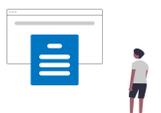


Law, Policy and Governance



Daily snippets

1. [Centre may rethink order on international seminars](#)

- The government would relook at the controversial order issued by the Ministry of Education in January that many scientists said curbs free scientific discussion at international fora, K. Vijay-Raghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, said.
- On January 15, the Ministry updated the guidelines governing online conferences, seminars and training programmes that required, among others, scientists at the highest grades of seniority to get a clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs.

2. [‘Right to peaceful protest is a nonnegotiable human right’](#)

- Swedish teen climate activist Greta Thunberg has extended her support to Disha Ravi, the 22-year old environmental activist who has been charged with sedition for allegedly editing an advocacy toolkit on the farmers’ protest, and sharing it with Ms. Thunberg. *“Freedom of speech and the right to peaceful protest and assembly are non-negotiable human rights. These must be a fundamental part of any democracy”*.
- **The Poetic Justice Foundation (PJF)**, a Canada-based non profit, has been at the centre of a roving investigation launched by Delhi Police regarding a social media campaign around the ongoing farmers agitation.

3. [Child abuse is unpardonable, says HC](#)

- An offence involving abuse of a child victim is unpardonable, the Delhi High Court remarked while refusing to lower the sentence awarded to a teacher, who was convicted for sodomising a 7-year old boy. Justice Subramaniam Prasad said releasing such convicts *“by reducing the sentence will send a wrong signal to the society and will be against the purpose for which the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act was enacted”*.

National News/ Interventions



Daily snippets

1. Promote Indian languages: Venkaiah

- Ahead of **International Mother Language Day**, **Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu** wrote to all members of the Upper House urging them to **promote and preserve Indian languages**. He lamented that regional languages were being given short shrift. Writing to each member in his or her own language, Mr. Naidu said India was **home to 19,500 languages and dialects**, of which **200 were facing the threat of immediate extinction**.

2. India and Maldives sign defence pact

- India and the Maldives signed a **defence Line of Credit agreement worth \$50 million** during the ongoing visit by **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar**. Both sides agreed to maintain peace and security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- *“The defence Line of Credit will facilitate capability building in the maritime domain”*, Mr. Jaishankar said in a social media message. The two sides agreed to strengthen coordination in **enhancing regional maritime security**. Indicating deepening security cooperation, an agreement to develop, support and maintain a **Maldives National Defence Force Coast Guard Harbour at Sifvaru** was also signed.

3. PM urges states to ease path for businesses

- States should work towards **reducing compliance burden** for citizens to ensure **ease of living and to promote ease of doing business**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said speaking at the **sixth meeting of the NITI Aayog Governing Council**, stressing the importance of a *better coordination between the Centre and the States* for the development of the country.
- Twenty six Chief Ministers, three Lieutenant Governors and two administrators attended the meeting, besides Union Ministers, special invitees and NITI Aayog officials. Most of the Chief Ministers emphasised on developmental agenda and timely completion of infrastructure projects.
- **NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant** added that agriculture issues which were discussed included aligning the cropping system to agro climatic conditions at district level for optimal resource utilisation, and promoting water conservation. Mr. Modi asked the States to **take advantage of Central schemes such as the production linked incentive scheme** to attract investments. He pointed out that States had a **40% share in the National Infrastructure Pipeline** and therefore, it was imperative that the States and the Centre synergise their budgets, make plans, and set priorities.

4. Punjab seeks center's help to ramp up health infrastructure

- In his speech at the NITI Aayog meeting, the Chief Minister Amarinder Singh also urged the Central government to provide immediate financial assistance of at least ₹300 crore to upgrade health infrastructure, equipment and other healthcare needs (medicines and consumables etc.) in view of the pandemic. The Chief Minister also requested the Central government to release the **pending amount of GST compensation** to the State and sought **extension in the period of GST compensation beyond the current 5 years** for States like Punjab.

- He reiterated his government's stand that **agriculture is a State subject** and law-making on it should be left to the States in the true spirit of "*cooperative federalism*" enshrined in the Constitution.
- **Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal** sought the Central government's intervention in resolving the long pending issue of the **Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL)** and the **Hansi-Butana Link Canals** so that the State could get its legitimate share of river water.



International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

Daily snippets

1. India backs the Maldives on UN role

- India reiterated its support for a greater role for the Maldives in multilateral affairs. Speaking at a joint media event in the Maldives' capital Male, **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar** said **Maldives' Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid is "best equipped" to be the President of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly.**
- *"I reiterate today India's strong support to the candidature of Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid for the President of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly next year. Foreign Minister Shahid with his vast diplomatic experience and his leadership qualities is in our view the best equipped to preside over the **General Assembly of 193 nations of the world.** We will work together to make this a reality. We would really like to work with you during our membership of the UN Security Council for 2021-22,"* said Dr. Jaishankar in his remarks.

2. With media blitz, China crafts new narrative on border crisis

- Chinese state media outlets highlighted the announcement of honours for five soldiers, four awarded posthumously. The names and images of the five were being shared widely on Chinese social media, along with their personal stories, all leading to an outpouring of sentiment.
- The People's Liberation Army (PLA) said the announcement, made **eight months after the clash in which 20 Indian soldiers lost their lives**, was aimed at honouring the soldiers and "*setting the record straight*", after it accused India of "*distorting the truth*" and "*slandering the Chinese border troops*"
- The broader aim of the narrative appeared aimed at underlining the message that the Communist Party had defended China and to **portray India as the aggressor** - a message that was repeated in the official media. This is a narrative that turns on its head the genesis of last year's border crisis, which began with a **mass mobilisation of PLA troops along the border** following a military exercise that caught India by surprise, and multiple transgressions across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that led India to lose access to territory and multiple patrolling points, an unusual outcome for any supposed aggressor.

3. China's Coast Guard law raises concern

- The U.S. has voiced concern over China's recently enacted **Coast Guard law**, which it said may escalate the ongoing disputes in the region and can be invoked to assert unlawful claims. China passed a law last month which **explicitly allows its Coast Guard to fire on foreign vessels**. "*The U.S. joins the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan and other countries in expressing concern with China's Coast Guard law, which may escalate the territorial and maritime disputes,*" State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said.

4. [Moscow court upholds prison term for Navalny](#)

- A Moscow court upheld a ruling to jail the **Kremlin's most prominent opponent, Alexei Navalny**, sealing his first lengthy prison sentence after a decade of legal battles with Russian authorities. Mr. Navalny was ordered on February 2 to serve the time in a penal colony for breaching his parole terms while he was in Germany recovering from a **nerve agent poisoning** he blames on the Kremlin.
- The anti-corruption campaigner appeared in court inside a glass cage for defendants, wearing a plaid shirt, smiling and flashing the V for victory symbol. In a closing address that often broke from his usual sarcastic tone, Mr. Navalny referenced the Bible and said he had no doubts about his decision to return to Russia. "*The Bible says: 'Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness, for they will be satisfied,'*" he told the court.
- He described the legal process to jail him as "*absurd*" and called on Russians to take action to make the country a better place. **Prosecutors lashed out at Mr. Navalny**, saying he acted as if he was above the law and had "*an exclusive right to do as he pleases*".

5. [China detains 3 bloggers for 'insulting' Galwan soldiers](#)

- Authorities in China have detained three people for "*insulting*" Chinese soldiers who died in the **Galwan Valley clash** last year, a day after Beijing officially confirmed the deaths.
- Among the arrested was Qiu Ziming (38), an investigative journalist formerly with *The Economic Observer*. Mr. Qiu was arrested on Saturday in Nanjing, where he lives, after **questioning China's official account of the Galwan clash**. A second blogger was detained in Beijing on Sunday, for comments made during a group chat on WeChat, the Chinese social media and messaging app. A third person, identified as a 25-year old surnamed Yang, was detained in southwestern Sichuan province, in the city of Mianyang, after he was reported by Internet users for posting "*smears toward the PLA soldiers, who fought in the China-India border clash.*"
- The Chinese military announced honours for five People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers, including four who died and one regimental commander who was injured, in the clash on June 15, 2020, which marked the **worst violence on the India-China border since 1967**. Twenty Indian soldiers lost their lives in the clash.
- The announcement of the honours for the soldiers on Friday, coming eight months after the clash, was widely covered in the Chinese state media and has led to an outpouring of sentiment, with the topic among the most widely discussed on social media over the past three days.
- State media reports have highlighted the valour of the soldiers, while also releasing new footage from the clash. **The announcement and video release, eight months after the clash**, came a week after India and China announced a plan to begin disengagement, which has been completed on the north and south banks of Pangong Lake while talks are ongoing to take the process forward in other areas along the Line of Actual Control.

6. [Iran says talks with IAEA chief 'fruitful'](#)

- Iran said it had held "*fruitful discussions*" with **UN nuclear watchdog IAEA chief Rafael Grossi** in Tehran, ahead of a deadline when it is set to restrict the agency's inspections unless the United States lifts painful sanctions. Mr. Grossi's visit comes amid stepped up efforts between the U.S. President Joe Biden's administration, European powers and Iran to salvage the **2015 nuclear deal** that has been on the brink of collapse since former President Donald Trump withdrew from it.

- **Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif**, before meeting Mr. Grossi, signalled that the Islamic republic wants to avoid an “*impasse*”, but also warned it could step further away from its commitments if Washington does not lift the sanctions.
- Iran's conservative dominated Parliament months ago demanded that if the U.S. does not lift sanctions by this Sunday, Iran will suspend some IAEA inspections from Tuesday. But Iran has stressed it will not cease working with the IAEA or expel its inspectors.

7. [Australia won't advertise COVID19 vaccine on Facebook](#)

- Australia's government pledged a publicity campaign for its rollout of COVID-19 vaccine on Sunday - but not in Facebook advertisements, as a feud continues over the social media giant blocking news content from its platform in the country. **Facebook Inc's abrupt decision on Thursday to stop Australians from sharing news on its platform** and strip the pages of domestic and foreign media outlets also blacked out several state government and emergency department accounts, drawing furious responses from lawmakers around the world.
- Hours before Australia began inoculations with the **Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine**, Health Minister Greg Hunt said the government would embark on a wide ranging communication campaign, including online, to ensure vulnerable people turned up for a shot. But a **ban on health department spending to advertise on Facebook** would remain in place until the dispute between the BigTech company and Australia - over a **new law to make Facebook pay for news content** - was resolved.
- Under the **News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code Bill 2020**, tech and social media giants such as Facebook and Google will have to pay local news outlets for using their content. The move is being studied worldwide as it will set a precedent in the use of Web-based news and content that may permanently impact the use of the Internet in Australia.



Opinions and Analysis

[Story : Extinction Rebellion - Rebels with a green cause](#)

[Link to article](#)

1. **Background**

- When the **Extinction Rebellion (XR)** set out to literally block the path of the fossil fuel-powered economy in the U.K., in the autumn of 2018, the core of its philosophy was that stopping public activity with even small actions would change politics. It would **shock a status quoist**, cynically manipulative system, and **turn public attention to the world's biggest problems: climate change and biodiversity loss**

2. **Founders of XR**

- The vision of its small group of founders led by **Roger Hallam**, an organic farmer turned researcher of civil disobedience at King's College, London, and **Gail Bradbrook**, a molecular biology scholar from Yorkshire who had

launched her activism in the Occupy movement after the 2008 financial crisis, draws heavily from the **U.S. civil rights struggle and Gandhian civil disobedience**.

3. **Demands of XR**

- The movement has three primary demands : **all governments ‘Tell the Truth’** about the climate crisis and the mass extinction of species, **commit themselves to act on net zero carbon emissions** by 2025, **create citizens’ assemblies** that will advise them on a just transition.

4. **The journey continues**

- XR moved to the mainstream as it **linked up with activists such as Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future campaign** she inspired and acquired a wider base of supporters connected with the arts, sciences, law, and finance.
- With every new crisis - wildfires, failed agriculture, drought, flood, heat waves and cold waves - governments and corporations are apprehensive that XR’s idea of “*collaborative rebellion*” will challenge locked-in policies on fossil fuels.
- **Tool-kit arrests India:** Disha Ravi, who organised Fridays for Future events in India, activists **Nikita Jacob** and **Shantanu Muluk** have provoked the government’s ire. The implications of growing environmental and climate crises merging with other struggles, such as the farmers’ agitation, add to the establishment's worries. XR is constantly tweaking its toolkit for nonviolent direct action, attracting public attention and demanding responsible replies from governments.

Commentary : Time and perseverance

1. **Background**

- The recent NASA mission, **Mars 2020**, that was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida on June 30, 2020, landed on the **Jezero Crater in Mars** on February 18, to much celebration. Of special magnificence was the entry, descent and landing of the mission’s **Perseverance rover**, described as the ‘*shortest and most intense part*’. Entering the Martian atmosphere at about 20,000 km per hour, the mission had to bring the Perseverance rover to a halt on the surface in just seven minutes.

2. **Exploration of Mars**

- NASA’s exploration of Mars has focused on **finding traces and trails of water that may have existed**, and relate it to **finding evidence of ancient life**. Its earlier Mars expedition which carried the **Curiosity rover**, **landed on August 5, 2012**. It identified regions that could have hosted life.
- **Expected to last at least the duration of one Mars year, or about 687 earth days**, the science goals this time are to *look for signs of ancient life and collect rock and soil samples*. Perseverance will take the inquiry made by Curiosity to the next level and search for signs of past life by **studying the Jezero Crater**. The crater was chosen for study as based on an earlier aerial survey, it was found to be home to an ancient delta.
- The **rover also carries a helicopter named Ingenuity** that is specially designed to fly in Mars’s thin atmosphere; its sole purpose would be to demonstrate flight on Mars.

Commentary : The fight for dignity in the feminist struggle

1. **Background**

- It is heartening to note that journalist Priya Ramani, against whom a defamation charge was filed by former journalist and minister M.J. Akbar, has been acquitted by a Delhi court and her right to dignity has been upheld. Ms. Ramani fought for over two years, and those years must not have been easy ones.
- The verdict for Ms. Ramani allows us to relish a moment of quiet satisfaction that in some contexts, at least the victim's speech may be granted the legitimacy that is often denied.

2. Some related matters

- **First**, one may face the trauma of repression and speaking out long after they have experienced harassment or violence.
- **Second**, sexual harassment exists as part of a wide spectrum of acts, which may range from casual demeaning speech to sexual threats and actual acts of assault. We need a robust culture of open speech and the right to defend our claims to dignity and justice in public, without being threatened with defamation or more.
- **Third**, the vulnerability of being sexually exploitable appears to be part of the working conditions that bind women in all sectors, and more so in so called informal work. To date, neither the **Vishaka judgment** nor the Act for sexual harassment at workplaces has been helpful in any of these contexts.
- It is important to **build feminist jurisprudence on the subject** and think about **local support systems** that can enable women to stand up for their rights. Lastly, there is the **question of restorative justice** that some are interested in, and how that might apply in matters where bodily integrity is at stake.

Analysis : The road for reducing public sector role

1. Background

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her Budget speech for 202122, announced a new policy for central public sector enterprises (CPSEs), *"We have kept **four areas that are strategic where bare minimum CPSEs will be maintained** and rest privatised. In the remaining sectors, all CPSEs will be privatised,"* the Minister said.

2. What goes outside the government ambit

- The strategic sectors are - atomic energy, space and defence, transport and telecommunications, power, petroleum, coal and other minerals, and banking, insurance and financial services. While the initial plan was to retain one to four public sector firms in these sectors, this has now been replaced by the phrase "bare minimum presence".
- For all firms in sectors considered non strategic, **privatisation or closure** are the only two options being considered. The policy's objective is to **minimise the public sector's role** and create new investment space for the private sector, in the hope that the infusion of private capital, technology and management practices will contribute to growth and new jobs. The proceeds from the sale of these firms would **finance various government run social sector and developmental programmes**.

3. How is it different from policies in the past

- This is the first time since 2004 that India is working on a slew of privatisation deals. Earlier, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government between 1999 and 2004 had managed to sell off majority stakes in a dozen odd public sector enterprises. The new policy goes beyond the Vajpayee era privatisation drive, which was limited to a 'case by case' sale of entities in nonstrategic sectors, by stressing that even strategic sectors will have a 'bare minimum' presence of government owned firms.

4. What is likely to be sold

- The government hopes to conclude the sale of Air India, BPCL and some other entities. Ms. Sitharaman also promised the sale of two more **public sector banks** and a **general insurance player** in her Budget speech, along with plans to **list the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India on the stock markets**. The Union Budget has estimated **₹1.75 lakh crore as receipts from PSU stake sales** in the year, compared to its target of ₹2.10 lakh crore for 2020-21.

5. Process for selecting the CPSE

- **The NITI Aayog** has been entrusted with suggesting which public sector firms in strategic sectors should be retained, considered for privatisation or merger or 'subsidiarisation' with another public sector firm, or simply closed. **A core group of secretaries on disinvestment** will consider the NITI Aayog's suggestions and forward its views to a **ministerial group**.
- After the ministerial group's nod, the **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management in the Finance Ministry** will move a proposal to the **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** for an 'in-principle' nod to sell specific CPSEs.
- Public sector firms and corporations engaged in **activities allied to the farm sector** will not be privatised. Similarly, the policy excludes **departments with commercial operations** like Railways and Posts, firms making appliances for the physically challenged, and those providing **support to vulnerable groups, security printing and minting companies**, will also be retained in the public sector.



Economics and Finance

Daily snippets

1. CSR shouldn't be mandated

- **Wipro founder and philanthropist Azim Premji** said companies should not be legally mandated to engage in corporate social responsibility as contributions to society need to "come from within". Mr. Premji, who contributed ₹7,904 crore in donations last year, also highlighted that the COVID-19 crisis was a "wake up call" to look at fundamental issues like the need to improve public systems like health, and changing the structure of society to make it more equal and just.

2. India urges credit rating agencies to put more insight in its numbers

- India is urging global credit rating agencies to look at its fiscal deficit and debt numbers in the context of the stimulus spending requirements posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said. Stressing that the **government's infrastructure spending push** would have an 'immediate impact' on core sectors, opportunities for labour, and demand creation at the industry as well as consumer level, the Minister said she expected the **Indian economy to recover and record good, sustainable growth** in the next decade.
- *"We are spending but we are also very clearly telling even the credit rating agencies that every country is going through the pandemic and every country has to spend to keep the stimulus going, so every country's rating will*

have to be in relative terms, and not just into the silo of India, 'x' or 'y' country. So spending, borrowing are all relative terms and we would want every institution to look at it with a sense of the relative understanding and context," she said.

- The Minister also said the government was privatising public sector units not for them to be closed down but for improving their operational efficiency with professional skills available outside the government.



Sports

Daily snippets

1. Osaka, Djokovic reign at Melbourne

- **Japan's Naomi Osaka** dismissed Jennifer Brady 6-4, 6-3 in front of thousands of fans to win the **Australian Open** in style for **her fourth Grand Slam title**. The 23-year old, who becomes only the third player after Monica Seles and Roger Federer to win their first four Major finals, will now rise to second in the world rankings.
- **World No. 1 Novak Djokovic** demolished Russia's Daniil Medvedev in straight sets to win his ninth Australian Open title and extend his record breaking reign at Melbourne Park. Djokovic overpowered the fourth seed 7-5, 6-2, 6-2. In winning a third straight Australian Open for the second time, the Serb claimed his **18th Grand Slam title** to move within two of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal who have 20 each. The win **reinforced Djokovic's status as World No. 1**, where he will mark his 311th week when the new rankings come out on Monday, surpassing Federer's record of 310.

Suggested Readings

1. India's first Dictatorship : The emergency 1975-77, [Link to article](#)
2. Law students: Then and now, [Link to article](#)
3. Suspicion and proof, [Link to article](#)
4. WASH program across health facilities in India, [Link to article](#)

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

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