

Facts...



1. **Dinesh Kumar Khara** has been appointed the new Chairman of the country's largest lender, State Bank of India.
2. **October 10th** is observed as the **World Mental Health Day**. [Further reading](#)
3. **Martin Vizcarra** is the President of Peru
4. **Krishnamurthy Subramaniam** is the **Chief Economic Advisor (CEA)** to the Government of India.
5. The **Phillips curve** is an economic concept developed by **A. W. Phillips** stating that inflation and unemployment have a stable and inverse relationship. The theory claims that with economic growth comes inflation, which in turn should lead to more jobs and less unemployment.

Policy and Governance



Graded Response Action Plan

1. The plan is in accordance with the stricter measures to fight the menace of air pollution in Delhi and surrounding states. It was approved by the Supreme Court in 2016. At the head of the plan is the Supreme Court appointed authority **EPCA (Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority)**.
2. The GRAP works only as an emergency measure, **the plan does not include action by various state governments to be taken throughout the year** to tackle industrial, vehicular and combustion emissions. When the air quality shifts from poor to very poor, the measures listed have to be followed since the plan is incremental in nature.
3. Overview of the plan :
  - The plan requires action and coordination among 13 different agencies in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan (NCR areas).
  - Before the imposition of any measures, EPCA holds a meeting with representatives from all NCR states, and a call is taken on which actions have to be made applicable in which town.

Parley : Should India start-ups take on global Internet giants

**Background** : Online payments company PayTM recently announced that it was building a 'Mini App Store' which would 'empower Indian developers'. This move came days after PayTM was removed from Google's Play Store over apparent violation of its policies. PayTM and other developers allege that Google is using its market dominance to arbitrarily enforce policies and target competitors.

For Arguments

1. We have an ecosystem that's very active with a large number of consumers and service providers. What is missing has been the infrastructure part. We have been able to build appreciable capacity and resolve in building infra like payment gateways which sees millions of tractions daily and a suitable homegrown app store ecosystem will be the next step forward.
2. The concerns are legitimate. Are we paying too much to access our own users by giving a 30% cut to Google when you are selling a service or a product through an app on the Google App Store? The companies also have to advertise via Google to reach their customer base. In effect, a large chunk of all the money that these companies make goes to Google and Facebook.
3. According to numbers, for digital services to take off and be profitable and viable, one of the thumb rules is that the GDP per capita should be above \$4,000. India is still at about \$2,000 - \$2500, hence the potential to monetise is very low.
4. Start-up companies create value by being innovative. Bigger companies like Google and Facebook create shareholder value by building barriers that start-ups cannot create. One of the tools they use is to buy all competition to ensure that they stay in the market and create shareholder value.
5. In the short-term such buying might help the consumers as bigger companies assimilate these innovations, these innovations become stronger and the bigger companies can use their infrastructure to make them available to a larger number of people. However, in the long-term, as the stickiness of the services increases, and the consumers find it very difficult to break away, the billings start rising and consumers end up paying more because there is not enough competition in the market.
6. We need to have the awareness of such situations. Governments all over have very little oversight on regulating technology which leads to thriving monopolies. In case of China specific technologies and companies that developed these technologies are chosen; and then there is unwavering support from the government and till now they have succeeded in building world class products. There is thus a conscious strategy to develop a giant that can compete with the global leaders.
7. To be able to compete with Google/Facebook or Big Tech monopolies, we will have to be where Google is going to be in five years from now. That requires significant time to plan and execute our strategies. If there are any antitrust actions globally, India should join those or provide overt support to ensure that dominant positions are not misused.

### **Against Arguments**

1. India's start-up ecosystem is still very naïve and has not reached the levels of maturity seen in the US and China. For example - in the fourth quarter of 2019, you had \$34.2 billion of venture capital going into the U.S. market. India had only \$6 billion and that's supposed to be a record breaking quarter.
2. From a product point of view, we don't have the infrastructure that is required to build and scale nimble start-ups, at least not yet. A lot of start-ups are launched on Amazon Web Services, or Google Cloud, or on Microsoft Azure. India doesn't have large infrastructure players that can help set up stuff.
3. It is best for a country like India to have an approach where we compete when it makes sense, on a level playing field; and cooperate and take help from whatever quarters it comes from.
4. Moving on to some other sectors where we lack capacity - India has zero strength in hardware. We have practically no real manufacturing or chipmaking. That said, we have companies like Indus OS which have built app stores, and have about 100 million users. That's a sizable population, but it's still not deep enough to be like Google or Amazon which coexist in an ecosystem like India. So, my view is we don't need to take a confrontational approach.
5. India should not have too much reactive policy making against them as it doesn't signal well for attracting foreign investors. Also, it is a slippery slope to be nationalistic about products that are built for the Internet,

which is global. If we create a very strict policy environment which encourages only local Indian innovation and strangles foreign competition, we might end up building very subpar ecosystems and large industrialists capturing policy.

6. A lot of our start-ups are also funded by Chinese or US investors and a nationalist tech policy won't go down well with the investment ecosystem.

### Delhi's tree plantation policy

1. Delhi is the first State in the country where this policy has been passed. Earlier policy entailed planting 10 saplings as a compensatory effort if one tree was supposed to be cut. Along with retaining the policy of planting 10 saplings for every one tree that is cut, the tree can be transplanted additionally.
2. The process involves uprooting a tree from a particular spot, lifting it, and planting it at another spot. According to the policy, a minimum of 80% of trees affected by a development or construction project will be transplanted and as much 80% of the transplanted trees must survive after transplantation. The payment of the agencies involved will be made only if 80% of the trees continue to survive after a year.
3. A dedicated Tree Transplantation Cell will also be formed by the Delhi government and local committee to monitor the transplanted trees and to certify that the task has been done with due diligence.

### The right balance

1. Long after Shaheen Bagh became a potent symbol of democratic resistance against a discriminatory law, (Citizenship Amendment Act 2019) the Supreme Court has ventured to hold that any such indefinite blockade of a public pathway is unacceptable.
2. The administration ought to take action to remove “encroachments and obstructions” placed during such protests.
3. The Court’s view arises from a straightforward balancing of two contrasting rights — the right to protest and the right to free movement. Protests derive legitimacy from the rightness of the underlying cause and the extent of public support.
  - In many cases, they are against laws and regulations
  - It is an inevitable part of the culture of protest in a democracy.
  - The Court rightly notes that the administration neither negotiated with the protesters in Shaheen Bagh nor tried to clear the scene.
  - Any finding that a peaceful protest had continued too long, or in a place deemed inconvenient to others, should not encourage the administration to seek early curbs. After the pandemic led to the end of the protests, there was little left for adjudication. Judicial certitude may end up undermining the larger democratic need
  - Both principles —
  - The need for balance between the right to protest and the right to free movement, and
  - The rule that protests should take place at designated spots are salutary from an administrative point of view. But these cannot become unquestionable axioms. To conclude, sudden, organic protests should not automatically invite the state’s strong arm.

### Gene editing : Critical analysis

1. Noble prize in Chemistry has been awarded to **Emmanuelle Charpentier**, a French microbiologist working at the Max Planck Unit for the Science of Pathogens in Berlin, Germany, and **Jennifer A. Doudna**, a biochemist from the University of California, Berkeley, U.S. for the development of a method for genome editing.

2. The two scientists have pioneered the use of **CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats)** – Cas9 (CRISPR associated protein 9) system as a gene editing tool. The method has already made a significant impact in biology, medicine, and agriculture
3. The discovery of CRISPR can be traced back to 1987. A notable discovery on the use of CRISPR as a gene editing tool was by a Lithuanian biochemist, Virginijus Siksnys, in 2012. Siksnys showed that Cas9 could cut purified DNA in a test tube, the same discovery for which both Charpentier and Doudna were given the credit. The conspicuous exclusion of Siksnys from this year's Nobel as the prize can be given to three individuals has attracted its share of controversies. The Nobel committee recognised Charpentier and Doudna as the sole discoverers for programming a Cas9 protein to cut a piece of DNA at a specific site with the help of a small piece of RNA, thereby proving the ability of CRISPR Cas9 to function as a gene editing tool.
4. In the male dominated world of science, this year's Nobel chemistry prize should be widely celebrated worldwide. It will encourage more women to choose science as a career.
5. **Gene-editing controversy**
  - In 2018, Chinese scientist **He Jiankui** edited genes in human embryos using the CRISPR/Cas9 system that were subsequently implanted and resulted in the birth of twin girls. He claimed this was ostensibly to prevent them from contracting HIV, and the incident became known as the case of the first gene edited babies of the world.
  - This incident made the WHO form a panel of gene editing experts which said "a central registry of all human genome editing research was needed in order to create an open and transparent database of ongoing work".
6. **Rules in India**
  - Under the **Environment Protection Act, 1986**, several rules, guidelines, and policies backed by the "Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells have been notified.
  - The National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical and Health Research involving human participants, 2017 by ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research), and the Biomedical and Health Research Regulation Bill implies regulation of the gene editing process. However, there is no explicit mention of the term gene editing.
  - It's important for India to come up with specific laws to ban germline editing and put out guidelines for conducting gene editing research giving rise to modified organisms.

#### [A concerted attack on RTI](#)

1. This year marks 15 years of the enactment of the Right to Information (RTI) law
2. The right to information has been upheld by the Supreme Court as a fundamental right flowing from Article 19 of the Constitution, which guarantees every citizen the right to free speech and expression.
3. Since its enactment, the RTI law has been used by people to seek information to actively participate in decision making processes and hold governments accountable.
4. During the COVID19 crisis too, the law has been widely used to seek information
5. **Attack on the transparency watchdogs**
  - In 2019, regressive amendments were made to the RTI Act which did away with statutory protection of fixed tenure and high status conferred on the commissioners.
  - Despite stiff opposition within and outside Parliament, the government pushed the RTI (Amendment) Act which allows the Central government to determine the tenure and salaries of all Information Commissioners.
6. **Vacancies in Information Commissions lead to**
  - large backlogs of appeals/complaints and
  - long delays in the disposal of cases, effectively frustrating the people's right to know.

7. Any attack on the RTI law, which has empowered citizens to question those in power, is an attack on the foundation of our democratic republic. It is a clear reflection of the lack of political will of governments to be answerable to the people of the country.

#### Analysis : India's non-profit sector and education

1. For about three decades now, a large number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are intensively engaged in the task of improving elementary education in the country. There are approximately around 12 lakh NGO workers engaged in education.
2. Most NGOs and large foundations believe that they work as catalysts and influence the functioning of the system
3. **The relevant policy frameworks in primary education** revolve around these four documents:
  - National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF)
  - The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE)
  - The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009 (NCFTE)
  - The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)
4. **Broad policy frameworks according to the documents:**
  - Regarding pedagogy, the RTE, in Section 29(e), recommends “learning through activities, discovery and exploration in a child friendly and child centered manner”.
  - On curriculum, NEP 2020, paragraph 4.23 says “certain subjects, skills, and capacities should be learned by all students to become good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings in today’s rapidly changing world. ... these skills include: scientific temper and evidence based thinking; creativity and innovativeness; sense of aesthetics and art; oral and written communication; health and nutrition; physical education, fitness, wellness, and sports; collaboration and teamwork; problem solving and logical reasoning; vocational exposure and skills; digital literacy, coding, and computational thinking; ethical and moral reasoning; knowledge and practice of human and Constitutional values; gender sensitivity; Fundamental Duties; citizenship skills and values”.
  - The NCFTE (page 23), says that we need teachers who “Promote values of peace, democratic way of life, equality, justice, liberty, fraternity, secularism and zeal for social reconstruction”.
5. A major part of the theoretical knowledge required for improvement in education is drawn from the philosophy of education, political theories, sociology of education, psychology of learning and development, and a contextual understanding of the current needs of our society. Understanding an adequate part of all this and their implications for curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher development, therefore, becomes imperative to be effective in quality improvement or to contribute to good education.
6. A strong programme for capacity building of NGO workers engaged in educational improvement becomes an urgent need.

#### Critical Analysis : India's Phased manufacturing policy

1. Aim was to transform India into a major mobile manufacturing hub. The Phased Manufacturing programme (PMP) began in 2016-17 and was supposed to culminate in 2019-20.
2. The PMP incentivised the manufacture of low value accessories initially, and then moved on to the manufacture of higher value components. This was done by increasing the basic customs duty on the imports of these accessories or components.
3. The foreign firms like Xiaomi and Apple did invest in India but it was mostly done through their contract manufacturers. For the majority of Indian firms involved in manufacturing 85% of the inputs were imported.

4. Comparable UN data for India, China, Vietnam, Korea and Singapore (2017-2019), show that except for India, all countries exported more mobile phone parts than imports — which indicates the presence of facilities that add value to these parts before exporting them.
  5. India, on the other hand, imported more than it exported, the least being in 2019 when its imports of mobile phone parts were 25 times the exports. Thus, PMP did increase the value of domestic production, however, improvement in local value addition remains a work in progress.
  6. As a successor to the PMP, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has approved 16 firms in the mobile manufacturing sector for the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme. A recent study found that, if the cost of production of a mobile phone is say 100 (without subsidies), then the effective cost (with subsidies and other benefits) of manufacturing mobile phones in China is 79.55, Vietnam, 89.05, and India (including PLI), 92.51. This shows that incentives under the PLI policy may not turn out to be a game changing move. It may thus be premature to expect a major chunk of mobile manufacturing to shift from China to India.
  7. Domestic firms have been nearly wiped out from the Indian market. So, their ability to take advantage of the PLI policy and grab a sizable domestic market share seems difficult.
  8. In summary, the PMP policy, since 2016-17 has barely been helpful in raising domestic value addition in the industry even though value of production expanded considerably. The new PLI focus is also on increasing domestic production, and not value addition. A possible initiative might be to encourage foreign firms chosen under the PLI policy to collocate their supply ecosystems in the country.
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## National News/ Interventions



### Daily snippets

#### 1. **PayTM-Google Fiasco**

- PayTM has rallied about 100 homegrown firms in opposing Google Play Store's new norms mandating the use of its billing system after March 2022, which would entail app developers needing to pay 30% transaction fee for all digital goods sold via their apps to Play Store.
- Paytm aims to onboard one million apps on its new Android 'mini app store' in the next year or so, coinciding with the deadline for new Google Play rules

#### 2. **Fake TRP Scandal , Mumbai**

- Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh said that a racket involving Republic TV, Box Cinema and Fakt Marathi that manipulated Television Rating Points (TRPs) has been busted by the Crime Branch.
- Owners of Fakt marathi and Box Cinema have been arrested and charged with Sections 420 (cheating and dishonestly including delivery of property) and 409 (criminal breach of trust by public servant, or by banker, merchant or agent) of the Indian Penal Code.

#### 3. **Ram Vilas Paswan (1946 – 2020 ) passes away**

- Union Cabinet Minister and the founder of the Lok Janshakti Party - Ram Vilas Paswan died on thursday at a Delhi hospital where he was recuperating from a heart surgery.

- In the 42 years since, he had been elected to the Lok Sabha eight times, barring in 2009. He was first elected MLA in 1969 from the Samyukta Socialist Party.
- In 1975, when the Emergency was proclaimed, he was arrested and spent the entire period in jail. On being released in 1977, he became a member of the Janata Party and won the Lok Sabha elections.
- In 2000, Mr. Paswan broke from the Janata Dal to form the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) building on the Dalit Sena that he had formed in 1983.

#### 4. **Supreme Court slams govt.'s Tablighi affidavit**

- Sharad A. Bodbe, the Chief Justice of India, pulled up the Union government for mistreating the Supreme Court for having a 'junior officer' file an 'evasive' affidavit containing 'unnecessary, nonsensical' averments on petitions challenging the discriminatory and communal coverage of the Tablighi Jamaat incident by some sections of the media

#### 5. **PM launches Jan Andolan for COVID-19 behaviour**

- A low cost, high intensity campaign with the key message - "Wear Mask, Follow Physical distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene", has been launched by PM Modi in view of the upcoming festival and winter season as well as the opening up of the economy.

#### 6. **Assam jails cannot be detention centres: HC**

- The Gauhati High Court has said that people declared as foreigners cannot be kept in jails that serve as detention centres, depriving them of basic human rights and human dignity.
- The Court has issued a notice to the Assam Government to submit a report on the steps taken to set up detention centres outside jail premises and hire any private premises if suitable government accommodations are not available for the purpose.
- The HC ruled that jails being used as detention centres were in conflict with the model manual for such centres.
- It referred to the apex court's observation that detainees should be kept in an "appropriate place with restricted movements" pending deportation or repatriation and provided basic facilities such as electricity, water, hygiene, etc.

#### 7. **RBI forecasts end of economic contraction by the fourth quarter Q4**

Source : The Hindu

- The Reserve Bank of India on Friday reiterated its resolve to revive growth impulses in the economy and mitigate the COVID19 pandemic's worst impacts by extending its accommodative policy stance for the rest of this year as well as 2021-22.
- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said growth may "break out of contraction" mode by the January-March 2021 quarter.
- Real GDP (gross domestic product) for the full year is expected to decline by 9.5%.
- The RBI expects private investment and exports to be subdued in view of anaemic demand conditions, however, the farm sector is expected to lead the growth revival through a rural demand spurt.

<h3>Governor's prescription</h3> <p>A look at some of the key announcements made by the RBI</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Repo rate will remain unchanged at 4%</li> <li>▪ Accommodative stance towards growth will be extended to next year</li> <li>▪ Risk weightages for home loans have been rationalised to spur job-intensive realty sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Real Time Gross Settlement payment system to go 24/7 from December 2020</li> </ul> <p><b>PROJECTION</b></p> <p>GDP to contract by <b>9.5%</b>, with positive growth likely in Q4</p>

- Apart from slashing a layer of red tape to expedite exports, the central bank also announced a rationalisation of risk weightages as signed by banks for all new home loans sanctioned up to March 31, 2022.

#### **8. Kasturi cotton**

- India's premium Cotton would be known as 'Kasturi Cotton' in the world cotton Trade. Union Minister for Textiles Smriti Zubin Irani unveiled a brand and a logo for Indian cotton recently. The branding — Kasturi Cotton — would initially be applicable to long staple cotton that is grown in India.
- The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has developed a mobile application called "Cott-Ally" to provide the latest news on weather conditions, the crop situation and best farm practices.

#### **9. Citizen Poll throws up three contenders for national butterfly tag**

- Krishna Peacock (Papilio krishna), Indian Jezebel (Delias eucharis), and orange Oakleaf (Kallima inachus)
- One will join the ranks of Bengal Tiger, Indian Peacock, Indian Lotus, Banyan tree and Mango as a national symbol.

#### **10. DRDO tests anti radiation missile**

- A new generation anti radiation missile, RudraM-I, was successfully tested by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). This is the first indigenous anti radiation missile.
- An anti-radiation missile can locate and target radiation emitting sources such as enemy radars, communication sites and other radio frequency emitting targets.

#### **11. Stan Swamy arrested**

- Stan Swamy, the 83 year old tribal rights activist has been arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).
- Civil rights activists and organisations have condemned the arrest citing it as a gross violation of human rights and democratic norms.
- Swamy has been a vocal critic of the BJP Government's attempts to amend land laws and the land acquisition Act in Jharkhand, and a strong advocate of the Forest Rights Act, PESA and related laws.

#### **12. Bhima Koregaon: NIA files chargesheet**

- The 2018 Bhima Koregaon violence refers to attack on visitors during an annual celebratory gathering at Bhima Koregaon to mark the 200th year of the Battle of Bhima Koregaon victory.
- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed a second supplementary chargesheet against seven accused and one absconding accused in the 2018 Bhima Koregaon case.
- According to a NIA press release
  - The accused conspired with other accused persons to further the ideology of terrorist organisation CPI (Maoist), abetted violence, brought into hatred and incited disaffection towards the government established by law and promoted enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, caste and community.
  - The absconding accused Milind Teltumbde also organised training camps for imparting weapons training to other accused persons."
  - Father Stan Swamy, who was arrested from his house in Ranchi, has been sent to judicial custody till October

#### **13. Background of the Loan Moratorium case**

- To help borrowers weather pandemic related stress, the RBI has let banks offer a moratorium on loan payments for up to six months and permitted a onetime restructuring of accounts.

- The RBI's measures ensured that accounts that were standard prior to the implementation of the nationwide lockdown in late March, would not be classified as NPAs if the borrowers made use of the moratorium, which allowed repayments to be delayed until the end of August
- What are NPA accounts? Non Performing assets (NPAs) are recorded on a bank's balance sheet after a prolonged period of non-payment by the borrower. NPAs place financial burden on the lender; a significant number of NPAs over a period of time may indicate to regulators that the financial health of the bank is in jeopardy. NPAs can be classified as a substandard asset, doubtful asset, or loss asset, depending on the length of time overdue and probability of repayment.

#### **14. Follow SOP in crimes against women**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued an advisory to all States regarding "mandatory action by the police in crimes against women".
- Some of the mandatory measures that have to be taken in cases of crime against women :
  - Compulsory registration of FIR
  - Collection of evidence for forensic examination.
  - Use of sexual assault evidence collection kit.
  - Completion of investigation in sexual assault cases within 2 months.
  - Use of national databases on sexual offenders.

#### **15. FELUDA paper-strip test for SARS-COV-2 diagnosis**

- This has been developed by the CSIRIGIB and approved by the Drug Controller General of India for a commercial launch. The test showed 96% sensitivity and 98% specificity.

#### **16. Supreme Court issues notice in PIL seeking equal protection from sexual offences for transgender community**

- After noting that there are no such provisions in the Indian Penal Code, the Supreme Court today issued notice in a PIL seeking equal protection against sexual offences for the transgender community.
- The bench of Chief Justice S.A Bobde and Justice A.S Bopanna and V Ramasubramaniam took up the PIL for hearing.
- Statistics reveal that there are shockingly high levels of sexual abuse and assault, where one in two transgender individuals are sexually abused or assaulted at some point in their lives.

#### **17. Right to Information and backlogs**

- Fifteen years after the RTI Act came into force, more than 2.2 lakh cases are pending at the Central and State Information Commissions, which are the final courts of appeal under the transparency law.
- The increasing backlog is exacerbated by the fact that most commissions are functioning at a reduced capacity, including the Central information Commission, which has been without a chairperson since August.

#### **18. Metro car shed at Aarey to be shifted**

- Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday announced the shifting of the metro car shed from Aarey forest area in the western suburbs to a government plot in Kanjurmarg in the eastern suburbs at "zero cost".
- Nearly 800 acres in Aarey has been declared as forest area, making it the first extensive forest blossoming within the city limits.

#### **19. 'Blue flag' tag for Kasarkod, Padubidri beaches**

- Two beaches in Karnataka are among the eight in India that have bagged the coveted eco-label 'Blue Tag' from the International agency, Foundation for Environment Education, Denmark. The two are Kasarkod and Padubidri in Karnataka.
- According to the Ministry, a 'Blue Flag' beach is an ecotourism model to provide tourists clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.
- The certification is awarded by the Denmark based agency based on 33 stringent criteria in four major heads: environmental education and information, bathing water quality, environment management and conservation and safety and services in the beaches.

## **20. Government's moves to spur demand**

- Hoping to spur fresh demand of about ₹1 lakh crore in the second half of the year, the government unveiled a mini stimulus of sorts, comprising incentives for the government and public sector employees to spend more on consumer durables and services, and interest free loans of ₹12,000 crore to the States for a 50 year tenure to finance capital expenditure.
- Central government also expanded its own capital expenditure plans by ₹25,000 crore, from the earlier allocation of ₹4.13 lakh crore, for spending on roads, urban development, water supply, defence infrastructure, and domestically produced capital equipment for defence infrastructure.
- The idea behind the stimulus was to nudge those whose jobs were unaffected to contribute to the revival of demand for the benefit of the less fortunate.
- Separately, a flat ₹10,000 special festival allowance has been announced for all Central employees to be utilised by March 31, 2021, that could be repaid in 10 interest free instalments. This would be given in the form of a prepaid Rupay card.
- Of the ₹12,000 crore loans offered to the States, ₹2,500 crore was earmarked for the eight north eastern States, who could avail ₹ 200 crore each, and Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, who could avail ₹ 450 crore each. For the remaining States, loans of ₹ 7,500 crore would be available in proportion to their share of the Finance Commission devolutions.

## **21. Use of Aadhaar Number not mandatory for Registration of Births and Deaths**

- The Registrar General of Union of India has elucidated that production of Aadhaar number is not mandatory for registration of births and deaths.
- The Ministry further provided that an applicant may provide the physical copy of Aadhaar number or Enrolment ID number for establishing the identity of an individual for the purpose of registration of birth and death on voluntary basis, as one of the acceptable documents.

## **22. India's economy to contract by 10.3% this fiscal, says IMF**

- India's economy is expected to contract 10.3% in the current fiscal year as the country and the global economy reel from the COVID19 pandemic, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Global output is projected to shrink 4.4% in 2020, the IMF said in its **World Economic Outlook** October 2020 report titled, "A Long and Difficult Ascent".
- Except for China, where output this year was expected to exceed 2019 levels, the advanced, developing and emerging market economies were expected to see lower output even next year, **IMF Chief Economist Gita Gopinath** said.
- The U.S. economy is expected to shrink 4.3% this year and grow by 3.1% next year. The corresponding numbers for the euro Area are 8.3% and 5.2%. For China, they are 1.9% and 8.2% respectively.

- The report mentions that the labour market had become more polarised, with low-income workers, women and youth being hit harder. It predicted that close to 90 million people could fall below the \$1.90/ day extreme poverty threshold (the World Bank last week projected that there could be up to 150 million additional extreme poor in 2020, 2021).

### **23. Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti released from detention**

- People's Democratic Party (PDP) president and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti was released after the Jammu and Kashmir administration revoked her detention under the Public Safety Act (PSA).
- She had been under arrest for over 14 months since the Centre scrapped Article 370 of the Constitution in Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019.

### **24. eVIN network to handle COVID-19 vaccine supply**

- [What is eVIN network](#)? eVIN (Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network) is an indigenously developed technology system in India that digitizes vaccine stocks and monitors the temperature of the cold chain through a smartphone application. The innovative eVIN is presently being implemented across twelve states in India. eVIN aims to support the Government of India's Universal Immunization Programme by providing real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows, and storage temperatures across all cold chain points in these states.
- In a statement by the Health Ministry, The eVIN network, which can track the latest vaccine stock position; temperature at storage facility; geotag health centres; and maintain facility-level dashboard, is being repurposed for the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine

### **25. Union Cabinet approves the STARS project**

- The Union Cabinet has approved a project partially funded by the World Bank to carry out a reform agenda in the governance of school education, and improve data and assessment systems at the national level, as well as teaching and learning outcomes in six States, especially for early childhood and vocational education.
- The Strengthening Teaching Learning and Results for States (STARS) project will have a total project cost of ₹5,718 crore, with the World Bank's support amounting to about ₹3,700 crore.
- A major component of the project is the establishment of PARAKH ((Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) as a National Assessment centre.

### **26. National Register for Citizens (NRC)**

- The **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** is a register of all Indian citizens whose creation is mandated by the [2003 amendment](#) of the [Citizenship Act, 1955](#). Its purpose is to document all the legal citizens of India so that the illegal immigrants can be identified and deported. It has been implemented for the state of Assam starting in 2013-14
- In the NRC documentation carried out in Assam last year, more than 19 lakh people of 3.3 crore applicants were excluded from the final NRC. Those left out were given the option to appeal to the Foreigners' Tribunals within 120 days of receiving the rejection slip from the NRC authority.

### **27. Researchers move SC against 'Toxic', 'Polarised' Coverage and 'Media Trials'**

- An application has been filed in the Supreme Court alleging that journalists are conducting 'media trials'
- The application claimed that media trials were another facet of "hate speech" and can take place for reasons ranging from garnering higher Television Rating Points (TRPs) to "something more sinister whereby certain private television channels act as proxy propaganda machines for the Central Government.

## Need for community-based mental health services

1. The need to stop discrimination by society and laws against people with mental health issues and treating them as second class citizens.
2. The data shows that one out of six or seven people in the world have a mental health problem or illness. The issue is that there is stigma and discrimination attached to mental health.
3. There are hosts of laws that definitely need to be modified
  - In the Representation of the People Act, 1951, a person with mental health problems is denied voting rights. There is no clear cut definition of the word 'unsound mind'.
  - The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, provides for mental illness as a ground for divorce even though other health issues like leprosy, epilepsy have been deleted from the ambit of the legislation.
4. Government should also strive to make:
  - Community based mental health services as they are more effective and less costly.
  - More funds towards mental health as simple statistics show less than 1% of the health budget goes towards mental health issues.
5. Experts say that there is a need to modify a host of laws that discriminate against people with mental health issues



## International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

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### Daily snippets

#### 1. **American poet Louise Gluck wins Nobel Literature Prize**

##### [Further Reading](#)

- She is the fourth woman to win the Nobel Literature Prize in the past decade after Olga Tokarczuk, Svetlana Alexievich and Alice Munro and only the 16th since the Nobel Prizes were first awarded in 1901.
- Ms. Gluck won the Pulitzer Prize in 1993 for her collection *The Wild Iris* and the National Book Award for her latest collection, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* in 2014.

#### 2. **Court to rule on Golden Dawn leaders**

- A Greek court will deliver eagerly awaited sentences after leaders of neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn were found guilty of running a criminal outfit in a landmark case.
- Key crimes carried out by Golden Dawn are the 2013 coldblooded murder of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas and the beating of Egyptian fishermen in 2012 and communist trade unionists in 2013, the court established.

#### 3. **UN's World Food Programme wins 2020 Nobel Peace Prize**

- The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for its efforts to combat hunger around the world and improve conditions for peace in areas affected by conflict.

- In India, WFP has been working closely with the government, carrying out reforms in the Public Distribution System, besides piloting innovative solutions such as the recent 'Annapurthi', automatic grain dispensers - Rice ATMs, that are aimed at checking malpractices in the distribution system.

#### **4. Armenia-Azerbaijan talks begin in Moscow**

- Armenia and Azerbaijan held their first high level talks after nearly two weeks of fierce clashes over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, with hopes rising that a ceasefire could be brokered in Moscow.
- France, which along with Russia and the U.S is mediating to end the conflict, said there was a chance of a breakthrough at the talks but it was far from certain.

#### **5. TikTok blocked in Pakistan**

- Pakistan's telecom regulator blocked TikTok for failing to filter out 'immoral and indecent' content, thus joining a number of countries who have issued a ban on the video streaming popular app.

#### **6. Nobel Prize for Chemistry : CRISPR/Cas-9 technology**

- Scientists Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier bagged the Nobel Prize for Chemistry "for the development of a method for genome editing". The discovery of "one of gene technology's sharpest tools: the CRISPR/Cas9 genetic scissors" will lead to the emergence of novel biological applications by making it easier to edit genes, and "may make the dream of curing inherited diseases come true".
- The CRISPR/Cas9 system allows for adding, altering and deleting the genomic code in living beings. Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) are pieces of DNA that bacteria snip off from viruses that once attacked them. CRISPR are part of bacteria's immunological systems that help them in recognising threatening viruses. When they sense a lurking virus, the bacteria produce customised RNA, which is necessary to translate DNA into protein, gleaned from the CRISPR libraries. This response also contains CRISPR-associated genes that are used to produce enzymes such as Cas-9.
- Using the tool, researchers can change the DNA of animals, plants and microorganisms with precision. In their natural form, the scissors recognise DNA from viruses, but Charpentier and Doudna proved that they could be controlled so that they can cut any DNA molecule at a predetermined site. Where the DNA is cut it is then easy to rewrite the code of life.
- The technology allows researchers to find out what genes do, move mutations that are identified and associated with disease into systems where they can be studied and tested for treatment. The prize to CRISPR/Cas9 may be unusual as it is rare for a method to be announced and conferred a Nobel within a decade of its discovery.
- The CSIR Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIRIGIB) in Delhi developed a COVID19 testing kit, nicknamed 'Feluda', after the fictional Bengali detective, based on the CRISPR/Cas9 system.
- Research is underway for using proteins that are smaller and more efficient than Cas9, though the system purportedly holds promise for treating more complex diseases, such as cancer, heart diseases, mental illnesses, and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.
- The most controversial application of CRISPR/Cas9 was in 2018, when Chinese researcher He Jian kui announced that he had used it to create 'gene edited twins' Lulu and Nana via invitro fertilisation.
- Thus, even though the CRISPR/ Cas9 system allows a democratic usage in labs across the world to tinker with genomes, it still has not reached the level of precision required to be sure that it does not cause unintentional side effects.
- Only one woman, Marie Curie, has been honoured twice, with the 1903 Nobel Prize in Physics and the 1911 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

## **7. Israel to bring over 2,000 Ethiopian Jews**

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has told his Ethiopian counterpart regarding Israel's intentions of bringing over the 2,000 Ethiopian Jews.
- Israel's government in 2015 pledged to bring the remaining Ethiopian Jews to Israel. In 1991, while Ethiopia was in the midst of a civil war, Israel carried out the dramatic Operation Solomon, airlifting some 14,500 Ethiopian Jews.
- Jews are often referred to in Ethiopia as 'Falashas', a derogatory word which translates into 'strangers' or 'migrants'.

## **8. In Belarus, women led the protests and shattered stereotypes**

- In a country whose strongman President, Alexander Lukashenko, has openly scoffed at women as too weak for politics and told them their place was in the kitchen, Belarusian women became the face and driving force of a movement aimed at toppling a leader known as "Europe's last dictator."
- The collapse began even before an August 9 presidential election that Mr. Lukashenko claimed to have won by a landslide, setting off two months of almost nonstop protests. To his obvious distaste, Mr. Lukashenko faced an unexpectedly strong challenge from a woman candidate, **Svetlana Tikhanovskaya**, the wife of a popular blogger who had hoped to run himself but was imprisoned before he could register as a candidate
- Adding to his rage and, perhaps, consternation, was the fact that the Opposition, previously led by men and prone to bitter internal feuding, had united around three women — Ms. Tikhanovskaya, whom they backed as the candidate; Veronika Tsepkalo, the wife of a would-be candidate who fled the country to avoid arrest; and Maria Kolesnikova, the campaign manager for Viktor Babariko, a jailed banker who had also hoped to challenge Lukashenko
- Ms. Kolesnikova, the only one of the women to remain in Belarus after the election, achieved hero status when she tore up her passport to foil the government's plan to deport her to Ukraine.

## **9. China backs Iran nuclear deal, calls for new West Asia Forum**

- China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called for a new forum to defuse tensions in West Asia after a meeting with his Iranian counterpart where he reiterated Beijing's support for Tehran. Mr. Wang and Javad Zarif also reaffirmed their commitment to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, an implicit rebuke of the U.S. for abandoning the accord during their Saturday meeting in China's southwestern Tengchong city.
- Iran has been locked in an acrimonious relationship with Saudi Arabia, the other major West Asian power, over the war in Yemen, Iranian influence in Iraq and Saudi support for Washington's sanctions on Tehran.

## **10. Pakistan's action on terror funding insufficient**

- Noting that Pakistan's measures against money laundering and terror financing "are not yet sufficient to justify a re rating", a regional affiliate of the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** retained the country on its "Enhanced Followup" list.
- The first FollowUp Report on Mutual Evaluation of Pakistan released by the AsiaPacific Group (APG) underlined that the country's progress on the 40 FATF recommendations on the effectiveness of anti money laundering and combating financing terror (AML/CFT) system largely remained unchanged.

## **11. Nobel Prize in Economics**

- U.S. economists **Paul Milgrom** and **Robert Wilson** won the Nobel Economics Prize for their work on commercial auctions, including for goods and services difficult to sell in traditional ways such as radio frequencies.
- Mr. Wilson's work showed why rational bidders tend to bid under their own estimate of the worth due to worries over the "winner's curse," or winning the auction but paying too much.
- Mr. Milgrom, also at Stanford, then came up with a more general theory of auctions, by analysing bidding strategies in different auction forms.
- The winners will share the prize sum of 10 million Swedish kronor (about \$1.1 million or €950,000)

## **12. Delhi, Male inks \$400-mn pact for connectivity**

- Following up on India's announcement of a \$500 million package to the Maldives, the Exim Bank of India and the Maldives's Ministry of Finance on Monday signed an agreement for \$400 million in Male.
- The line of credit (LoC) will fund the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP).
- The grant and LoC come in addition to the previous LoC of \$800 million, among India's largest loans extended in the region.

## **13. Pakistan likely to remain on FATF greylist**

- Pakistan is unlikely to exit the Financial Action Task Force (FATF's) greylist next week, when the plenary session of the Paris based global terror financing watchdog is held, after its latest evaluation saw it clear 21 of 27 action points, with six key areas outstanding where Pakistan has yet to show progress.
- At the plenary next week, Pakistan needs at least three of 39 members to keep it off the blacklist, and the support of 12 of 39 members to exit the 'greylist'.
- The six points of failure in the FATF's 27-point action list include Pakistan's lack of action against charitable organisations or NPOs (Non-profit organisations) connected to terror groups banned by the UN Security Council, and delays in prosecution of banned individuals and entities like Lashkar-e-Taiba chief Hafiz Saeed and LeT operations chief Zaki-Ur-Rahman Lakhvi, as well as Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar.

## **14. Johnson and Johnson pauses coronavirus vaccine trials**

- Johnson & Johnson has paused clinical trials of its coronavirus vaccine candidate due to an unexplained illness in a study participant.
- The move comes around a month after AstraZeneca also suspended trials of its experimental coronavirus vaccine which uses a similar technology - due to a participant falling ill.
- The J&J and AstraZeneca vaccines are both based on a so-called adenovirus, a harmless modified virus that instructs human cells to produce vaccine proteins.

## **15. Pakistan re-elected to UN rights body**

- Pakistan has been re-elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council despite opposition from activist groups over its abysmal human rights records.
- Last week, a coalition of human rights groups from Europe, the U.S. and Canada called on UN member states to oppose the election of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Pakistan and Uzbekistan, saying their human rights records make them unqualified.

## **Navy to hold PASSEX with U.S. carrier**

1. The Navy is scheduled to hold a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier group. It is likely to be held in the waters of Kochi.

2. In July, frontline warships of the Navy conducted a PASSEX with the U.S. Navy's Nimitz carrier strike group near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as it was transiting the Indian Ocean. The USS Nimitz was returning from the South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca where it undertook Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOP). The USS Ronald Reagan was in the South China Sea in August to conduct FONOPs amid tensions between China and the US.

#### Madrid Principles : Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict

1. OSCE : It is the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organization. Its mandate includes issues such as arms control, promotion of human rights, freedom of the press, and fair elections. It has its origins in the 1975 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) held in Helsinki, Finland. The OSCE is concerned with early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation.
2. Madrid- Principles : The OSCE, put forward in 2007 the Madrid Principles as the basis for the formulation of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. They provided for a prohibition on the use of force, respect for territorial integrity, and recognition of the equal right to self-determination.
3. In concrete terms, the Madrid Principles envisaged the demilitarisation of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian majority region that seceded from Azerbaijan towards the end of the Soviet Union, and the gradual liberation of Azerbaijani territory that Armenia had occupied in the 1991-94 war.
4. The Madrid Principles mentioned that international peacekeeping operations were to be deployed immediately after the Peace Agreement came into force, to monitor the Armenian redeployment; and internally displaced persons and refugees were to be provided the right to return to their original place of residence.
5. The UN Security Council's 1993 resolutions, calling for the unconditional withdrawal of Armenian occupying forces from Azerbaijan also calls for interventions based on similar lines.



## Science & Technology and Environment

### Animal Discoveries 2019, Plant Discoveries 2019

1. Animal Discoveries is the annual publication of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and Plant Discoveries is by the Botanical Survey of India (BSI).
2. Animal Discoveries 2019' lists 368 faunal species as new to science and 116 species as being spotted for the first time in India.
3. 'Plant Discoveries 2019' lists 180 new plant species and 73 species spotted for the first time in the country. Many plants with horticulture value as well as those which can serve as alternative foods have been discovered.
4. The number of plant species found in India, according to the 2019 BSI compilation, is 50,012 and accounts roughly for 12% of all flora species in the world.
5. Both the ZSI and BSI have been releasing 'Animal Discoveries' and 'Plant Discoveries' since 2007 and this is the 13th publication in the series. The data analysis of the past decade reveals a total of 2,444 new animal species and 3,500 plant species from the country.

## Pak butterfly, Chinese dragonfly, miles from known habitats, now listed in India by citizen scientists

1. The butterfly, **Spialia zebra**, has been found in Dungarpur district of Rajasthan, far south of its known habitat in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab province in Pakistan.
  2. The dragonfly **Atratothemis reelsi** has been recorded in southern Arunachal Pradesh's Namdapha Tiger Reserve, about, 1170 Km west of its previously known nearest locality of Xiaoqikong Park in China's Guizhou Province.
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## Sports

### Daily snippets

#### 1. Lewis Hamilton equals Michael Schumacher's record

- Lewis Hamilton equalled Michael Schumacher's all-time record 91 Formula One wins with an Eifel Grand Prix victory that catapulted the Mercedes driver closer to a seventh world championship.
- Schumacher was associated with Ferrari when he got the record.

#### 2. Rafael Nadal equals Federer's record of 20 men's Majors title

- Men's major's titles are : The US Open (Flushing Meadows), The French Open (Roland Garros), The Championships (Wimbledon), The Australian Open.
- Rafael Nadal demolished World No. 1 Novak Djokovic 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 in the French Open final to claim a record equalling 20th Grand Slam title. He is now tied with Swiss Roger Federer for most men's singles Majors.
- This was also Nadal's 13th title at the Roland Garros.

#### 3. Player profiles:

- **Magnus Carlsen** : Sven Magnus Øen Carlsen is a Norwegian chess grandmaster who is the current World Chess Champion, World Rapid Chess Champion, and World Blitz Chess Champion. Carlsen first reached the top of the FIDE world rankings in 2010, and trails only Garry Kasparov in time spent as the highest rated player in the world.
- **Saurav Goshal** : He is a professional squash player from India and reached a career-high world ranking of World No. 10 in April 2019. In 2013, Saurav became the first Indian to reach the Quarter finals of the World Squash Championship in England. In 2004, he became the first Indian ever to win the coveted British Junior Open Under-19 Squash title.
- **Joshna Chinappa** : She is an Indian professional squash player. She was the first Indian to win the British Junior Squash Championship title in 2005 in the under-19 category and was also the youngest Indian women's national champion. She is the current record-holder of most national championship wins, with 18 titles. At the 2014 Commonwealth Games Joshna, along with Dipika Pallikal Karthik, won the squash women's doubles gold medal, India's first-ever Commonwealth Games medal in the sport.
- **Deepika Kumari** : She competes in the sport of archery and is a former world number one. She won the gold medal in the 2010 Commonwealth games in the women's individual recurve event. She also won the gold medal in the

women's team recurve event along with Dola Banerjee and Bombayala Devi. She was conferred the Arjuna Award, India's second highest sporting award, in the year 2012. In February 2014, she was honoured with FICCI Sports person of the Year Award. The Government of India awarded her the civilian honour of the Padma Shri in 2016.

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### Suggested Readings

1. PayTM - Google Appstore clash , [Link to article](#)
2. TRPs and their rigging , [Link to article](#)
3. Kasturi Cotton, [Link to article](#)
4. What's happening in Kyrgyzstan, [Link to article](#)
5. Right to protest in public, [Link to article](#)
6. The World Food Programme, [Link to article](#)
7. Handling of the Hathras Case, [Link to article](#)
8. Pre-installed apps and user privacy, [Link to article](#)
9. Madrid Principles : Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, [Link to article](#)
10. COVID and Intellectual Property , [Link to article](#)
11. The Tyranny of TRPs, [Link to article](#)
12. Right to free speech and Protests, [Link to article](#)
13. How prepared is India for the next public health emergency, [Link to article](#)
14. Plea to recognise same-sex marriage, [Link to article](#)
15. The Arab World and the two-state solution, [Link to article](#)
16. Tackling the roots of discrimination, [Link to article](#)
17. Legality of Dying Declarations, [Link to article](#)

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