



Law, Policy and Governance



[Daily snippets](#)

1. [Amazon wins relief as HC stays Future-Reliance Deal](#)

- The Delhi High Court provided interim relief to e-commerce major Amazon by directing Future Retail Limited (FRL) to **maintain status quo** with regard to transfer of its retail assets to Reliance Retail. Justice J.R. Midha also said he was of the *prima facie view* that an order of the emergency arbitrator (EA) at the **Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC)** restraining FRL from taking any steps to transfer its retail assets was enforceable in India.

2. [Social media issues our concern, Centre tells SC](#)

- Concerns about information technology and law relating to social media intermediaries fall within the domain of the Central government. The Delhi Assembly, or for that matter any State Assembly, has no jurisdiction over such issues, the Centre told the Supreme Court.

3. [Freelance journalist held from protest site gets bail](#)

- A Delhi court granted bail to freelance journalist **Mandeep Punia** who was arrested by the police from the Singhu border protest site where farmers have been agitating against the Centre's three farm laws. He was arrested allegedly for '*obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions*'. The prosecution alleged that Mr. Punia had pushed a constable towards the protest site, following which the police used "*minimal force to control the situation*".

4. [Court rejects plea to release protesters](#)

- The Delhi High Court dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking immediate release of all persons, not limited to farmers, illegally arrested and detained on or after January 26 from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur areas by the Delhi police.

- A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh declined to entertain the plea of Harman Preet Singh, a law graduate, who had collected the names of 15 persons who are missing since January. The court noted that the petition was silent on whether Mr. Singh has contacted any of the family members of the 'missing' persons.

5. SC upholds bail for man booked under UAPA

- The Supreme Court has upheld the bail granted by the Kerala High Court to a man booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in connection with a brutal attack on a college professor who included, in his Malayalam exam paper, a question considered objectionable by certain sections of a particular faith.
- A three judge Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana, in a judgment pronounced on February 1, observed that “no one can justify gross delay in disposal of cases” which compel undertrials to remain incarcerated.

6. MHA gets further extension till April 9 to frame CAA rules

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Lok Sabha that a parliamentary committee on subordinate legislation had granted it extension till April 9 to frame the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019 rules**. Without the rules being notified, the Act remains ineffective.

7. Power to relax provisions of Sports Code

- The Sports Ministry will have the power to relax provisions of the **National Sports Development Code (NSDC)** while deciding on grant of recognition to federations and the management of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), a circular issued by the ministry stated.
- The ministry's power to relax the sports code will cover “renewal of recognition of National Sports Federations (NSFs) on annual basis and governance and management of IOA and NSFs, as a special exemption where considered necessary.” The circular further states that the discretionary relaxation of norms would be done only “for the promotion of sports, sportspersons or to remove difficulties in giving true effect to that particular provision of the Sports Code...”.

National News/ Interventions



Daily snippets

1. Farmers' stir to continue till Oct.Nov. if needed: Tikait

- The farmers' protest at the Ghazipur border will continue “till October or November”, announced **Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait** amid multiple layers of metallic and concrete barricades enmeshed with barbed wires put up by the police. **Repealing the three controversial farm laws**, was the sole solution to the gridlock between the agitating farmers and the BJP government at the Centre, he added.

2. Awareness campaign planned to dispel 'rumours' on NPR, Census

- The Union Home Ministry has informed a parliamentary panel that “the right kind of messaging will be done to tackle the miscommunication and rumours around NPR and Census”.

- The first phase of house listing and housing census and the **National Population Register (NPR)** was to be rolled out in some States on April 1 last year but was postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19.
- **Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai**, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, said that “*the demographic and other particulars of each family and individual were to be updated/collected during the exercise of update of NPR*” and “*no document is to be collected during this exercise*”.
- The parliamentary committee, headed by the Congress’s Anand Sharma, while discussing the demands for grants report on February 18, 2020 observed that there was a lot of **dissatisfaction and fear among people regarding the coming NPR and Census**.

3. **More women have antibodies in Delhi**

- More women were found to have developed antibodies against COVID-19 compared with men in the fifth and the largest **serological survey done by the Delhi government**, said Health Minister Satyendar Jain.
- Many experts and the Minister said the **city is getting closer to attaining herd immunity**, but people should still take vaccines as it will provide a better immune response against the virus, and also continue to take all precautions.
- About 56.13% of over 28,000 people, whose blood samples were collected, have developed antibodies against COVID-19, the results show. This means that 56.13% of the people surveyed had caught the infection at some point and have recovered from it, Mr. Jain said.
- **What is herd immunity?** When a larger part of the population develops antibodies and becomes immune to the virus, the chain of transmission is broken which reduces the spread of the disease which is called herd immunity. So, a higher value of sero prevalence is favourable.

4. **Sputnik V vaccine shows 91.6% efficacy**

- An interim analysis of a Phase-3 trial of **Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine** against COVID-19 shows the vaccine is safe and has 91.6% efficacy. The 91.6% efficacy was **seen 21 days after the first dose**. Although the study was not designed to assess the efficacy of a single dose regimen, the researchers observed a possible partial protective effect of a single dose. The results were published in *The Lancet*.
- Storage at 28°C, a favourable temperature profile for global distribution, has been approved by Russia’s Health Ministry. The Phase-3 trial between September 7 and November 24, 2020 in about 20,000 participants carried out in Moscow at 25 sites found the vaccine was safe.
- **Sputnik V vaccine’s approach:** While **AstraZeneca** uses the same adenovirus vector to ferry the genetic material into cells, the Sputnik V vaccine uses two different adenovirus vectors – **adenovirus 26 (Ad26) for the first dose** and **adenovirus 5 (Ad5) for the second dose** – to carry the SARSCoV2 spike protein. Using two varying serotypes of adenovirus, is intended to overcome any pre-existing adenovirus immunity in the population.

5. **ECT fiasco: Indian envoy meets Gotabaya, Mahinda**

- In a flurry of meetings a day after Sri Lanka backed out of an agreement with India and Japan to develop the **East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port**, Indian High Commissioner Gopal Baglay met President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena on Tuesday.
- The thrust of the Indian envoy’s message to the Sri Lankan leadership, sources said, was that Colombo must adhere to its commitments in the tripartite agreement of May 2019, to jointly develop the strategic terminal with the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) holding a 51% stake and India and Japan holding 49% together.
- The **Adani Group from India**, along with Japanese companies, was to invest in the project expected to cost up to \$700 million, as per official estimates.
- This is the *second instance of Sri Lanka reversing an agreement on a large infrastructure project* involving Japan, after the government scrapped the \$1.5 billion, Japan-funded Light Rail Transit system last year. The **development has sparked alarm in India and Japan**, according to diplomatic sources, who said Sri Lanka had neither conveyed its decision, nor offered the alternative proposal to either of the partners.

- While the ECT, which is in its first stage and awaits upgrade, has a 450 metre long quay wall and water depth of 18 metres, equipping it to accommodate large vessels, the **West Container Terminal (WCT)** exists merely as a proposal, with no infrastructure yet.

6. [Jal Jeevan Mission to help revive urban waterbodies](#)

- The urban water supply mission announced in the Bud will include rejuvenation of waterbodies and 20% of supply from reused water, the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said.
- In a statement, the Ministry said there was an estimated gap of **2.68 crore urban household tap connections** that the **Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) (JJMU)** would seek to bridge in all 4,378 statutory towns. The Mission would also aim to bridge the gap of **2.64 crore sewer connections** in the 500 cities under the existing **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)**. The mission would include rejuvenation of water bodies to boost the sustainable freshwater supply and creation of green spaces. The Ministry said the *MetroNeo* and *MetroLite* technologies, which are cheaper than conventional Metros, mentioned in the Budget were already being considered by it.

7. [UK variant mutation](#)

- The U.K. has reported a key mutation in the **coronavirus variant called B.1.1.7**, or the 'U.K. variant, that studies say makes it more infectious, better equipped to thwart immune systems and slightly reduce the potency of vaccines. The mutation, called E484K, has been reported previously in South Africa in a coronavirus lineage called B.1.135.
- Vaccine companies **Pfizer and Moderna** had undertaken laboratory tests to see if their vaccines are effective against the new mutated strains. Both claimed that their vaccines were effective against the U.K. strain. Moderna said it had also tested its vaccine against the South African variant and while effective, it showed a **slightly diminished response** compared to that against the U.K. variant.
- On Tuesday, **Minister of State for Health Ashwini Choubey** said in a written statement in the Rajya Sabha that there was "*no data generated*" on Covaxin and Covishield regarding their effectiveness on the "*new European*" coronavirus strain.
- Last week, Bharat Biotech reported results of a lab test that showed its vaccine appeared to be working against the U.K. strain. No tests were done to check its potency against the South Africa variant. Since December, India has been scanning genomes of coronavirus isolated from people with international travel history and announced plans to do so in 5% of the population of those positive but there is no information public on whether these variants have been found in the community.



International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

[Daily snippets](#)

1. [Moscow court sends Navalny to prison](#)

- A Moscow court on Tuesday sentenced **Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny** to more than two years in prison despite nationwide protests and a Western outcry.
- The decision to turn a 2014 suspended sentence into real jail time will see **Mr. Navalny, who accuses the Kremlin of poisoning him last year**, serves a lengthy prison term.

[Analysis : Setback in Myanmar](#)

1. Background

- In one swift operation, Myanmar's military establishment has wiped out a decade of the country's democratisation process. By **arresting President Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and the rest of the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) leadership**, and declaring military rule under a state of emergency for at least a year, **General Min Aung Hlaing** has made it clear that it is the military that is in charge, and he is not particularly concerned about the opposition to or condemnation of the move.

2. The decision seems questionable on legal and constitutional grounds:

- *First*, electoral issues need to be addressed and resolved by relevant authorities, not the military leadership. *Second*, Article 417 of the Constitution empowers the President to proclaim emergency, in consultation with the National Defence and Security Council. It does not seem that the Council met or presidential consent was obtained.

3. In this context, three fault lines may be pinpointed:

- *First*, ideologically the two segments of the political elite have been at war with each other. The army has a sense of entitlement to power on the **grounds that it secured independence**, defended the country against secession, and ensured stability and development. NLD leader Ms. Suu Kyi, the other protagonist, has been a staunch advocate of democracy, a system in which the army should be completely apolitical.
- *Second*, in political terms the fight is for power. The army has been used to exercising power for long, which yields it immense economic dividends too. **Playing second fiddle to democratically elected leaders** was a difficult role for it. *Third*, presidential ambitions and the future of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's career constitute a relevant issue. Back in 2016, and even now, argue well informed sources, he nurtured the dream to be Myanmar's President. Ms. Suu Kyi was opposed to it. Besides, she was perhaps unwilling even to extend his tenure. He is due to retire from the army in July. Presumably the coup guarantees an indefinite extension.

4. Diminishing aura of Nobel laureate Suu Kyi:

- Daw Suu, as she is known, has also failed to bring democracy to her party, and been criticised for her autocratic style. Her refusal to rein in the Generals when the **Tatmadaw unleashed a pogrom on the Rohingya** between 2016-17, had lost the Nobel Peace laureate much international support.

5. According to the Constitution:

The President must have military experience and he himself, his spouse or children "*shall not be subject to a foreign power or citizen of a foreign country*". Ms. Suu Kyi, whose two sons are British citizens, cannot become President. The Constitution also mandates that the *Defence and Interior Ministries be controlled by the military*. Also, 25% of the total seats in Parliament (166 out of the 664 member house) are reserved for the military, giving it a veto over any move to change the Constitution.

6. Why did the military stage a coup ?

- With 166 seats reserved for the military, the USDP wanted only 167 seats to form the government and appoint the next President (according to some reports, **Gen. Min Aung Hlaing has presidential ambitions**), whereas the NLD needed 333 seats for an outright victory. The voters gave the NLD 396 seats, while the USDP ended up with just 33. This set the alarm bells ringing in the headquarters of **Tatmadaw**, as the Myanmar military is called.

Suggested Readings

1. Uniform Civil Code, [Link to article](#)
2. Appointment of judges in Constitutional Courts, [Link to article](#)
3. Unpaid care work and Paternity Benefit Act, [Link to article](#)
4. US and India, a tale of two sieges, [Link to article](#)

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

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