other stock exchanges when the NSE halted trading. The minister stressed that the NSE case was an example of the challenges that technology driven platforms could face.
- SEBI has already advised NSE to carry out a **detailed root cause analysis of the trading halt** and also to explain the reasons for trading not migrating to the disaster recovery site.

2. Women and pay-raise

- About 85%, or four in five working women in India believe they have **missed out on a raise, promotion, or work offer** because of their gender, according to a new report by LinkedIn. As per the '**The Opportunity Index 2021**' report, this average stands at 60% for the Asia Pacific (APAC) region. "*A deeper analysis shows that more women in India have experienced the impact of gender on career development when compared to the APAC region,*" as per the LinkedIn report.

- The survey, conducted in January, saw participation from more than 10,000 respondents across the APAC region. It covered 2,285 respondents in India.



Science & Technology and Environment

Daily snippets

1. ISRO puts Brazil's Amazonia-1 into orbit

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on successfully launched **Brazil's optical earth observation satellite, Amazonia-1**, and 18 co-passenger satellites - five from India and 13 from the U.S. - from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre** at Sriharikota. The satellites were carried on board the PSLV-C51, the 53rd flight of ISRO's launch vehicle and the **first dedicated mission of its commercial arm, New Space India Ltd.** Amazonia1 was injected into its precise orbit of 758 km in a sun-synchronous polar orbit.
- The successful launch of Brazil's Amazonia-1 satellite marks a new high point in space cooperation between the two countries that began nearly two decades ago. The launch was witnessed by the visiting Brazilian Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, **Marcos Pontes**, and the heads of the **Brazilian Space Agency (AEB)** and the **National Institute for Space Research (INPE)** at Sriharikota. Welcoming the news of the launch, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called it a "*historic moment*" in India Brazil space cooperation. **Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro** said the first fully Brazilian made satellite, which would help to **monitor the Amazon forests**, was a mark of the "*increasing investment*" the country was making in science and technology.
- Brazil and India first signed an MoU between the Department of Space and AEB in March 2002, followed by a Framework Agreement in 2004, that is reviewed by a Joint Working Group. In 2007, they inked a special arrangement which allows Indian scientists access to Brazilian ground stations to remote sensing data from the Indian satellites.
- Among the satellites from India were - **Satish Dhawan SAT (SDSAT)** built by Space Kidz India and the **UNITYsat**, a combination of three satellites for providing radio relay services was also put into orbit. ISRO chairperson K. Sivan said, "*This particular mission is special because these Indian satellites are coming under the new space reform announced by the Government of India*".

2. Spectrum Auction

- A total of **2251.25 MHz of airwaves**, across 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz and 2500 MHz frequency bands, with a **total value of ₹3.92 lakh crore** at reserve price, will be put up for bidding. The **5G airwaves** have not been put up for bidding. As per analysts, telcos will likely **bid conservatively for minimum quantities**, needed to satisfy the immediate 2-3 quarter capacity requirement, and await prices of regular bands to be cut in subsequent auctions as well as wait for 5G spectrum.
- In the last spectrum auctions, which were held in 2016, about 40% of the 2,355 MHz of spectrum (worth ₹5.6 lakh crore) put on auction was sold, generating ₹65,789 crore revenue for the government. According to

spectrum auction rules, a firm can bid for spectrum only as per eligibility point allocated based on its deposit. As per the government, successful bidders **may pay the entire bid amount in one go** or may exercise the option to pay. In addition to the bid amount, successful bidders will also have to pay **3% of the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)** excluding wireline services as spectrum usage charges.

- The government received bids worth ₹77,146 crore on the first day of the auction for telecom air waves, exceeding its own pre-bid estimates of about ₹45,000 crore. It saw participation from the three private players - Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, who bid for 849.20 MHz on the first day out of a total of 2,308.80 MHz put up for sale. However, no bids were received for **the premium 700 MHz band as well as the 2500 MHz band.**



Sports

Daily snippets

1. Djokovic ties Federer's record

- Novak Djokovic matched Roger Federer's all-time record for the **most weeks as ATP World No. 1** on Monday, holding the top spot for the 310th week. Djokovic's **ninth Australian Open title** last month ensured the 18-time Grand Slam champion would surpass Federer's record.
- The Serb reclaimed the top ranking from Rafael Nadal in February 2020 and finished as year end number one for the sixth time, **tying the mark set by Pete Sampras.**

Suggested Readings

1. UK's Supreme Court ruling on Uber drivers, [Link to article](#)
2. Newly notified Information Technology Rules, 2021, [Link to article](#)
3. Government and sedition, [Link to article](#)
4. The Inconsistent policy on Bail, [Link to article](#)
5. Big government and Big Tech, [Link to article](#)

Sources referred to : [The Hindu](#), [The Indian Express](#), [Live Law](#), [Bar & Bench](#)

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