

G.K snippets...



1. **Aligarh Muslim University** : It is a premier central university in Aligarh, India, which was originally established by **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan** as the **Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875**. It became Aligarh Muslim University in 1920.

2. **Bala Devi** is the captain of the **Indian women's football team**. Bala made her India debut in 2005 and since 2010, has played 58 matches for the country, scoring 52 goals. She hails from Manipur. Indian team is currently ranked 55th in the world FIFA rankings.

3. **N.K Singh** is the chairperson of the **Fifteenth Finance Commission**. The Finance Commission is a Constitutionally mandated body that is at the centre of fiscal federalism. **Set up under Article 280** of the Constitution, its core responsibility is to evaluate the state of finances of the Union and State Governments, recommend the sharing of taxes between them, lay down the principles determining the distribution of these taxes among States. Its working is characterised by extensive and intensive consultations with all levels of governments, thus strengthening the principle of cooperative federalism. Its recommendations are also geared towards improving the quality of public spending and promoting fiscal stability. The first Finance Commission was set up in 1951 and there have been fifteen so far. Each of them has faced its own unique set of challenges.
4. In the modern science view, there are two kinds of immunity: one is **'innate' immunity** which is the first line of defence against an infection. A class of cells called "natural killer cells" are produced in the bone marrow and directly attack infectious microbes. The other, a so-called **adaptive immunity**, where specialised cells produced in the thymus gland actively monitor — and produce antibodies that are specific to viruses and bacteria. Both systems work in tandem.
5. **Article 121 and Article 211** of the Indian Constitution expressly bar Parliament and the State Legislatures to discuss the conduct of any judge.
6. **Portraits of Power** is the autobiography of **15th Finance Commission Chairperson N.K Singh**.
7. **Ajay Tyagi** is the Chairman of **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**.
- What is SEBI? The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** is the regulator of the securities and commodity market in India owned by the Government of India. It was established on 12 April 1988 and given Statutory Powers on 30 January 1992 through the SEBI Act, 1992.
8. **Saumya Swaminathan** is the Chief Scientist of the World Health Organisation.
9. **Rodrigo Duterte** is the President of Philippines.



No end to violence against women : Supreme Court

1. The Supreme Court said crimes against women continued in a “never-ending cycle” in India. The Bench said domestic violence continued to be the **least reported form of violence towards women**.
2. **Reasons women continue to be vulnerable to these crimes :**
 - Non-retaliation, coupled with absence of laws addressing their rights and ignorance of the existing statutes.
 - Societal attitude and Stigma
 - Conditioning also made women vulnerable to domestic violence
3. The observations came in a judgment that held that the relief granting right to residence to a married woman under the domestic violence law by a criminal court was relevant and could be considered even in civil proceedings seeking her eviction from the matrimonial home.

A constitutional pickle of the Andhra kind

1. The latest controversy which threatens to suck in the Indian judiciary at its highest levels. The letter of October 6 written by the State Chief Minister, Jagan Mohan Reddy, to the Chief Justice of India (CJI), S.A. Bobde.
2. These are the following **allegations** made in the letter :
 - Reference is made to **Justice N.V Ramana’s** (who is the senior most after the Chief Justice of India, and is due to take over from him come April 2021) proximity to former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) as Additional Advocate General, and that former Supreme Court justice Justice J. Chelameshwar has commented adversely on their connection.
 - Justice Ramana has, through the State Chief Justice, influenced the selection of the roster and allotment of key portfolios to a few judges. Important matters relating to State policy and TDP interests are posted before these judges and invariably orders adverse to the government are passed.
 - The letter makes mention of cases where the High Court has passed orders negating a slew of key decisions of the Jagan Mohan Reddy government.
 - Reference to insider knowledge and purchase of large land transactions in Amaravati at old prices to make a killing when the development plans were unveiled.
 - Mentions the involvement of D. Srinivas, previous Advocate General of the State and also makes reference to close relatives of Justice Ramana.
 - Justice Ramana went one step further and placed a gag order on the media from reporting the FIR.
 - The onus of proof is on the CJI to evolve a fair and transparent process which enables Justice Ramana to clear his name
 - **Possible solutions:**
 - A Leadership Commission which would focus on the measures required to obtain and keep high levels of integrity from our leaders, and that includes not just politicians and bureaucrats, but also judges.
 - And for good measure perhaps, we should also bestow thought on the office of a judicial ombudsman.

Need for Police Reforms

1. The first serious attempt to overhaul the policing machinery was made when the **National Police Commission (NPC) was set up in 1977**. The NPC submitted eight reports to the Ministry of Home Affairs between 1979 and 1981. The report was put in cold storage until Prakash Singh, a retired IPS officer, filed a PIL in the apex court in 1996 demanding the implementation of the NPC's recommendations.
2. In 2006, the Supreme Court issued a slew of directives on police reform. These would have had a far-reaching impact had the States and the Centre paid any serious attention to them.
3. Only six States provided a minimum tenure of two years to the Director General of Police (DGP). Many States have not implemented a single directive of the Supreme Court.
4. The Court has to come down heavily on the States and the Centre to ensure that its directives are not dismissed lightly. A bold step towards bringing down crimes is possible only when the politicians-criminals police nexus is strangled.

The National Green Tribunal's resilient journey

1. October 18th marked the 10th anniversary of the NGT.
2. **The beginnings**
 - The sheer number and complexity of cases, led the Supreme Court of India to designate a special Bench to handle these matters. This Bench, which met every Friday to deliberate on these and many other matters, came to be known fittingly as the 'Forest Bench'.
 - Parliament had passed laws related to the establishment of a **National Environment Tribunal (1995)** and a **National Environment Appellate Authority (1997)**. The Authority was intended to act primarily as a forum for challenges to environmental clearances while the Tribunal could award limited amounts of compensation in cases of environmental damage to life or property. These, however, did not go far enough in terms of jurisdiction, authority, impact, or autonomy.
 - It was clear that the enforcement, protection, and adjudication of environmental laws required a specialised and dedicated body. The quality of time spent on environmental issues could also be increased as, unlike the Supreme Court, the tribunal could have benches in various States, thereby increasing access to all citizens. Thus, the idea for the 'NGT' was born.
 - The then Chief Justice of India, **Justice P.N. Bhagwati**, had suggested "to the Government of India that for cases involving issues of environmental pollution, ecological destructions and conflicts over national resources that involve assessment and evolution of scientific and technical data, it might be desirable to set up Environmental Courts on the regional basis with one professional Judge and two experts. Hence, the need for a court that was "a combination of a Judge and Technical Experts".
3. **Work done by the NGT**
 - It has created a new breed of legal practitioners, protected vast acres of forest land, halted polluting construction activities in metros and smaller towns.
 - It has penalised errant officials who have turned a blind eye towards enforcing the laws, and held large corporate entities to account.
 - It has protected the rights of tribal communities and ensured the **enforcement of the "polluter pays" principle** in letter and spirit.

- One of the key challenges is that the NGT must focus less on governance issues and more on adjudication. Benches have to expand manifolds. Vacancies have to be filled quickly.

[The fight against the Human Immunodeficiency Virus \(HIV\)](#)

1. The newly released 2019 HIV estimates by the [National AIDS Control Organization \(NACO\)](#)/Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with the technical support of UNAIDS tell us that there has been a 66.1% reduction in new HIV infections among children and a 65.3% reduction in AIDS related deaths in India over a nine year period.
2. Overall, antenatal coverage has expanded, and HIV testing has increased over time and within target range. Treatment coverage has also expanded.
 - From 2010 to 2019, India made important progress in reducing the HIV impact on children through prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV.
 - This was done through education and communication programmes, increased access to HIV services with innovative delivery mechanisms for HIV testing; counselling and care; and treatment and follow-ups. India made HIV testing for all pregnant women free and HIV treatment is offered the same way nationwide without cost to pregnant mothers.
 - The approach being promoted by focusing attention and resources in high burden districts is supported by all stakeholders to better understand the locations and populations most HIV affected, so that technical support and HIV services can be directed towards these areas.
3. Using data driven and decision making approaches, it's certain that AIDS will no longer be a public health threat for children in India by the end 2030, if not before.

[The foreign Tribunals](#)

[Link to article](#)

1. An analysis of 818 orders passed by this Foreigners Tribunal between June 16, 2017 and December 30, 2019, obtained through the Right to Information Act, and found that 96% were decided ex parte. Also, the orders were inconsistent, vague and biased.
 - In 733 cases, the police claim to have met the suspected foreigners. The police asked them to produce documentary proof of their citizenship, and 570 of them allegedly produced no documents. Further, In 218 of these cases, the police went on to declare that the suspected foreigners were from Bangladesh. The police claimed they were able to meet suspected foreigners before submitting their inquiry report, in at least 98% of such cases.
2. Foreigners Tribunals do not allow for the police to be cross-examined. This works out conveniently for the police and the tribunals given the anxiety in Assam about finding and deporting Bangladeshis.
3. The burden of proof under the Foreigners Act of 1946 is on the accused. If a person fails to appear before the Foreigners Tribunal, it can pass an order declaring him a foreigner ex parte, without allowing him an opportunity to defend himself.
4. Only in 31 cases were the suspected foreigners allowed to refute the allegations made against them.
 - All these orders were passed by the same tribunal member.
 - The progression of her career as a member of the Foreigners Tribunal gives us of how the desperate search for Bangladeshis in Assam has tainted the quasi judicial process of adjudicating citizenship claims.
 - She was denied an extension along with several other members because she had not declared enough people as foreigners.

5. Most The cases appear to have been kept in cold storage for several years and disposed of with undue haste in 2018 and 2019.
 - The tribunal ordered the deportation of the suspected foreigners in 97% of these cases.
6. Therefore, to conclude There is an urgent need to make the procedure followed by the Foreigners Tribunal fair and transparent because The claims of 19 lakh people excluded from the National Register of Citizens will go before these tribunals.

Caste and sanitation work

1. Even in 2020, the Indian government and our civil society continue to **grapple** with the inhuman nature of manual scavenging. The focus now is on manhole deaths and provision of safety equipment to sanitation workers.
2. The movement has been demanding the abolition of the dehumanising practice of manual removal of human excreta. Various State governments and the previous Central governments have responded to these civil society demands.
3. **Different legal and policy frameworks/actions :**
 - In 1993, the then government promulgated an Act prohibiting the construction of unsanitary dry latrines
 - The Act defined ‘manual scavenger’. Until the introduction of the **Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act in 1993**, State governments had a post called ‘scavengers
 - After the Act was introduced, State governments themselves became agencies that would enforce prohibition of the construction or usage of dry latrines.
 - Ten years later, the Safai Karamchari Andolan filed public interest litigation in the Supreme Court. This forced the Central government to conduct **a survey of manual scavengers in 2013 :**
 - The survey found that dry latrines and manual removal of human excreta still persisted.
 - In the same year, the government introduced the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act.
 - However, the number of deaths in manholes, sewers and septic tanks continues to remain high.
 - The present government had plans to amend the 2013 Act. However, it did not address the issue of labour safety.
 - Workforces in sanitation departments are recruited via open competition.
 - Particular caste members are approached for the job.
 - Hardly any volunteer offers to do clean-up work during natural calamities
 - During the last Chennai floods, sanitation workers from the Nilgiris district were made to travel in garbage trucks
 - In Tamil Nadu, sanitation workers are asked to work in newly formed COVID-19 wards.
 - Unlike other labour forces, sanitation workers do not have a separate rule-book that lays down guidelines for their work
4. In India, sanitation work is caste-ridden and hence, there is an urgent need to dissociate caste from labour.

Nurturing the digital payment infrastructure in India

1. The growth of digital payments is going to be phenomenal, supported by banks and FinTech, or financial technology companies.
2. **Evolution of digital payment infrastructure in India:**

- A major thrust toward large value payments was effected through the **Real Time Gross Settlement System**, or RTGS, launched by the RBI in March 2004. The large value payments on stock trading, government bond trading and other customer payments were covered under the RTGS, providing finality of settlement, thereby reducing huge risks.
- The RBI introduced **National Electronic Funds Transfer**, or NEFT and bulk debits and credits to support retail payments around the same time. These changes brought about by the RBI triggered major changes in the corporate and capital market transactions as well.
- These initiatives, especially retail payments, was seeded and reinforced with the setting up of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) by 10 lead banks at the instance of the RBI in 2009. NPCL as a non-profit company was inspired by BGC (Bankgirocentralen (BGC AB), a not for profit organisation owned by eight Swedish banks for providing retail payment and related services.

3. Supporting the digital payment infrastructure

- Digital payment being a public good like currency notes, it is necessary that the NPCI is fully supported by the RBI and the government as an extended arm of the sovereign.
- The NPCI's success, supported by innovative technology, viz. Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), is well recognized by central banks in many other countries. **The Bank for International Settlements'** endorsement of the NPCI model in 2019 is a major accolade.
- Further, the strategy should be to assist the NPCI financially, either by the RBI or the government, to provide retail payment services at reduced price (in certain priority areas). This may also help support expansion of the payment system network and infrastructure in rural and semi urban areas in partnership with FinTech companies and banks.

4. Focusing on the pricing of these services

- The ideal pricing for digital payment products should be based on an analysis of producer surplus, consumer surplus (i.e. gain or loss of utility due to pricing) and social welfare for which we need cost volume price data.
 - The RBI should study and arrive at a rational structure of pricing including MDR (possibly also penalty on default by customer), given that the digital payment system is like a national superhighway, for which the government has a crucial role to play in protecting consumers against exploitation.
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National News/ Interventions



Daily NEWS snippets

1. GST Shortfall : Centre to borrow for States

- The Central government announced that it will undertake market borrowings to bridge the ₹1.1 lakh crore of GST compensation shortfall this year, stating that the Government of India (GOI) will now undertake the required borrowings in tranches and pass them on to the States as “back-to-back loans” that will reflect on the states books. The amounts will be reflected as the capital receipts of the State governments and as part of financing of the respective fiscal deficits, thus, avoiding the prospect of individual States having to pay differential interest rates if they borrowed the amount as a State development loan.
- Economists welcomed it as a cleaner way of raising the necessary funds swiftly and bringing the focus back to fighting the pandemic. The move will offer a big breather to States, particularly those that have high fiscal deficits and would have had to pay higher rates if they approached the market.
- In its original proposal put up at the 41st GST Council meeting in August, the Centre had said the shortfall on account of GST implementation would be borrowed by States through the issue of debt under a Special Window coordinated by the Finance Ministry.

2. Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI)

- The air quality of Delhi, Gurugram, and Noida, all part of the National Capital Region (NCR), worsened to “very poor” category.
- An increase in stubble burning fire counts was observed around Haryana, Punjab, and neighbouring border regions and as per SAFAR.
- What is SAFAR? The System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR) is a national initiative introduced by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** to measure the air quality of a metropolitan city, by measuring the **overall pollution level** and the **location-specific air quality** of the city.
- A ban on diesel generators, except for emergency purposes, came into force in Delhi and neighbouring cities as part of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) measures to control air pollution.
- What is AQI ? An **air quality index (AQI)** is used by government agencies to communicate to the public how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is forecast to become. Public health risks increase as the AQI rises. Different countries have their own air quality indices, corresponding to different national air quality standards. In India, an AQI between 0 and 50 is considered “good”, 51 and 100 “satisfactory”, 101 and 200 “moderate”, 201 and 300 “poor”, 301 and 400 “very poor”, and 401 and 500 “severe”.
- **Pollutants monitored:** PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), Sulfur Dioxide (SO2), Benzene, Toluene, Xylene, and Mercury.

3. Bhanu Athaiya, India's first Oscar winner passes away

- Costume Designer Ms. Bhanu Athaiya had won the Academy Award for **Best Costume Design**, along with John Mollo, for her work in **Richard Attenborough's 1983 film Gandhi** which starred Ben Kingsley as the Mahatma.

- The veteran created some of Bollywood's best remembered looks, including Vyjayanthimala's in *Amrapali*, Waheeda Rehman's in *Guide* and Zeenat Aman's in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*

4. Malayalam poet Akkitham passes away

- Legendary Malayalam poet and Jnanpith laureate **Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri**, 94, passed away. He was the last Malayalam poet to be called 'Mahakavi' (great poet), Akkitham was considered the tallest among Malayalam poets. He introduced "meaningful modernism" in Malayalam poetry several decades ago.
- His work *Balidarshanam* won the Kerala and Kendra Sahitya Akademi Awards in 197273. He was awarded Padma Shri in 2017.

5. Zoo revives scheme for animal adoption

- The Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) in Bhubaneswar, which suffered a huge loss following its closure due to COVID-19 pandemic, has revived its innovative 'Adopt-An-Animal' programme to mobilise resources for animals.
- The zoo authorities came up with the scheme urging animal lovers to provide funds from ₹500 to ₹2.5 lakh.
- They are hopeful that ₹1 crore can be generated through adoption. The highest of ₹2.5 lakh per annum has been fixed to adopt an elephant, while ₹1.5 lakh is required for a melanistic tiger. Similarly, people can adopt the Asiatic lion and the Bengal tiger for ₹1 lakh per annum.

6. BAARC suspends ratings of all NEWS channels

- Days after a probe by the Mumbai police pointed at a possible tampering of Target Rating Point (TRP) by certain news channels, television rating agency **Broadcast Audience Research Council** (BARC) on Thursday announced the suspension of audience estimates and ratings for all news channels for the next three months.
- The News Broadcasters Association welcomed the decision and called it an important step in the right direction. The Mumbai police had claimed that ratings for Republic TV, Fakt Marathi and Box Cinema were rigged.

7. Bodoland statehood movement

- The Bodoland statehood movement has its roots in the 1967 Udayachal stir seeking self-rule for the areas dominated by the Bodo community.
- **First Bodo Accord** in February 1993 between the government and moderate leaders of the movement resulted in the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC).
- The extremist National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), which split into four factions later on, rejected this "trivial" accord. The discontent bred another outfit, the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), which rivalled the NDFB. The Centre signed the **second Bodo peace accord** with the BLT in February 2003, elevating the BAC to the BTC.
- The five-decade-old demand for a separate State for the Bodos, the largest plains tribe in the Northeast, was said to have ended with the signing of the **third peace accord** on January 27 for transforming the BTC into the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) with more powers.
- A new organisation (All India Bodo People's National League for Bodoland Statehood) has announced the revival of the Bodoland statehood movement ahead of the elections to the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).

8. MSP (Minimum Support Prices) is key to India's food security

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated his support for minimum support prices and government procurement of crops and stated that they are vital to India's food security.

- With regard to the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis, he said the system had its own identity and strength; he further added that the recent reforms aimed to make the APMC mandis more competitive.
- He said that earlier small farmers used to sell their produce to middle men due to lack of access to the mandis. Now, the market itself will reach their doorsteps because of the new reforms.
- What are MSPs? Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices. The minimum support prices are announced by the Government of India at the beginning of the sowing season for certain crops on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). MSP is price fixed by the Government of India to protect the producer - farmers - against excessive fall in price during bumper production years.

9. Any stay on proceedings is valid only for 6 months: SC

- The Supreme Court held that any stay on civil or criminal proceedings is valid for a period of six months, beyond which the trial will resume
- An extension of the stay has to be granted only for a “good reason.”

10. India fares poorly in Hunger Index

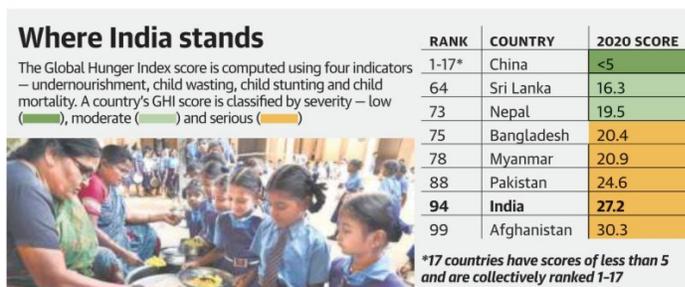


Image Source : The Hindu

- India has the highest prevalence of wasted children under five years in the world, which reflects acute undernutrition, according to the Global Hunger Index 2020. Overall, India ranks 94 out of 107 countries in the Index. In the region of south, east and south-eastern Asia, the only countries which fare worse than India are Timor-Leste, Afghanistan and North Korea.

- India has improved in both child mortality

rates, which are now at 3.7%, and in terms of undernourishment, with about 14% of the total population which gets an insufficient caloric intake.

- Although it is still in the poorest category, however, child stunting has actually improved significantly, from 54% in 2000 to less than 35% now. Child wasting, on the other hand, has not improved in the last two decades, and is rather worse than it was a decade ago.
- **The Global Hunger Index** is a peer reviewed report released annually by **Concern Worldwide** and **Welthungerhilfe**. It uses four parameters to determine its scores : Undernourishment, Child Wasting (low weight for height, reflecting acute undernutrition), Child stunting (low height for age, reflecting chronic undernutrition) and Child mortality.
- Globally, nearly 690 million people are undernourished, according to the report, which also warns that the COVID-19 pandemic could have affected the progress made on reducing hunger and poverty.

11. Khelo India Programme

- They are held annually in January or February, are the national level multidisciplinary grassroot games in India held for two categories, namely **under-17 years school students** and **under-21 college students**. Every year the

best 1000 kids are given an annual scholarship of ₹5 lakh (US\$7,000) for 8 years to prepare them for the international sporting events.

12. Bogibeel

- India's longest rail-and-road-bridge across the Brahmaputra, had in December 2018 brought the two "emotionally connected" banks of eastern Assam closer by more than seven hours. A 'Zero Rajdhani' train via this 4.94 km bridge has now brought the people of the two banks closer to New Delhi by more than 100 Km.

13. Dr Reddy's laboratories gets nod for Sputnik V trials

- Pharma major Dr.Reddy's Laboratories and Russia's sovereign wealth fund RDIF have received approval from the Drugs Controller General of India to conduct an adaptive phase 2/3 human clinical trial for the Sputnik V vaccine in India.
- It is the world's first registered vaccine against COVID-19.

14. 76% of rural Indians can't afford nutritious diet

- According to a paper titled "Affordability of nutritious diets in rural India", published in the journal Food Policy, three out of four rural Indians cannot afford a nutritious diet.
- It states that, even if they spent their entire income on food, almost two out of three of them would not have the money to pay for the cheapest possible diet that meets the requirements set by the government's premier nutrition body.
- The National Institute for Nutrition's guidelines for a nutritionally adequate diet call for adult women to eat 330 gm of cereals and 75 gm of pulses a day, along with 300 gm of dairy, 100 gm of fruit, and 300 gm of vegetables, which should include at least 100 gm of dark green leafy vegetables.
- The study uses the latest available food price and wage information from the National Sample Survey's 2011 dataset.
- The Global Hunger Index showed that India has the world's highest prevalence of child wasting, reflecting acute undernutrition. On indicators that simply measure calorie intake, India performs relatively better, but they do not account for the nutrition value of those calories.

15. Dispersal of pollutants in Delhi's atmosphere and wind pattern

- The wind direction is favourable for transport of pollutants due to stubble burning. Also, local wind speed is less and this leads to pollutants not getting dispersed easily and in turn negatively affects the air quality of the region.
- The local wind speed is calm, almost nil during the night and during the day time it is in the range of 8-10 km/hr, which is also less. The local wind speed has to be above 15 km/ hr and continue for a good amount of time to disperse pollutants properly.
- Absence of rainfall further aggravates the situation resulting in higher dust pollution.

16. Women soldiers check drug smuggling through LAC

- Nine riflewomen of the paramilitary force Assam Rifles were deployed at the Sadhna Pass, earlier called the Nastachun Pass, on the Kupwara-Tangdhar highway in July, the first women soldiers in combat functioning under the Army, as part of a series of steps taken recently to contain smuggling of narcotics from across the Line of Control (LoC)

17. Hybrid model of 'smart' fence being tested along the LoC

- The Army has significantly improved its electronic surveillance along the **Line of Control (LoC)** to check infiltration, and work on converting the existing border fence into a smart fence integrated with several sensors is under way. The fence will be integrated with **LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) sensors**, infrared sensors and cameras among others.

18. Punjab formally reject farm laws

- Punjab became the first State to formally reject the Centre's three recent agriculture sector laws, with its Assembly unanimously passing three Bills to negate the Union legislation.
- It also sought an ordinance to protect the minimum support price (MSP) regime and ensure the continuance of procurement by the Centre. Further, sale or purchase of wheat or paddy in the State will be not allowed below the MSP.
- The three State Bills provide for imprisonment of not less than three years and fines for sale-purchase of wheat or paddy under a farming agreement below the MSP, besides prevention of hoarding and black-marketing of agricultural produce, among other things.

19. Jio, Qualcomm complete tests for 5G product

- Qualcomm and Reliance Jio said they had aligned efforts to fast track development and rollout of an indigenous 5G network. Using Qualcomm technology, Jio has indigenously developed a 5G RAN product that has achieved ultrahigh throughput

20. Cybercrimes caused loss of 1.25 lakh crore

- Cybercrimes in India caused losses of ₹1.25 lakh crore in 2019 and cyber threats will continue to increase as the country starts developing smart cities and rolling out 5G networks.
- There are only a few Indian companies that are making cybersecurity products and there is a big vacuum in the sector. A dedicated industry forum for cyber security needs to be developed for trusted indigenous solutions to check cyberattacks.

21. ICMR advises citizens to be cautious of reinfections

- **The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** on Tuesday called for sustained caution against COVID-19 and pointed out that any negligence could lead to reinfection. In a statement they stated that after COVID19 infection, antibodies thus formed, stay in the body for anywhere between **three to five months**. If the person gets infected again after 90 days, it is called reinfection.
- In a separate statement, the health ministry stated that India was the only country with the highest recoveries and it continued to have one of the lowest fatality rates globally. The briefing further added that India has not faced any medical oxygen shortage and isn't anticipating any problem in the future. However, several measures, including importing medical oxygen, have been planned.

22. Air Pollution now biggest health risk in India, says report

- Long-term exposure to outdoor and household air pollution contributed to over 1.67 million annual deaths from stroke, heart attack, diabetes, lung cancer, chronic lung diseases and neonatal diseases in India in 2019, according to the State of Global Air 2020 by the U.S.-based Health Effects Institute.
- **India faced the highest per capita pollution exposure** — or 83.2 µg/cubic metre — in the world, followed by Nepal at 83.1 µg/cubic metre and Niger at 80.1, according to the report which sources its data from publicly available sources. Countries with the least population exposure are below 8 micrograms (µg) per cubic metre.

23. Freelance journalist Prashant Kanojia granted bail

- Freelance journalist Prashant Kanojia, who was arrested by the Lucknow police for allegedly posting a fake tweet, was granted bail by the Allahabad High Court

- Mr. Kanojia was arrested in August for allegedly posting a tweet purportedly about Dalits, tribals and Backward Castes people being barred from entering the Ram Mandir.

24. Maharashtra withdraws consent to CBI

- The Maharashtra government withdrew the general consent given to the Central Bureau of Investigation, curtailing its powers in the State.
- The CBI will now have to approach the State government on a case-to-case basis seeking permission to conduct investigations. The move comes a day after the Central investigation agency registered an FIR in the TRP scam case involving Republic TV.

Eco-clearance for Kaleshwaram dam project

1. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has held that environmental clearance (EC) to the **Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP)** was granted *ex post facto, after completion of substantial work*, by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) “in violation of law”.
 2. It has also observed that accountability needs to be fixed and remedial measures taken. It has directed MoEF&CC to constitute an expert committee to assess the extent of damage caused in going ahead with the project without EC — the period from 2008 to 2017 — and identify the necessary restoration measures. To also look into relief and rehabilitation measures adopted and required to be further adopted, examine effective implementation of the environmental management plan submitted by the project proponent, as also compliance of EC conditions.
 3. This will serve as a benchmark for projects that are multi purpose and not all parts of it require an Environmental Clearance (EC).
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International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

Daily snippets

1. Kyrgyzstan president resigns

- **Kyrgyzstan's President Sooronbay Jeenbekov** resigned on Thursday, saying he wanted to bring an end to the crisis sparked by disputed parliamentary elections earlier this month and avoid any further bloodshed.
- During the unrest, protesters met little resistance as they sprang prominent figures from jail, including populist figurehead **Sadyr Japarov**. Mr. Japarov had been serving jail time for hostage taking, but was named Prime Minister soon after his release.

2. EU imposes sanctions on six Russians over Navalny attack

- The European Union (EU) and Britain imposed sanctions on six Russians, some among the highest ranked officials in the nation, and a state research institute over the nerve agent poisoning of Russian opposition leader **Alexei Navalny**.

3. Thailand Protests

- Thousands of protesters demonstrated in Thailand's Bangkok, defying a ban imposed to end three months of anti-government action that has targeted King Maha Vajiralongkorn as well as Prime Minister Prayuth Chanocha, a former junta leader
- Protesters also filled the walkways of the nearby shopping complex, holding up the three finger salute (inspired from the Hunger Games) adopted as a symbol of opposition after Mr. Prayuth's 2014 coup.
- The protest movement aims to remove Mr. Prayuth, saying he manipulated an election last year to keep hold of power. Protesters also want a new Constitution and have called for a reduction in the powers of the King. Criticism of monarchy in Thailand is punishable by up to 15 years in prison under lese majeste laws.

4. Repurposed drugs did not cut down mortality

- Interim results from the **Solidarity Therapeutics Trial**, coordinated by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, have indicated that **remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir/ritonavir and interferon** regimens appeared to have little or no effect on 28 day mortality or the in hospital course of COVID-19 among hospitalised patients.
- In a statement the WHO stated that the Solidarity trial is the largest trial to examine the effect of four treatments on the risk of death in hospitalised patients of COVID-19. As a multi-country study, it offers the advantage of large patient numbers needed to reach meaningful conclusions on this very important clinical outcome and also provides generalisability of its conclusions across diverse populations across the world.
- It added that the study, which spans more than 30 countries, looked at the effects of these treatments on overall mortality, initiation of ventilation, and duration of hospital stay in hospitalised patients. **The Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR)** was also an active partner in the trials

5. Russia kicks off Caspian war games

- Russia on Friday said its Navy had begun military exercises in the central waters of the Caspian Sea north of the Azerbaijani capital Baku, insisting there was no threat to neighbouring states as Armenia and Azerbaijan battle over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.
- Russia has so far kept its distance from the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Armenian controlled **Nagorno-Karabakh region** of Azerbaijan. But Armenia, unlike Azerbaijan, is a member of the Moscow-led **Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)** military alliance and Yerevan has made clear it is hoping for Russian backing.
- *The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a Russia-led military alliance of seven former Soviet states that was created in 2002. The CSTO's purpose is to ensure the collective defence of any member that faces external aggression. Current CSTO members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.*

6. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern wins historic re-election

- **Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern** delivered the biggest election victory for her centre-left Labour Party in half a century, as voters rewarded her for a decisive response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The mandate means Ms. Ardern, 40, could form the first single party government in decades. Labour was on track to win 64 of the 120 seats in the country's unicameral Parliament, the highest by any party since New Zealand adopted a proportional voting system in 1996.
- She became *a role model for working mothers around the world*, many of whom saw her as a counterpoint to President Donald Trump. And she was *praised for her handling of last year's attack on two Christchurch mosques*, when a white supremacist gunned down 51 Muslim worshippers

7. Japan's Prime Minister send offering to controversial shrine

- **Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga** sent a ritual offering to the controversial **Yasukuni war shrine**, which is seen by neighbouring countries as a symbol of the nation's past militarism, especially during the Second World War.
- What is the Yasukuni Shrine?
 - Built in 1869 under Emperor Meiji, it venerates the souls of 2.5 million war dead.
 - Those enshrined included hundreds of convicted war criminals, among them war-time leader Hideki Tojo, who was executed in 1948.
 - China and South Korea see the Shrine as a glorification of Japanese atrocities in the world wars and a legacy of Japanese imperialism. Shrine organisers however differ saying that it honours thousands of civilians.

8. Israel and Bahrain to formalise diplomatic ties

- **The United Arab Emirates** and **Bahrain** became only the third and fourth Arab states to agree to normalise ties with Israel, following Israel's 1979 peace deal with **Egypt** and a 1994 pact with **Jordan**.
- An Israeli delegation, led by National Security Council chief Meir Ben Shabbat, arrived from Tel Aviv for a one-day trip that will see Israel and Bahrain formalise a US-brokered agreement they signed at the White House.

9. Thousands rally in Paris to pay tribute to beheaded teacher

- Thousands of people rallied in central Paris on Sunday in a defiant show of solidarity with a **teacher (Samuel Paty)** *beheaded for showing pupils cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad.*

- Some in the crowd chanted “I am Samuel”, echoing the “I am Charlie” cry that travelled around the world after Islamist gunmen killed 12 people at the **Charlie Hebdo** satirical magazine in 2015 for publishing caricatures of the Islamic prophet

10. [Iran hails lifting of UN arms embargo](#)

- Iran said a longstanding UN embargo on arms sales to and from the Islamic republic expired in line with a 2015 landmark nuclear deal with world powers from which Washington has withdrawn. Tehran, which could now purchase weapons from Russia, China and elsewhere, has hailed the development as a diplomatic victory over the U.S., which had tried to maintain an indefinite freeze on arms sales.
- Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that arms sales to Iran would breach UN resolutions and result in sanctions.

11. [China passes law to safeguard national security](#)

- China has passed a new law restricting sensitive exports to protect national security, a move that adds to policy tools it could wield against the U.S. as tensions — especially in technology — continue to rise.
- The new law allows Beijing to “take reciprocal measures” against countries that abuse export controls and pose a threat to national security.
- Beijing’s measure gives it more room to hit back in U.S. President Donald Trump’s war on Chinese tech firms, with the White House moving against popular platforms and major companies — including apps TikTok and WeChat, tech giant Huawei and chipmaker Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp.

12. [Australia to take part in Malabar naval exercise](#)

- Amid the ongoing standoff with China, the Ministry of Defence on Monday announced that Australia will join the Malabar 2020 naval exercise, consisting of India, Japan and the U.S., to be held next month. This will formally bring together the militaries of the four countries in the Quad group.

13. [Bolivia’s political situation](#)

- **Bolivia’s socialist candidate Luis Arce** looks set to win the country’s presidential election without the need for a run-off, an unofficial count indicated on Monday, putting the **leftwing party of Evo Morales** on the brink of a return to power.
- Conducted amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Sunday’s poll was regarded as a test of democracy in the Andean nation after last year’s election was annulled after allegations of vote rigging, which sparked bloody protests and led to Mr. Morales quitting after almost 14 years in power.

14. [US files antitrust lawsuit against Google](#)

- The US Justice Department accused Google of maintaining an illegal monopoly over search and search advertising in a lawsuit filed, the government’s most significant legal challenge to a tech company’s market power in a generation.
- In its suit, filed in a federal court in Washington, the agency accused **Google, a unit of Alphabet, of illegally maintaining its monopoly over search** through several exclusive business contracts and agreements that lock out competition.

15. [Russia offers US freeze on Nuclear-warhead numbers](#)

- Russian President **Vladimir Putin** last week proposed extending by one year the **New START treaty**, which caps the number of nuclear warheads by Washington and Moscow and expires on February 5th, 2021.
- What is the New Start Pact? The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) pact limits the number of deployed nuclear warheads, missiles and bombers and is due to expire in 2021 unless renewed. The treaty limits the US and Russia to a maximum of 1,550 deployed warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, well

below the Cold War caps. It was signed in 2010 by former US President Barack Obama and then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. It is one of the key controls on superpower deployment of nuclear weapons.

16. [Unrest flares in Lagos \(Nigeria\) after civilians are fired at](#)

- Nigeria's biggest city Lagos and several states were under curfews on Wednesday as unrest rooted in anti-police protests broke out again following a day of violence, including the shooting of civilians by security forces. Fires burned across Lagos and residents reported hearing gunfire despite **President Muhammadu Buhari's** appeal for "understanding and calm".
- **How did the unrest begin?** Protests have spread across Africa's most populous country for nearly two weeks, after a video allegedly showing a member of the notorious federal police **Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)** killing a young man spread across social media, launching the viral hashtag #EndSARS.

17. [Pompeo, Esper to travel to India for 2+2 dialogue](#)

- **U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo** announced that he will be coming to India, for the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue with **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** and **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar**. Mr. Pompeo will be accompanied by **U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper**. The third annual ministerial dialogue will take place on October 27.
- **What is the Indo-US 2+2 dialogue ?** The 2+2 dialogue is the highest-level (Ministerial) institutional mechanism between India and the USA that brings together the perspectives of the two countries on foreign policy, defence and strategic issues. India also holds such dialogue with Japan. India also holds 2+2 dialogue with Australia at the foreign secretary and defence secretary level.

[Shenzhen : A Chinese city at the heart of the rise of China](#)

1. On October 14, China marked the 40th anniversary of the setting up of its first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Shenzhen, a key step in China's economic reforms and opening up process.
 2. In 1978, at the start of the reforms process, China's GDP was \$149 billion, not much greater than India's \$140 billion. Its GDP per capita of \$156 was less than India's \$203.
 3. Four decades later, and it is now five times India's, while the city of Shenzhen alone has a \$400 billion GDP, which overtook Hong Kong's in 2018 and is about the same as Maharashtra's, India's biggest state economy.
 4. Access to a large pool of trained and talented labour is one of the major reasons behind the city's rise. Millions of rural workers who descended on this city in the 1980s seeking jobs that offered a way out of rural poverty.
 5. How the city fares now : decentralisation and a retreat of the party state paved the way for reforms and experimentation in the 1980s, today, the Communist Party is seeking to exert ever greater sway over how even private tech companies are run.
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Science and Technology

Global Warming and its effect on food security

1. Between the year 1870 (the first industrial revolution) and today, the global temperature has risen by almost 2 degrees Celsius. More fossil burning (oil, natural gas, coal), has also increased the carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels from 280 ppm to 400 ppm. This heating has caused glaciers to melt and the sea level to rise.
2. **Rise of CO₂ levels**
 - The rise in CO₂ levels has also acidified the ocean, leading to weakening the shells and skeletons of animals living in the sea.
 - On land, the rise in CO₂ levels has both positive and negative effects. This being a 'GreenHouse Gas', it traps the Sun's heat from the atmosphere and warms the temperature, aids in the photosynthesis of plants, making them grow more, but at the same time restricts the plant's ability to absorb nitrogen, thus restricting crop growth.
 - Higher temperatures during the 'growing season' in the tropics and sub-tropic regions (India and our neighbours, Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South America) will greatly affect crop productivity, and that this would be the 'norm'.

Skinks found in India

1. Skinks are common reptiles around homes, garages, and open spaces such as parks and school playgrounds, and around lakes.
 2. A recent publication by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) reveals that India is home to 62 species of skinks and says about 57% of all the skinks found in India (33 species) are endemic. It is the first monograph on this group of lizards, which are found in all kinds of habitats in the country, from the Himalayas to the coasts and from dense forests to the deserts.
 3. Skinks are highly alert, agile and fast moving and actively forage for a variety of insects and small invertebrates. They are not venomous.
 4. The book also gives a phylogenetic and biogeographical analysis of distribution of these species in all the 11 bio-geographic zones of India and a detailed account on the historical studies on this group of lizards from the British era to the present.
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Economics and Finance

Daily snippets

1. Latest fiscal stimulus to have minimal growth impact : Moody's

- The government's latest fiscal stimulus measures will have a minimal impact on India's growth prospects, according to rating agency Moody's, stressing that their 'small scale' is actually a credit negative as it reflects the country has 'limited budgetary firepower to support the economy'.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced a leave travel cash voucher scheme and an interest free festival advance of ₹10,000 for all central government employees, to spur consumer demand. She also announced a ₹25,000 crore enhancement in the Centre's capital spending and a 50 year loan facility worth ₹12,000 crore for States to expand capital expenditure.
- Moody's expects India's GDP to shrink 11.5% in 2020-21, so the 0.5% of GDP gain expected by the government from these stimulus measures will provide only 'a small boost', it pointed out.
- In total, the two rounds of fiscal stimulus bring the government's direct spending on coronavirus related fiscal support to around 1.2% of GDP.
- India's rating is Baa3 negative as per Moody's, following a downgrade this June from Baa2 negative.
- While Moody's has forecast growth to rebound to 10.6% in 2021-22, due to base effects and a gradual normalisation in economic activity, it expects growth to settle around 6% over the medium term, with downside risks that partly arise from 'ongoing stress' within India's financial system.

2. On the current stock market rally

- The current stock market rally, in the backdrop of the challenging times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has been broad-based with large and midcap stocks gaining 55% and small cap stocks 70%, Ajay Tyagi, Chairman, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said.
- After the secondary markets reacted adversely in March following the declaration of pandemic with the volatility index, or VIX, rose to 84 in March from an average of 15 in the previous three months, the Sensex/Nifty today is very close to the all-time high hit in January and volatility has also relatively stabilised with the VIX now hovering at around 25.
- Investor participation in the equity market had risen, with the average daily turnover in the cash market in this financial year about ₹60,000 crore, or 54% higher than last year. India received about **\$11 billion in net FPI investments** in the equity markets, till date in this financial year.
- Mutual funds had recorded net inflows of ₹1.47 lakh crore in this financial year till September
- In the case of primary markets, the total funds raised had touched ₹1.54 lakh crore till September, just short of the ₹1.58 lakh crore raised during the same period last year.
- Almost all IPOs and rights issues this year have been oversubscribed several times. Further, over ₹22,000 crore equity issuances are in the pipeline.
- The funds raised through corporate bonds this financial year till September was about ₹3.8 lakh crore, or 25% more than the year earlier period.

- Some critics however, have pointed out that liquidity and low interest rates were primarily boosting the markets and that there had been a disconnect between the markets and the real economy.
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Sports

Daily snippets

1. [Elavenil Valarivan wins gold](#)

- Elavenil Valarivan won the women's gold in the Sheikh Russel international air rifle championship organised online by the Bangladesh Shooting Federation.
 - The women's world No. 1, the 21-year-old Elavenil shot a total of 627.5 with her 60 shots for the gold.
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Suggested Readings

1. The message in the Peace Nobel — multilateralism, [Link to article](#)
 2. Trivialisation of sexual offences by judges, [Link to article](#)
 3. Infraction of Rules of Natural Justice by itself and invalidation of proceedings, [Link to article](#)
 4. Declining Star formation, [Link to article](#)
 5. UNHRC : A work-in-progress campaign for rights, [Link to article](#)
 6. Reinventing auctions for the real world, [Link to article](#)
 7. India's low rank on nutritional indices, [Link to article](#)
 8. Farm law in court : State vs Centre, [Link to article](#)
 9. Love in the time of polarization, [Link to article](#)
 10. Testing the 'basic structure' doctrine, [Link to article](#)
 11. India's innovation horizon, [Link to article](#)
 12. Viewpoint : Regulating content on every platform, [Link to article](#)
 13. West Asian geopolitical scenario and role of America, [Link to article](#)
 14. Media Trials and investigative journalism, [Link to article](#)
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