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Law, Policy and Governance

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Daily snippets

1. [New labour codes to allow four-day work week](#)

- The new labour codes set to be implemented soon would provide companies the flexibility of reducing the number of working days to four days a week and provide free medical check-ups to workers through the Employees State Insurance Corporation. According to a ministry briefing, the concerns about the working hours going up from 10.5 hours to 12 hours, with one hour of rest, which arose during consultations had been addressed.
- Under the **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 draft rules**, the limit of working hours for a week was 48 hours.

2. [HC dismisses Navlakha's plea challenging rejection of bail](#)

- The Bombay High Court dismissed the appeal filed by scholar, civil rights activist, and journalist **Gautam Navlakha from the Taloja Central Jail** challenging the rejection of his statutory bail by the special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court on July 12 in the **Bhima-Koregaon violence case**. A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Karnik was hearing the appeal filed through senior advocate Kapil Sibal on September 9.

3. [Twitter asked to remove 1,178 accounts](#)

- The Union government has asked Twitter **to remove nearly 1,200 accounts** related to farmers' protest that it suspects to be linked to Khalistan sympathisers or backed by Pakistan. The decision comes amid a tussle between the government and the micro-blogging platform over the latter's move to restore nearly 250 accounts which the Centre previously wanted removed over the usage of content related to "*farmer genocide*".
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## National News/ Interventions



### Daily snippets

#### 1. First 'Kisan Rail' from Telangana chugs off

- The South Central Railway started **the first 'Kisan Rail' service** from Telangana on Monday. The train will transport 230 tonne of dry turmeric in 10 parcel vans from the Warangal station to the Barasat station of Sealdah division (West Bengal). The move is aimed at **assisting farmers to sell their produce at better prices**, a release said.

#### 2. V.K. Singh statement on LAC 'unwitting confession': China

- China's Foreign Ministry said Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways and former Army chief, Gen. V.K. Singh (ret'd), had made an "*unwitting confession*" by saying **India had transgressed the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on more occasions than China had**. On Sunday, Gen. Singh said the border had never been demarcated, and while China had transgressed across the LAC up to its perception, India had done the same but the government did not announce it.



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## International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

### Daily snippets

#### 1. U.S. to rejoin UN human rights forum

- The U.S. announced plans to re-engage with the much-maligned **UN Human Rights Council** that former President Donald Trump withdrew from almost three years ago, as President Joe Biden's administration reverses another Trump-era move away from multilateral organisations and agreements.
- **Secretary of State Antony Blinken** said the pullout in June 2018 "*did nothing to encourage meaningful change, but instead created a vacuum of U.S. leadership, which countries with authoritarian agendas have used to their advantage.*" Mr. Blinken said Mr. Biden had instructed the State Department to "*re-engage immediately and robustly*" with the council, but he acknowledged it still needs work. "***We recognise that the Human Rights Council is a flawed body, in need of reform to its agenda, membership, and focus, including its disproportionate focus on Israel,***" he said.

## 2. [Sri Lanka clears Chinese energy project, 50 km off Tamil Nadu](#)

- Sri Lanka's recent decision to pull out of the **East Container Terminal (ECT) deal with India and Japan** is not the only challenge to New Delhi's interests emerging this year. A week before renegeing on the 2019 Colombo Port terminal agreement, Sri Lanka cleared a Chinese energy project in **three islands off Jaffna peninsula** that are barely 50 km from the Tamil Nadu coast.
- The energy project is not the first instance of a **Chinese role in northern infrastructure in Sri Lanka**. In 2018, India voiced concern over **China's \$300 million housing project for war affected areas**, accusing the Resettlement Ministry [of the former government] of holding an "opaque" bidding process. The project was eventually dropped.

## 3. [South Africa halts rollout of AstraZeneca vaccine](#)

- South Africa on Monday halted the planned rollout of the **AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine** after data showed that it gave only minimal protection against mild infection from one variant. The coronavirus has killed 2.3 million people and turned normal life upside down for billions but new variants have raised fears that vaccines will need to be tweaked and people may require booster shots.
- Researchers from the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Oxford said, in a prior-to-peer analysis, that the **AstraZeneca vaccine provided minimal protection against mild or moderate infection** from the so-called South African variant among young people. The vaccine, developed by AstraZeneca with the University of Oxford, was the big hope for Africa as it is cheap and easier to store and transport than the **Pfizer** shot.



## Opinions and Analysis

### [Analysis : An uphill task for Mario Draghi](#)

#### 1. **Background :**

- It won't be an easy ride in Rome for **Mario Draghi**, the man who soothed Europe's financial markets in 2012 with his bold declaration to do "*whatever it takes*" to save the euro during the eurozone's sovereign debt and banking crises.
- Less than 15 months after he **stepped down as President of the European Central Bank (ECB)**, when his negative interest rates policy was criticised for sucking money out of savers, he now finds himself thrust to the centre of Italy's fractious politics.

#### 2. **How the story stands :**

- On Wednesday, Mr. Draghi, who was previously Governor of the Bank of Italy, accepted the mandate by the country's **President, Sergio Mattarella**, to form a new national unity government following the **collapse of the coalition led by Giuseppe Conte** in the last week of January.
- Now, Mr. Draghi's efforts to rescue the Italian economy, drawing on €200 billion in grants and loans from the EU €750 billion recovery fund, would pronounce, so to say, a verdict on the bloc's response to the pandemic.

- Crucially, Mr. Conte's government collapsed because **Italia Viva, the party of former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi**, withdrew backing citing strong differences with the government's recovery plans that must be approved by Brussels. Above all, Mr. Draghi must attempt to cement the **differences among Italy's several feuding parties**.

### Commentary : Law and Compassion

#### 1. **Background**

- Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit has decided that only the President can decide the issue of granting remission to the seven life convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

#### 2. **What the law says**

- It has often been stressed by the Supreme Court that the clemency powers of the **President, under Article 72**, and the **Governor, under Article 161**, stand on an equal footing, and are exercised solely on Cabinet advice.
- The only limitation in Article 161 is that it should relate to *"the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends"*.

#### 3. **The story goes on**

- The decision is debatable for the unusual delay in the Governor reaching his conclusion as much for its legal correctness. It is unfortunate that a new legal question on which authority has the power to decide the issue has been tossed into the equation so late in the day.
- To conclude, It is vital that law and compassion, rather than politics and electoral considerations, form the basis for any decision on their release.

### Analysis : Budget and the environment

#### 1. **Background**

- The fallacy of believing that **all ecological damage can be compensated** (a rainforest drowned under a dam can't be recreated, however much money you pour into it), the governments have not put in the substantial new financial resources raised through rapid growth into environmental protection. Budgetary allocations for the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** have consistently fallen as a percentage of total allocations.

#### 2. **The story so far**

- Even when there are increased allocations, such as for cleaning up the Ganga, their usage is ridden with such design flaws, inefficiencies and corruption that the environment is no better off than before. Steadily increasing levels of pollution, biodiversity loss, decline in forest health and destruction of wetlands is testimony to the dismal gap between governmental rhetoric and the environment.
- Fund allocation for the MoEFCC and crucial institutions such as the **Wildlife Institute of India** and the **Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education** remains stagnant. It is inline with recommendations by the Ministry of Finance that the government should disengage with many such institutions.
- The 2021 Budget has allocated ₹3,500 crore for **wind and solar energy**, ₹4,000 crore for a '**Deep Ocean Mission**', and ₹50,011 crore for **urban drinking water**, all of these have positive ecological potential.

#### 3. **Diving deeper**

- There is no intention to **phase out fossil fuels**; on the contrary, coal mining and thermal power are being promoted under the **Atma Nirbhar Bharat package**. And large hydropower is being promoted as Renewable

Energy, though its **massive ecological and social impacts** are well documented. Much of the **solar and wind energy** is coming in the form of massive energy parks that take up **huge areas of land, displacing people and wildlife**.

- There is no indication in the Budget that the RE push would be predominantly decentralised, community managed, and with full environmental impact assessments (currently not required for RE projects). Nor does the Budget have anything on **curtailing wasteful and luxury consumption of energy** or other products and services by the rich. Without controlling demand, even **a complete shift to RE will be unsustainable**.
- The 'Deep Ocean' allocation is intriguing. It is being projected as a programme for **conservation of biodiversity in the depths of our marine areas**. The institutions that are given responsibility under this are the *Ministry of Earth Sciences*, the *Indian Space Research Organisation*, the *Defence Research and Development Organisation*, the *Department of Atomic Energy*, the *Council of Scientific and Industrial Research*, the *Department of Biotechnology*, and the *Indian Navy*, none with expertise in or even significant focus on marine conservation.
- An allocation of ₹18,000 crore for public transport could have significant benefits for people and the environment if it **helps to reduce private vehicle density in cities**. But if much of this is allocated to the metro rather than to buses and other such earthy alternatives (including last mile connectivity, incentives for walking and cycling), the picture becomes murky.

#### 4. Allocations to non-environmental sectors

- The Budget proposes **11,000 km more of national highway corridors**. In the last few years, **massive road and dam construction** has fragmented fragile ecosystems and disrupted local community life in the Himalaya, Western Ghats, northeast India and elsewhere.
- This could have been the occasion to climb into a green, nature and land based livelihoods recovery that could create tens of millions of jobs as also regenerate India's depleted environment. India should be putting environmental regeneration and conservation, and self-reliance built on this, at the core of the Budget.



## Economics and Finance

### Daily snippets

#### 1. Delay in 5G trials

- Slamming the government for its '**laid back approach**' and delay in conducting 5G trials, a Parliamentary Panel has said that sufficient preparatory work had not been undertaken for **introducing 5G services in India** and that the country was likely to witness only partial deployment by 2021 end or early 2022.
- In the report tabled in Parliament, the committee, headed by Shashi Tharoor, added it was very likely that after missing the 2G, 3G and 4G buses, India was going to miss out on 5G opportunities, unless time bound action was taken in areas where governmental intervention was required.
- The panel said inadequate availability of spectrum, high spectrum prices, poor development of use cases, low status of fiberisation, non-uniform right-of-way issues and deficient backhaul capacity are some factors coming

in the way of a **5G services rollout in India**. The committee was of the view that the issue of **allocating the right amount of spectrum** as demanded by the industry needed to be addressed if India were to realise the benefits of 5G. The panel found fundamental differences between the versions of telcos and TRAI on fixing of spectrum prices and urged a **review of the spectrum pricing policy**.

## 2. [Critical take on the budget's infrastructure push](#)

- The 2021-22 Union Budget's bet on **pushing infrastructure spending** to revive the economy **faces implementation risks** and it may have been better to combine it with **some income support for those worst affected** by the pandemic.
- The rising **tendency towards protectionism** doesn't sit well with India's objective of attracting more foreign direct investment and integrating with **global value chains**, and a liberal tariff policy maybe more effective. India needed globalisation more than other countries due to its growth potential. It would also be better for India to maintain a **sustainable current account deficit** rather than celebrate the current account surplus expected this year. India cannot have trade surpluses with every country. It is important we may want to run a sustainable deficit by importing the right kind of capital goods, and technology. It took just one macroeconomic crisis to **recalibrate general government debt targets** from 60% of GDP, to the 85% that the Finance Commission has now recommended for 2025-26.
- A **dual strategy** of infrastructure spending with income support for those who have lost jobs, with ways in which we could create demand among those sections of society that have the highest propensity to consume might have been better.

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### Suggested Readings

1. Future of democratic protests, [Link to article](#)
2. Universal Healthcare in India, [Link to article](#)
3. On the glacial burst in Uttarakhand, [Link to article](#)

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

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