

G.K snippets...



Law, Policy and Governance



[Daily snippets](#)

1. [SC reserves judgment in Central Vista case](#)

- The Supreme Court reserved its judgment in petitions challenging the Central Vista redevelopment project in the national capital. The project seeks
- A Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar said the court would examine whether the project complied with land use and environmental regulations peculiar to the area which houses Parliament and the Central Secretariat buildings.

2. [Law on 'love jihad' can be challenged, says U.P. Law Commission chairman](#)

- A limited scoped legislation will not stand in law: **Justice (Retd.) Aditya Nath Mittal** said.
- In the context of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announcing at a rally recently that he would bring an “effective law” against “love jihad”, Mr. Mittal says the U.P. Home Department is “examining” his draft and it is “possible they could bring a law [based on it] with minor changes”. However, Mr. Mittal clarifies that his report does not mention “love jihad” nor restricts the scope of conversions to just Hindu Muslim relationships.

3. [‘Producing suspects before media violates their rights’](#)

- The Gwalior Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court has observed that producing suspects before the media violated their fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution and encouraged media trials.
- The court observed that although the general public was entitled to know about the progress of an investigation, producing suspects or victims before the media had no foundation under any statutory provision law.
- The court said the counsel for the State could not justify the rationale behind the liberty of producing the accused or victim before the media.

4. [‘All insults not offence under SC/ST Act’](#)

- The Supreme Court said in a judgment that All insults or intimidations to persons belonging to Dalit or tribal communities will not be an offence under the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act**.
- The court said the insult should be specifically intended to humiliate the victim for his caste. The court was hearing an appeal filed by a man, Hitesh Verma, booked under the Act for allegedly abusing a Dalit woman in her house.
- The court found that allegations against Mr. Verma do not fulfil the basic ingredient under the Act that such humiliation should have happened in public view. Since the incident occurred within four walls in the absence of members of the public, allegations against Mr. Verma under the Act do not stand.

5. [Jharkhand withdraws consent to CBI](#)

- The Hemant Soren government withdrew the general consent accorded to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to carry out investigation in the State.
- The revocation of power means CBI cannot conduct any investigation in the State without prior approval.

6. [Haryana clears Bill on right to recall panchayat member](#)

- The Haryana Assembly passed a Bill which provides the right to recall members of Panchayati Raj institutions to those who elected them and gives **women 50% reservation** in these rural bodies.
- The Bill also proposed 8% reservation to the “more disadvantaged” among the Backward Classes.
- The amendment is aimed at increasing the accountability of Panchayat members to the voters. The Bill is also aimed at enhancing participation of women in the three tier Panchayati raj system.

7. [Panel starts work to check stubble burning'](#)

- The Union government informed the Supreme Court that the new Commission to check stubble burning by farmers in the adjoining States of Delhi would start functioning from November 6th
- Chief Justice Bobde said, “There are many Commissions working, but at the end they have to be effective”. **The Commission for Air Quality Management** in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance of 2020 was promulgated by the Centre recently. It is meant to both prevent and monitor stubble burning by farmers of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

8. [Alimony guidelines](#)

- Girls in India are married off early and bear children long before they should. This triggers a state of poor maternal health and is the root cause of high levels of child stunting and wasting in India. Also, the possibility of a marriage not working out for varied reasons, leaves women in extreme distress.
- Parliament and the courts have persistently enacted legislation to give women better rights. Article 15 (3) read together with Article 39 of the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court while hearing a dispute between a Mumbai-based couple, **set down comprehensive guidelines on alimony -**
 - The court ruled that an abandoned wife and children will be entitled to ‘maintenance’ from the date she applies for it in a court of law.
 - The verdict was pronounced by a bench of **Justices Indu Malhotra and R. Subhash Reddy**.
 - The Court outlined specifics, including “reasonable needs” of a wife and dependent children.

- The Court laid down that while women can make a claim for alimony under different laws it “would be inequitable to direct the husband to pay maintenance under each of the proceedings”, urging civil and family courts to take note of previous settlements.
- The Court also added how an “order or decree of maintenance” may be enforced under various laws and Section 128 of the CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code).
- The top court’s words that **maintenance laws will mean little if they do not prevent dependent wives and children from “falling into destitution and vagrancy”**, is of great importance.

9. [SC reserves order on GST on lotteries](#)

- The Supreme Court has reserved its judgment on the constitutional validity of imposing Goods and Services Tax (GST) on **sale of lotteries** across the country.
- A three judge Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan would primarily heard and pronounce the verdict on charges of discrimination raised against the law for imposing 12% GST on lotteries sold within the same State and 28% GST for sale of tickets from other States.
- Act imposes two rates on sale of lotteries, which petitioners feel is discriminatory

10. [AG stands firm in plea against Jagan Reddy](#)

- **Attorney General K.K. Venugopal** has said it is “open” to the Supreme Court to initiate suo motu contempt proceedings against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy for his October 6 letter to the Chief Justice of India. Mr. Venugopal stood firm on his decision to refuse consent.

11. [Plea on draft West Ghats notification](#)

- A Kerala based NGO for farmers moved the Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional a draft notification of the Centre demarcating 56,825 sq. km spread across six States as the ‘Western Ghats Ecologically sensitive area’.
- The petition has also sought a direction to the government not to implement the [Madhav Gadgil and K. Kasturirangan committees’ reports](#) on the conservation of the Western Ghats and the demarcation of ‘no-go’ zones.

12. [HC plea alleges illegal operation of path labs](#)

- A petition before the Delhi High Court has sought urgent implementation of the government’s Health Bill, 2019, or the Delhi Clinical Establishment Act, 2010, alleging that unauthorised pathological laboratories are running in Delhi without any checks and balances.
- The application has been filed in a petition moved by Mr. Misra in 2018 seeking closure of the unauthorised pathological labs and diagnostic centres in Delhi.

13. [Punjab revokes general consent given to CBI](#)

- The Punjab government has withdrawn general consent given to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for investigating cases in the State.
- An order in this regard has been issued. With this, the CBI would have to seek prior permission from the State government for conducting any investigation.

14. [NGT links cracker sales to air quality](#)

- The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** directed that there would be a total ban on sale or use of all kinds of firecrackers between November 10 and 30 in all cities and towns across the country.

- A Bench, headed by **NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel**, also directed that in places where the ambient air quality fell under the 'moderate' or below category, only green crackers would be permitted for sale and timings for bursting them would be restricted to two hours.

15. Indefinite blacklisting is death knell for firms: Supreme Court

- A Bench of Justices Rohinton F. Nariman, Navin Sinha and Krishna Murari described the blacklisting of a business entity as its "civil death".
- The Supreme Court has said in the judgment that Indefinite blacklisting will "spell the death knell" for commercial organisations and institutions. The court was hearing an appeal filed by VetIndia Pharmaceuticals Limited against an indefinite order of blacklisting issued against it by the Uttar Pradesh government.
- The Bench found that the show cause notice issued to the company by the State did not caution the company that they would blacklist the company. The Court held that the order of blacklisting dated 08.09.2009 stands vitiated on more than one ground and merits interference."

16. J&K party approaches SC for early hearing of pleas

- The **Peoples Conference (PC)**, headed by **Sajad Lone**, submitted a plea before the Supreme Court for an early hearing of the petitions pending before it that contested the measures taken by the Union government since August 5 last year in Jammu and Kashmir, including the abrogation of provisions of Article 370.
- "The petitioners have made out a very strong prima facie case and the issues raised are being considered by a Constitution Bench of the court", read a statement by party spokesman Adnan Ashraf Mir. It further adds that sweeping changes are being brought about by the Centre that impact the rights of a large number of people, including dilution of the safeguards earlier available to the permanent residents.

17. CCI to probe Google's 'abuse' of position

- **The Competition Commission of India (CCI)** ordered a detailed probe against Google for 'abuse' of its dominant position, primarily with regard to its digital payments application G-Pay.
- CCI decided to carry forward the investigation into two of these instances — pre-installation of G Pay on Android OS smartphones and use of Google Play's in app billing as the method of payment by developers. The Commission has directed the Director General to finish the probe and submit the report in 60 days.

18. Nutraceutical industry seeks policy changes

- With demand for natural immunity boosting products growing during the pandemic, the nutraceuticals industry has called for policy and regulatory changes to spur sales to \$25-\$30 billion in 10 years from about \$3 billion currently.
- The recent consumer preference trends show an increasing focus on nutritious food and food safety globally. This shift offers a variety of opportunities to the Indian nutraceutical industry, which can lead this business globally due to our natural advantages, quoted an industry expert.

19. Government to govern OTT platforms

- The Narendra Modi government brought "**Over the Top**" (OTT) platforms or video streaming service providers like Netflix, Amazon Prime and others under the ambit of **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**. Currently, there is no law or autonomous body governing digital content.
- From time to time, the government had indicated the necessity to monitor these platforms. The government had indicated that it would issue a "negative" list of don'ts for video streaming services. It also wanted the platforms to come up with a self regulatory body on the lines of the **News Broadcasting Standards Authority**.

20. Gujjars sign quota pact with Rajasthan govt.

- After an 11 daylong stalemate, Gujjars, demanding reservation in jobs and education, signed an agreement with the Rajasthan government covering the crucial aspects of - backlog posts, ongoing recruitments, withdrawal of criminal cases and rehabilitation of the families of those killed during previous agitations.
- According to the six point pact - a committee will examine the issue of extending 5% reservation under the **most Backward Class (MBC) category** in the ongoing recruitments and study the provisions made in other States. Regular pay scale will be given to 1,252 MBC candidates on completion of their probation period.

21. Home Ministry amends FCRA rules

- **The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has relaxed norms to those who are not directly aligned to any political party to receive foreign funds if the groups are not involved in “active politics”.
- The Ministry notified new rules under the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010** thereby amending the FCRA Rules, 2011.
- As per the FCRA, members of legislatures, political parties, government officials, judges and media persons are prohibited from receiving any foreign contribution.

Analysis : India's COVID-19 vaccine distribution strategy and challenges

1. The government's recent distribution policy outlines four category of people : the priority groups named are **healthcare professionals including doctors, nurses and ASHA workers**, a second category that includes **frontline workers including police and armed forces**, the third category of **those aged above 50** and finally **those below 50 years of age with comorbidities**.
2. Deciding whom to vaccinate first may also be dictated by the characteristics of the vaccines that become initially available, such as the ones that are more effective in the younger population than in older people. As soon as we move beyond the big picture characterisation of initial priority groups, there are more questions for discussion than clear answers.

3. Ultra-low temperatures

- A bigger challenge comes in the form of keeping the vaccines at ultralow temperatures during distribution. Most of the COVID-19 vaccines, the **RNA vaccines** in particular, that are in the advanced stage of Phase3 trials **require –70 degrees C to –80 degree C** cold chains. The Ebola vaccine, too, requires the same kind of cold storage. With hundreds of millions of doses the infrastructure required is at unprecedented scale - freezers, uninterrupted power supply etc. It may make sense to even think about bringing people to the vaccine, instead of taking the vaccine to people in some settings.
- The Oxford vaccine does not require ultracold temperatures, and hence, the existing system used in the routine immunisation programme may be able to handle the vaccines.

4. Problem of multiple doses

- Most of the vaccines at advanced stages of Phase-3 trial use two doses of the vaccine to achieve best results. Our experience with the Polio programme might come handy here. Although oral vaccines are much easier to deliver than injectable vaccines, the logistics of storage, transport and delivery are similar.

5. Children and Adults

- While the national immunisation programme is limited to vaccinating children, COVID-19 vaccination will be across age groups, including older people. It remains to be seen how well the lessons learnt from the national immunisation programme can be replicated for other age groups.
- With vaccines seen as one sure way to end the pandemic if 60-70% of the population is vaccinated, the question of making the vaccines available for free gains important.

6. Vaccine commerce

- There is a possibility of the government allowing companies to purchase vaccines to maintain business continuity. Probably, other groups that might be willing to pay for vaccines might also become eligible to buy vaccines. Certain types of vaccines that are unsuitable for public programmes in India because of expense or cold chain requirements, might be opened up for purchase by companies, organisations and individuals as a premium product.

Inter-faith marriages, conversion and the law

1. The **Special Marriage Act, 1954 (SMA)** was enacted to facilitate the marriage of couples professing different faiths and preferring a civil wedding.

2. Features of SMA are :

- The man has to complete 21 years of age and the woman 18.
- No living spouse.
- Both should be capable of giving valid consent.
- They should not suffer from any mental disorder.
- They should not be within the degrees of prohibited relationships.
- Parties should give notice to the 'marriage officer' of the district in which one of them had resided for at least 30 days.
- The notice will have to be entered in a 'Marriage Notice Book' and a copy of it displayed at a conspicuous place in the office.
- The Notice Book is open for inspection at all reasonable times.
- The marriage has to be solemnised within three months of the notice.
- The law also provides for objections to the marriage.
- The Act says that when a member of an undivided family who professes Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain religions, gets married under SMA, it results in his or her "severance" from the family.

3. The hurdles faced by the couples are :

- The provisions relating to notice, publication and objection have rendered it difficult for many people intending to solemnise interfaith marriages.
- Publicity in the local registration office may mean that family members objecting to the union may seek to stop it by coercion.
- The Kerala Registration department decided to discontinue the practice of uploading marriage notices on its websites following complaints that these were being misused for communal propaganda.
- These provisions have been challenged in the Supreme Court recently on the grounds that they violate the privacy of the couples, their dignity and right to marry.

4. The other options for registration of inter-faith marriages are :

- Many opt for inter faith marriages through the relevant law of the faith of one of the parties. This will involve one of them converting to the religion professed by the other.

5. Are there laws against conversion for the sake of marriage?

- The Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2019, and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018, both prohibit conversion.
- There is a separate section in both laws under which, not conversion for the purpose of marriage, but marriage done solely for the purpose of conversion, may be declared null and void by a family court based on a suit by either party.

A comparison between the Election Commission of India and the Federal Election Commission (USA)

1. The need for an EC

- In India, our constitutional fathers had debated in the Constituent Assembly itself the necessity of imbuing the ECI with enormous power. By virtue of being the custodian of the electoral roll, all matters related to keeping the roll updated, fall under the ECI's domain. so vast are the powers accorded to the ECI (Election Commission of India) during the election process that even the higher judiciary does not interfere during the course of the election process.

2. Comparison in mandate between ECI and FEC

- The Federal Election Commission has a much narrower mandate than its Indian equivalent. Unlike the ECI, it was established in 1975 with the special mandate to regulate campaign finance issues. It is meant to disclose campaign finance information, to enforce the law regarding campaign contributions, and oversee public funding of the presidential election.
- The Federal Election Commission is led by six Commissioners. The six posts of Commissioner are supposed to be equally shared by Democrats and Republicans, and too have to be confirmed by the Senate. Amidst such a critical election, the Commission has effectively passed no orders at all since August 2019, because it has lacked a quorum — for which at least four members are needed.
- The status of the commission can be gauged from the fact that the President has not mentioned even once about appealing to the Federal Election Commission, but only to the U.S. Supreme Court. In sharp contrast, our Constitution's fathers decided to limit the role of the judiciary in India to the post-election period, when election petitions may be filed.

3. What India can learn from the US elections : Postal ballots

- In the 2016 U.S. election, almost a quarter of the votes counted arose from postal and early balloting. In India we have confined postal ballots to only a few categories, of largely government staff. In these difficult times of the novel coronavirus pandemic, we need to widen this base to include all senior citizens and anyone else who may find it convenient to cast their vote early. We will need to add more fool proof systems.

4. What makes our democracy tick

- Ever since our first election in 1951-52 and every single election since, our political parties, losers and winners alike, have invariably accepted the results declared by the Election Commission of India, with the result that the baton has passed on in a graceful and smooth manner.

Analysis : NGT's ban on fire-crackers

1. The National Green Tribunal has prohibited the sale and use of firecrackers during Deepavali in the National Capital Region of Delhi and in urban centres that recorded poor or worse air quality in November last year.
2. The order provides some concessions to cities and towns that have moderate or better air quality, by allowing "green crackers" and specified hours for bursting. The NGT took note that Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Chandigarh, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee and the Calcutta High Court had already responded to deteriorating environmental conditions by banning firecrackers this year.
3. As the impact of COVID-19 became clear in March, and there were fears of a case surge during the winter, it was incumbent on the Centre to work with States and resolutely prevent the burning of farm stubble ahead of Deepavali, which fouls the air across northern and eastern India and imposes heavy health and productivity costs.
4. Climatic conditions at this time of year, of low temperature and atmospheric circulation, couples the effect and leaves many in distress.

5. The National Clean Air Programme, which seeks to reduce particulate matter pollution by 20% to 30% by 2024, must be demonstrably effective with 40% of all pollution linked deaths attributed to bad air quality in leading emerging economies.
6. A transparent compensation scheme for workers, and suitable relief for producers may also be necessary coupled with the ban of fire-crackers to keep the industry afloat, although the longer-term solution might lie in broad basing economic activity in the Sivakasi region, reducing reliance on firecrackers.

Analysis : Strengthening public health capacities in disasters

1. India's Disaster management framework : A reactive approach

- In 2005, India enacted the Disaster Management Act, which laid an institutional framework for managing disasters across the country. It sought to replace ad-hoc measures with a systematic scheme for prevention, mitigation, and responding to disasters of all kinds.
- While some headway has indeed been achieved, the approach continues to be largely reactive, and significant gaps remain particularly in terms of medical preparedness for disasters. The public health angle in disasters and disaster management has been under emphasised.
- Two important takeaway from the Act
 - Health services and their continuing development cannot be oblivious to the possibility of disaster imposed pressures.
 - Legal framework for disaster management must push a legal mandate for strengthening the public health system.

2. India's private health-care sector

- The Indian private sector healthcare landscape, characterised by weak regulation and poor organisation, is infelicitous for mounting a strong and coordinated response to disasters. The government's focus on health insurance schemes provides a bottleneck as a large majority of private hospitals in the country are small enterprises which cannot meet the inclusion criteria for insurance.
- Many of these entities are unsuitable for meeting disaster-related care needs. Thus, development of certain services and competencies that are crucial for disaster response could lag behind. Several researches have quoted that for a private entity, disaster preparedness does not make a strong “business case” for hospitals, which prefer to invest in more profitable areas. Strong public sector capacities are therefore imperative for dealing with disasters.
- There is a strong case for introducing a legal mandate to strengthen public sector health capacities via disaster legislation.

3. Integration with primary care

- The Disaster Management Act fails to identify progressive events (which nevertheless cause substantial damage, often more than sudden catastrophes) as disasters, thus neglecting pressing public health issues such as tuberculosis and recurrent dengue outbreaks.
- Primary care stands for things such as multisectoral action, community engagement, disease surveillance, and essential healthcare provision, all of which are central to disaster management. Thus, there is scope for greater integration of disaster management with primary care.
- Synergies with the National Health Mission, the flagship primary care programme which began as the ‘National Rural Health Mission’ concurrently with the Disaster Management Act in 2005, could be worth exploring.
- Making primary health care central to disaster management can be a significant step towards building health systems and community resilience to disasters.

National News/ Interventions



Daily snippets

1. Prime Minister pitches for India as a global investment destination

- Pitching India's resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic as a signal of its inherent strengths, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India's economy has been stable and all sectors are now looking up, as he invited global money managers looking for "returns with reliability" to invest in the country.
- He mentioned the National Infrastructure Pipeline, which envisages investments of \$1.5 trillion covering areas like affordable housing, infrastructure, connectivity etc.
- He stated that India is the place to be if you want returns with reliability, demand with democracy, stability with sustainability, and growth with a green approach.
- Addressing a virtual global investor round table attended by 20 large global investment funds managing over \$6 trillion, the PM said India's "brave fight during the pandemic reflected its sense of responsibility, spirit of compassion, national unity and the spark of innovation".
- The stability of India's policies has made it a preferred investment destination, the PM said, citing the 13% rise in FDI (foreign direct investment) inflows in the first five months of this year.
- He concluded that any achievements by India will have a multiplier effect on the world's development and welfare.

2. LUPIN faces information security incident

- Pharma major Lupin said it had experienced an information security incident that had affected select internal IT systems but had not impacted the company's operations.

3. NPCL allows WhatsApp to offer payment service

- The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** on Thursday allowed Facebook owned messaging platform WhatsApp to start its payments service in the country in a 'graded' manner.
- The announcement by NPCI came minutes after it limited a single, third-party like WhatsApp, or its rivals such as Google Pay or PhonePe, to handle only 30% of overall UPI transactions.

4. Severe pollution continues to choke capital

- Delhi's air quality improved slightly but remained in the 'severe' category for the second consecutive day, with farm fires accounting for 21% of the pollution in the Capital. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the 24 hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi was 406.
- The [SAFAR bulletin](#) stated there were 3,225 stubble fires on Thursday in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and neighbouring areas — the highest so far this SEASON. The bulletin mentioned that Stubble burning share in PM2.5 in Delhi's air is estimated at 21% on Friday.
- Delhi government issued a statement stating a 15 member **Pusa Bio-decomposer Impact Assessment Committee** has been formed to study the impact of the stubble burning solution that the Delhi government has tried out, so that next year other States may use it as a cheap and viable alternative to stubble burning.

5. Distributing fortified rice at government schools

- Experts warn that a long journey lies ahead to implement distribution of fortified rice at government schools and anganwadis centres in 15 States as there is need to bring millers and snack manufacturers on board and improve quality control.
- Some are also wary of its nutritional outcomes and caution that fortification of staples such as cereals may hurt local economies. Some public health experts also warn of adverse consequences of “the corporatisation of the food system” by insisting on processes that demand a centralisation of supplies.
- The government announced earlier this week its plans to expand supply of rice fortified with iron, vitamin B12 and folic acid on a pilot basis from 15 districts to 15 States with the aim to curb anaemia. Baseline studies are now being conducted in the 15 pilot districts to measure current levels of anaemia in the population.

6. National Clean Air Programme

- It was launched by the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change** in January 2019.
- It is the first-ever effort in the country to frame a national framework for air quality management with a time-bound reduction target.
- It seeks to cut the concentration of coarse (particulate matter of diameter 10 micrometre or less, or PM10) and fine particles (particulate matter of diameter 2.5 micrometre or less, or PM2.5) by at least 20% in the next five years, with 2017 as the base year for comparison.
- The plan includes 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015. Non-attainment cities are those that have fallen short of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQs) for over five years.

7. India won't accept shifting of LAC: CDS

- India will not accept any “shifting” of the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** and the possibility of unprovoked tactical military actions “spiraling into a larger conflict cannot be discounted”, **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat** said on Friday, as India and China held the 8th round of **Corps Commander level talks** at Chushul in an attempt to resolve the ongoing stand-off.
- Following the developments on the south bank of Pangong Tso (lake) in August, when the Indian Army occupied several dominating features that were lying vacant, China has been pressing for discussing the south bank first and other friction areas later. This is the first round of talks with the Indian side being led by **Lt. Gen. P.G.K. Menon**, who took over as the 14 **Corps Commander** on October 13. He attended the last two rounds of talks.

8. Assam raises border issue with Arunachal

- The **Assam** government has raised the issue of forest land encroachment with **Arunachal Pradesh** even as the Assam **Mizoram** border row continued for the tenth day on Friday. Assam claims people of Arunachal Pradesh have encroached upon 6,375 hectares of its forest land.

9. INDIA successfully launches earth observation satellite EOS-01

- India successfully launched its latest **earth observation satellite EOS01** and nine international customer spacecraft on board a Polar rocket from the spaceport at **Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota** on Saturday, in its first mission this year amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) workhorse **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C49)** injected EOS01, intended for applications in agriculture, forestry and disaster management support.

- **K Sivan** is the chairperson of ISRO.

10. Four more biodiversity heritage sites for Karnataka

- The Karnataka Biodiversity Board has decided to declare four more areas in the State as biodiversity heritage sites. Biodiversity heritage sites are considered unique and fragile ecosystems that can be marine ecosystems, coastal and inland waters, or terrestrial areas.
- Notifying an area as a biodiversity heritage site helps protect the rich and unique ecosystem in a particular area from further destruction.

11. Yashvardhan Sinha sworn in as the Chief Information Commissioner

- **Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha** was sworn in as the country's **new Chief Information Commissioner** on Saturday by President Ram Nath Kovind.

12. Guwahati zoo new home to rescued exotic animals

- Non-Asian exotic animals rescued from cramped cages smuggled in from Myanmar have found a home — the **Assam State Zoo-cum-Botanical Garden in Guwahati**. The officials released six **blue or hyacinth macaws** and **two capuchin monkeys** in the zoo that occupies 175 hectares in the city's **Hengerabari Reserve Forest**. The birds and monkeys are native to Central and South America.
- Two years back the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence busted an international syndicate of exotic wildlife smugglers whose kingpin was based in Mizoram.

13. Fourth anniversary of Demonetisation

- On the fourth anniversary of demonetisation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the move helped in reducing black money, increased tax compliance and formalisation of the economy. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi blamed it for “destroying” India's economy that allowed even Bangladesh to “surpass” India.
- On **November 8, 2016**, Mr. Modi had announced his government's decision to ban all currency notes of ₹500 and ₹1,000 from midnight.

14. Great banyan tree Pillalamarri breathes afresh

- **Pillalamarri**, the great banyan tree of Telangana, has got a new lease of life and is now back in healthy germination. The constant micromanagement conservation efforts of the forest officials reversed the decaying process of the termite infested tree and put it back on the growth path.
- Spread over three and half acres, the 700 year old ficus tree is one of the oldest and largest on the planet.

15. Thulasendrapuram erupts in joy over Kamala's victory

- Deepavali came a week early for the nondescript **Thulasendrapuram** in Tiruvarur district(Tamil Nadu) as residents of the village celebrated the victory of Kamala Harris as the next Vice-President of the United States. The ancestral village of Ms. Harris erupted in joy; residents burst crackers and distributed sweets.

16. Editors Guild asks Yogi to free jailed journalists

- **The Editors Guild of India (EGI)** on Monday urged **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** to free the journalists who were jailed, withdraw cases that are under review and ensure safety of all working journalists in the State.

17. PM 2.5 level nearly 7 times the safe limit

- The air quality of Delhi, Gurugram, and Noida worsened on Monday but continued to remain in the 'severe' category, according to data by the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**.
- The PM2.5 level in Delhi was 405.1 ug/m³ at 8 p.m. on Monday — the highest this season. The safe limit for PM2.5 is 60 ug/m³.
- The contribution of **stubble burning** to PM2.5 level in the Capital was estimated to be around 38% on Monday, said SAFAR.
- [What is PM 2.5?](#) Fine **particulate matter (PM_{2.5})** is an air pollutant that is a concern for people's health when levels in air are high. **PM_{2.5}** are tiny particles in the air that reduce visibility and cause the air to appear hazy when levels are elevated.

18. [Massive haul of narcotics in Mizoram](#)

- In a major recovery of narcotics along the Myanmar border, Assam Rifles has recovered 1.3 lakh **Methamphetamine tablets** worth over ₹6.5 crore in the international market in Champhai district of Mizoram, a defence source said.
- There have been significant recoveries of drugs and contraband in large volumes in recent times by Assam Rifles in the northeast along the Myanmar border, the source added. Narcotics smuggling has also significantly increased on the western border along the Line of Control with Pakistan.

19. [COVID-19 vaccine could be 90% effective, claims Pfizer](#)

- Pharma major Pfizer said that an early peek at the data on its coronavirus vaccine suggests the shots may be a robust 90% effective at preventing COVID-19. Pharmaceutical companies and various countries are in a global race to develop a vaccine against the virus.
- This interim analysis, from an independent data monitoring board, looked at 94 infections recorded so far in a study that has enrolled nearly 44,000 people in the U.S. and five other countries.
- Authorities have stressed it's unlikely any vaccine will arrive much before the end of the year, and initial supplies will be rationed.
- **Dr. Anthony Fauci**, the US government's top infectious disease expert, said he would be happy with a COVID-19 vaccine that was 60% effective. Scientists have warned for months that any COVID19 shot may be only as good as flu vaccines, which are about 50% effective and require yearly shots.
- The coronavirus shots, made by **Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech**, are among 10 possible vaccine candidates in late stage testing around the world — four of them so far in huge studies in the U.S.

20. [Fifteenth Finance Commission Report](#)

- The 15th Finance Commission said it had taken the unique requirements of each State on board and come up with State specific considerations in its report, which was submitted to President Ram Nath Kovind.
- It's main recommendation is on devolution of funds between the Centre and the States for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- The commission also addresses all its unique terms of reference, such as considering a new non lapsable fund for financing national security and defence spending and offering performance incentives to the States that deliver on reforms.
- The main report has been uniquely titled - **Finance Commission in Covid Times**, the 15th Finance Commission presented two volumes as part of its submissions.
- The first one focuses on the state of the Centre's finances, with an in depth scrutiny of the key departments, the medium term challenges facing the Centre and a road map for the future.

- The other volume is dedicated to the States, with the finances of each analysed in great depth. The panel has come up with State specific considerations to address the key challenges that individual States face.
- The report is expected to be presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi soon, and will be available in the public domain once it is tabled in Parliament along with an action taken report on its recommendations.

21. [LSR student suicide on late payment of scholarship](#)

- The student was in line for the Centre's INSPIRE scholarship worth ₹80,000 per year, she was yet to see a single paisa of that money despite being almost halfway through her second year.
- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) said the scholarship money is not paid in the first year to prevent drop outs from benefiting. Surveys suggest that scholarship and research stipend delays have also been further exacerbated by the lockdown.
- The ministry annually funds 10-12,000 science students via the **Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) scheme**, whereby the top 2% of graduates from State school boards are given a scholarship to pursue degrees in basic sciences. Potential awardees get money from the second year onwards depending on maintaining a certain threshold of marks in the first year.
- The Ministry and the college administration have been citing technicalities of delay in submission of documents and other formalities as the reason for the delay. The student in question had maintained a grade point average of about 8 out of 10, well above the 60% requirement for continuation of the scholarship.

22. [Naravane hopeful of reaching 'mutually beneficial' agreement](#)

- **Army chief General Manoj Naravane** said that senior military commanders of India and China were "ironing out the modalities" of how to proceed ahead on the situation in eastern Ladakh and were hopeful that "we will be able to reach an agreement, which is mutually acceptable and mutually beneficial".
- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** held talks with his Chinese counterpart, **Gen. Wei Fenghe**, on September 4 in Moscow on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers meeting.
- On September 10, **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar** met his Chinese counterpart, **Wang Yi**, in Moscow, where they agreed on a five point plan for disengagement and de-escalation.

23. [Azim Premji : The philanthropist](#)

- With donations of ₹7,904 crore in 2019-20, **Wipro founder Azim Premji** topped the EdelGive Hurun India list of 'India's most generous', surpassing **Shiv Nadar and Mukesh Ambani**.
- The primary cause for which Mr. Premji and Mr. Nadar donated was education.
- Shiv Nadar is the founder of HCL technologies.

24. [Incentives to boost manufacturing in India](#)

- The Central government unveiled a **production linked incentive (PLI)** scheme to encourage domestic manufacturing investments in 10 more sectors, with an estimated outlay of about ₹1.46 lakh crore over the next five years.
- The new sectors have been identified on the basis of their potential to create employment and make India self-reliant. The sectors include - food processing, telecom, electronics, textiles, speciality steel, automobiles and auto components, solar photovoltaic modules and white goods, such as air conditioners and LEDs.
- The incentives under the PLI scheme is valued at over ₹1,45,980 crore, with the largest chunk of over ₹57,000 crore allocated for automobiles and auto components production.
- The Finance ministry stated that applications to avail the benefits will be vetted by an Empowered Finance Committee, following which they will be taken up to the Cabinet for final approval.

- The scheme will make Indian manufacturers globally competitive, attract investment in the areas of core competency and cutting edge technology; ensure efficiencies; create economies of scale; enhance exports and make India an integral part of the global supply chain.

25. Ladakh standoff : India, China finalising dis-engagement plan

- **India and China** are working out modalities to finalize a plan for phased disengagement and de-escalation along the **Line of Actual Control** in eastern Ladakh, beginning with the North Bank of Pangong Tso.
- The proposal from the Chinese side put forward at the eighth round of **Corps Commander talks** on November 6 includes pulling back their troops and equipment from Finger 4 to Finger 8 on the North Bank.

26. Farmers firm on Delhi march against Centre's farm laws

- Farmers' groups insist they will come to the Capital for protest on November 26 and 27, despite the Delhi police denying permission for a rally at the Jantar Mantar protest site, citing COVID-19 and other restrictions.
 - The **All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC)**, a platform including more than 300 farmer groups, had given the call for a Dilli Chalo protest on November 26 and 27, demanding the repeal of the three controversial farm laws as well as the Electricity Bill 2020.
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International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

Daily snippets

1. China bars travellers from India, UK

- China on Thursday effectively barred travellers from India, the U.K, Belgium and the Philippines by temporarily suspending valid visas, with measures targeting other countries also expected as Beijing moves to tighten international travel restrictions, citing a rising number of imported COVID-19 cases due to the advent of autumn and winter in the Northern Hemisphere.
- With Beijing broadly controlling the local transmission of cases within the country and China returning to normalcy in recent months following stringent measures, authorities are now emphasising dealing with “imported” cases from international travellers as the current priority.

2. Kosovo President resigns to face war crimes court

- Kosovo’s President Hashim Thaci, a guerrilla leader during Kosovo’s war for independence from Serbia in the 1990s, resigned on Thursday and will face charges for war crimes at a special court in The Hague.
- **Kosovo** : It is a partially-recognized state and disputed territory in Southeastern Europe. On 17 February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. It has since gained diplomatic recognition as a sovereign state by 98 UN member states.

3. Ethiopia PM says ‘clear, limited’ objectives to military operation

- **Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed** said that military operations launched in the northern region of **Tigray** had limited objectives, as concern mounted over a possible slide into war.
- Mr. Abiy, the winner of last year’s Nobel Peace Prize, announced Wednesday that he had ordered military operations in Tigray in response to an “attack” by the (**Tigray People's Liberation Front**) **TPLF** on a military camp there. The TPLF denies the attack occurred and accuses Mr. Abiy of concocting the story to justify deploying the military against the party.
- **UN chief Antonio Guterres** on Friday expressed deep alarm at the situation and urged de-escalation.

4. Presidential race exposes America’s ‘perilous’ divides

- The big reveal in the contest between President **Donald Trump** and former Vice President **Joe Biden** is the extent of the cavernous divide between **Republican and Democratic America**. Scepticism about the integrity of the vote and an agitated electorate increasingly divided by race, education and geography. Even the vote count threatens to split Americans.
- The yawning divides will threaten the next President’s ability to manage multiple crises — daily coronavirus infections set a record this week, the economy is struggling to recover from the pandemic and many Americans are pressing for a reckoning on racial injustices.

- Mr. Trump may lose, but strong GOP (Grand Old Party) turnout in battlegrounds and unexpectedly solid victories for Republican candidates in Senate and House races made Tuesday far from a thumping victory for the Democrats.

5. [U.K to face BREXIT trade disruptions](#)

- Northern Ireland will not be ready on January 1 to implement the systems needed to keep trade moving with the rest of the United Kingdom as required by the **Brexit** divorce deal, the National Audit Office (NAO) said on Friday.
- Other areas of concern include problems with preparing transit movements that enable goods to move across multiple EU borders with fewer checks, and the software that needs to cope with an expected 270 million customs declarations a year.

6. [Joe Biden elected 46th President of the United States](#)

- Democratic candidate **Joseph Robinette Biden Jr.**, was elected the 46th President of the United States late on Saturday morning, beating incumbent U.S. President **Donald Trump**, by securing more than the required 270 of the 538 Electoral College votes needed to win the White House.
- Mr. Biden's running mate, **Kamala Devi Harris**, a U.S. Senator from California, will become the first woman and the first Indian and African American Vice-President of the country.
- The turnout in this year's elections — expected to be over 70% — is the highest in decades, with Mr. Biden receiving about 74 million votes, the highest in history, and Mr. Trump receiving 70 million, the second highest in history.

7. [Plea to free Indians held in Yemen](#)

- The Supreme Court of India has sought the government's response on an urgent plea from a 33-year-old Tirunelveli resident to rescue her husband and other Indian workers held "captive" by Houthi rebels in Yemen.
- The petition said the government, under **Section 35 of the Disaster Management Act**, has the power to coordinate with the United Nations, international organisations and even foreign governments for the wellbeing of its citizens abroad.

8. [UAE set to overhaul Islamic laws](#)

- The **United Arab Emirates** announced on Saturday a major overhaul of the country's Islamic personal laws, allowing unmarried couples to cohabit, loosening alcohol restrictions and criminalizing so-called "honor killings."
- The announcement follows a historic U.S.-brokered deal to normalise relations between the UAE and Israel, which is expected to bring an influx of Israeli tourists and investment. The changes also reflect the efforts of the Emirates' rulers to keep pace with a rapidly changing society at home.

9. [Experts want more U.S action on climate change](#)

- United States President elect, Joseph Biden has committed to getting his country back into the 2015 Paris Climate Change Treaty, which commits countries to prevent a 2 degrees Celsius rise in global temperature by the end of the century.
- Experts in India say the U.S. ought to be doing more. The U.S. formally left the Treaty on November 2 after a four-year withdrawal period.

- Several developed countries and regions including the United Kingdom, Japan, and the EU have committed to achieve 'net zero emissions' by 2050. The U.S. — the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases — is exceptional in not committing to a deadline.
- India has consistently maintained that it was doing more than its fair share towards achieving Paris targets and other developed countries ought to be stepping up. India's emission share in the world is only 6%. According to Ajay Mathur, Director General of TERI, India is the only G-20 country whose Paris pledges for 2030 place it on a 2°C pathway.

10. 'Strategic comfort' with the Maldives

- The visit of **Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla** to the Maldives is significant for taking forward bilateral relations. Under **Maldivian President Ibrahim Solih**, bilateral cooperation, especially on the economic front, has become a 'model' that New Delhi can adopt to make Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Neighbourhood First' a sustained success.
- India and the Maldives have had bilateral relations for centuries. Through the decades, India has rushed emergency assistance to the Maldives, whenever sought.
- In 1988, when armed mercenaries attempted a coup against **President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom**, India sent paratroopers and Navy vessels and restored the legitimate leadership under **Operation Cactus**. The **2004 tsunami** and the drinking water crisis in Male a decade later were other occasions when India rushed assistance. At the peak of the continuing COVID-19 disruption, India rushed \$250 million aid in quick time. New Delhi also rushed medical supplies to the Maldives, started a new cargo ferry and also opened an air travel bubble, the first such in South Asia.
- Now, **Abdulla Yameen** camp has launched an 'India Out' campaign against New Delhi's massive developmental funding. Despite this, India can take respite in the 'strategic comfort' of the 'India First' policy of the Solih government.

11. Biden may relax curbs on H-1B, job-based visas

- **U.S. President-elect Joe Biden** will work towards providing a road map to American citizenship for nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants, including over 5,00,000 from India, and will also establish a minimum admission number of 95,000 refugees annually. He also plans to increase the number of high skilled visas, including the H-1B, and eliminate the limit on employment-based visas by country.
- Mr. Biden is expected to reverse the move of the outgoing Trump administration to revoke work permits to the spouses of H-1B visas, which had adversely impacted a large number of Indian families in the U.S.

12. Next U.S. govt. must make up for past mistakes: Iran

- **U.S. President Donald Trump** had applied a "maximum pressure" policy and crippling sanctions against **Iran** since his 2018 withdrawal from a landmark **nuclear agreement with Tehran**. The re-imposed sanctions targeted Iran's vital oil industry and banking ties, among other sectors.

13. French Foreign Minister in Egypt to ease tensions

- **French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian** was in **Egypt** on Sunday hoping to ease tensions following the publishing of controversial cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed that sparked ire in the Arab world. Mr. Le Drian met with **President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi**, Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and will also meet Ahmed alTayeb, the Grand Imam of **Al-Azhar**, Egypt's highest Muslim authority. Mr. Le Drian's highly anticipated meeting with Imam Tayeb will tackle **French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo's** decision in September to reprint the cartoons.

14. [As Myanmar goes to polls, Suu Kyi is expected to win](#)

- **Leader Aung San Suu Kyi's** National League for Democracy (NLD) is expected to win a second term, following a 2015 landslide that ended more than a half century of military and military backed rule.
- Among the obstacles to some NLD reforms is a Constitution that guarantees the military a significant political stake, including control of several key Ministries and a 25% quota of legislative seats, allowing it to veto constitutional amendments.
- **United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres** on Friday urged “peaceful, orderly and credible elections” that could enable hundreds of thousands of **Rohingya** who fled to neighbouring Bangladesh during a 2017 Army crackdown to return” in safety and dignity”.

15. [The War within Ethiopia](#)

- When **Abiy Ahmed** became Ethiopia's Prime Minister in April 2018, hopes were high that the former Army intelligence officer would bring normalcy.
- Last week, Mr. Abiy declared war on the country's Tigray region, which is ruled by the powerful **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)**, in response to its attack on a federal military base in Tigray. The militia-turned-party, which was part of the coalition that brought an end to the military dictatorship in 1991, had played a dominant role in the country's ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. After Mr. Abiy came to power, he purged the TPLF from senior government positions.
- **The Tigrayans**, who make up roughly 6% of Ethiopia's 110 million people, have traditionally enjoyed outsized influence in the government whereas **the Oromos**, the largest ethnic group, have complained of marginalization. Mr. Abiy, an Oromo, has said his mandate is to place Ethiopia's interests over the regions and correct the uneven distribution of power. But his actions have often produced unintended consequences.
- Mr. Abiy should reach out to regional political leaderships, especially the TPLF, find common ground, and run the country peacefully by restoring the balance between ethnicities and regions and decentralising the federal government.

16. [Under Biden, unfurling India's foreign policy concerns](#)

- For India, there are two foreign policy issues which are of great concern and interest — **China and Iran** in that order.
- If there is a major skirmish or worse in the South China Sea, the other members of **the Quad** (USA, Japan and Australia) will expect India to join them in fighting China.
- If **JCOA (Joint Comprehensive plan of action)** is readopted with Iran by the US, India may be able to buy Iranian oil, and sell her pharma and other goods to that country. The government may also feel less constrained in investing openly in oil and other infra projects in Iran, including the rail project in which Indian Railways Construction Ltd has been interested.

17. [Suu Kyi's party claims victory](#)

- **Myanmar's** ruling **National League for Democracy (NLD)** party claimed that it has won enough seats in Parliament to constitute an absolute majority and retain power.
- Much of the NLD's appeal is based on the popularity of its leader, **Aung San Suu Kyi**, who became the head of government with the title of State Counsellor after the 2015 polls.

18. [Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests](#)

- Pro-democracy members of **Hong Kong's** legislature will resign “*en masse*” if Beijing moves to disqualify four of them for violating the city's **Basic Law**, the bloc said.

- Hong Kong's leader is chosen by pro-Beijing committees, but half of its legislature's 70 seats are directly elected, offering the city's 7.5 million residents a rare chance to have their voices heard at the ballot box. The inability of Hong Kongers to elect their leaders and all of their lawmakers has been at the heart of swelling opposition to Beijing's rule, including the huge and often violent democracy protests that broke out last year.
- Hong Kong's democracy camp has come under sustained attack since Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law in response to the protests, including political disqualifications, arrests for social media posts and activists fleeing overseas.

19. [Pakistan's media mogul gets bail after months in prison](#)

- Pakistan's top court on Monday granted bail to the owner of one of the country's largest media groups, after a month's long detention condemned by rights groups as suppression of the press.
- **Mir Shakeel-ur-Rehman's Jang Group**, which includes some of Pakistan's biggest newspapers and the Geo television network, has frequently been critical of **Prime Minister Imran Khan's** government as well as the country's powerful military.

20. [Biden convenes COVID-19 taskforce](#)

- **President-elect Joe Biden** convened a task force on Monday to devise a blueprint for tackling the coronavirus pandemic in the United States and hailed progress on a vaccine, while President Donald Trump steadfastly refused to acknowledge his defeat.
- Mr. Biden named the 13-member task force, headed by former **U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy**, former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner David Kessler and Yale University healthcare equity expert Marcella Nunez-Smith.

21. [Armenia, Azerbaijan agree on peace deal](#)

- Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed on a deal with Russia to end fierce clashes over **Nagorno-Karabakh**, after a string of Azerbaijani victories in its fight to retake the disputed region.
- But the agreement sparked outrage in Armenia as crowds also entered Parliament and demanded the resignation of **Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan**.

22. [PM seeks respect for 'territorial integrity'](#)

- In an indirect reference to the Chinese infrastructure projects in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged members of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** to respect "territorial integrity" and "sovereignty".
- The 20th summit of SCO heads of state is important as it brought President Xi Jinping of China and Mr. Modi together in the virtual format even as both sides are caught in a stand-off along the LAC in eastern Ladakh.
- Mr. Modi said bringing changes in the global governance will be the focus of India as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council next year
- **What is SCO?** Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a Eurasian political, economic and military organisation, which was founded in Shanghai in 2001. The eight permanent members of the SCO are: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.

23. [Key Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat dies](#)

- **Saeb Erekat**, one of the most prominent **veterans of the Palestinian cause**, died on Tuesday of coronavirus complications at the age of 65, in a death mourned far beyond the occupied territory.

- An academic and author, Erekat grew up in the shadow of Israel's crushing victory over its Arab neighbours in the **Six-Day War of 1967**, and dedicated much of his life to seeking a resolution to the conflict. He was part of every team to negotiate with Israel since 1991.

24. [Bahrain PM, world's longest-serving, dies at 84](#)

- Bahrain's Prince **Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa**, the world's longest-serving Prime Minister who had held the post since Independence in 1971, died on Wednesday at the age of 84.
- **Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa** named crown prince **Salman al-Khalifa** as the new prime minister. Bahrain followed the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** in agreeing last month to normalise ties with **Israel** in US-brokered deals.

25. [Myanmar elections : Opposition rejects 'unfair' elections](#)

- Myanmar's military aligned Opposition party rejected the results of this week's election as "unfair" and called for a fresh vote — a demand immediately rebuffed by the election authorities.
- Official results are still trickling in, but **Aung San Suu Kyi's** ruling party has already declared a landslide victory based on its own tallies from across the country. The polls are only the second since the country emerged from outright junta rule in 2011.

26. [Hong Kong disqualifies four pro-democracy lawmakers](#)

- **Hong Kong** stripped four pro-democracy lawmakers of their seats on Wednesday, immediately after **China** gave it the power to disqualify politicians deemed a threat to national security.
- The disqualifications are the latest blow to the city's beleaguered democracy movement, which has been under sustained attack since China imposed a sweeping **national security law**. The remaining 15 pro-democracy lawmakers said they would all quit in protest.

27. [Sri Lanka yet to take a final call on container terminal](#)

- Although the Sri Lankan government is yet to declare its final position on developing the strategic **East Container Terminal (ECT)** at the **Colombo Port** jointly with **India and Japan** — agreed in May 2019 by the previous government — port worker unions, which are resisting the project, think Sri Lanka might "concede".
- India's interest in the project has well-known commercial and strategic motives. The ECT adjoins the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT), the SLPA's joint venture with China Merchants Port Holdings Company that holds an 85% stake. A deep-water container terminal, the CICT is the busiest at the Colombo Port. The ECT is also located near the China backed \$1.4 billion Port City coming up on reclaimed land at Colombo's sea front.
- New Delhi has more reasons to pin its hope on the ECT, especially after the Rajapaksa administration ruled out any Indian involvement in developing the **Mattala airport**, located near the **Chinese built Hambantota Port** — leased to China for 99 years — in the island's Southern Province. Japan, one of Sri Lanka's biggest donors over the years, is also keen to help develop the ECT.

In Focus

■ The Paris Agreement came into force on November 4, 2016, and works on the principle of voluntary national contributions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

■ It seeks to keep global temperature rise well within the goal of 2°C from pre-industrial levels, and to try and limit it to 1.5°C

■ So far, 188 out of the 197 parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change have ratified it, but the U.S. is no longer a party after Donald Trump pulled the country out

Image Source : The Hindu

1. With the election of Joe Biden to the highest office, the USA can now again become the leader in the world's quest to avert dangerous climate change, marking a return to global cooperation and reversing President Donald Trump's isolationist rejection of efforts to cut carbon emissions. The U.S., under Mr. Trump, had earlier formally exited the UN's Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

2. Pressure from civil society is mounting on all countries to act on carbon emissions, in order to keep global temperature rise well within the goal of 2 degree C from pre-industrial levels, and to try and limit it to 1.5 degrees C, as mandated by the Paris Agreement.

3. [On Paris Agreement](#)

- The global compact works on the principle of voluntary national contributions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and came into force on **November 4, 2016**. So far, 188 out of 197 parties to the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** have ratified it, but the U.S. is no longer a party after Mr. Trump's move.

- The Paris Agreement also lays emphasis on transparency, requiring all parties to submit national emissions sources and removals of carbon dioxide, using good practices outlined by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**. These reports are to be technically reviewed, and the performance of countries compared with the emissions reductions they have pledged.

- Over the past four years, Mr. Obama's rules created impact, with the International Energy Agency estimating the fall in U.S. energy related carbon dioxide emissions in 2019 at 2.9%, or 140 million tonnes, the highest for any country. The fall in emissions in the first half of 2020 globally may be of the order of 8.8% compared to the previous year, coinciding with the lockdowns. But as countries have opened up again, emissions have also begun to rise, turning the focus back on longer term clean energy solutions envisaged in the climate accord.

4. [The Biden Plan](#)

- The Biden Plan for a Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice, which he articulated during the presidential election campaign, vows to steer the U.S. back to its leadership position, after re-entering the Paris Agreement. The process requires only a notification to be sent to the UN.

- Within 100 days, he's also promised to host a world summit on climate at which the leaders of the nations with the highest emissions [which would include China, the European Union and India] would be engaged, to collaborate and raise ambition on cutting greenhouse gases.

- This will mean a return to the UN system's scientific consensus on climate change and a progressive plan to come up with enforceable targets that will take America to net zero emissions by mid-century and achieve measurable progress on this goal by 2025.

- His strong emphasis on multilateralism for solving global problems, emphasis on arrangements to increase funding and transfer of clean technologies that innovation makes possible to developing countries.

- In his climate plan, he has spoken of preventing other countries, including China, becoming “destination economies” for polluters. He also favours adjustment fees or quotas for carbon intensive goods from other countries, aligned with steps to make domestic polluters pay.
- 5. Global climate analysts calculate that the world had a budget of 570 giga tonnes left to limit warming to 1.5 degree Celsius in 2018. Without farsighted U.S. policy, which acknowledges the responsibility of the industrialised world to help developing nations, and its legacy of carbon emissions, valuable momentum to create a safer planet will be lost over the next four years.

Chabahar port rail project : India-Iran

1. India is not a part of the **Chabahar-Zahedan railway** at present, but as Iran begins the second phase of the 628 km project, Tehran hopes New Delhi will help it procure equipment to run the rail line from the **Chabahar port to the Afghan border**.
 2. Iran’s Port and Maritime Organisation (PMO) recently conveyed to India a request for cranes, tracks, switches and signalling equipment, as well as locomotives that it has had difficulty in procuring them directly due to the U.S. imposed sanctions.
 3. The real sticking point in the **Indian Railway Construction Company (IRCON)** not going ahead was that Iranian construction company **Khatam Al Anbyar** is under U.S. sanctions for its links to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Committee (IRGC) and although the Chabahar project has secured a special waiver from the U.S., the Indian government is hesitant to deal with the IRGC entity.
 4. The Chabahar port Shahid Beheshti Terminal, operated jointly by India and Iran, had been running smoothly, and had processed more than 12 lakh tonnes of bulk cargo and 8,200 containers, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.
 5. Delays due to sanctions have also taken a toll on the Indian interest in developing the **Farzad-B gas field**, where Indian government owned **ONGC Videsh** made a discovery in 2008. Iran recently said that we will hand over Farzad-B to an Iranian company, and we will complete exploration and development on its own.
 6. Impact of US elections
 - The U.S. election results projecting Mr. Biden as the next President are being watched in both India and Iran for the possibility that sanctions on Iran might ease, allowing India to increase its engagement with its traditional partner who used to be a major supplier of oil before the Trump administration forced India to “zero out” imports.
 7. Role of China
 - A 25-year strategic cooperation agreement between China and Iran believed to be worth \$400 billion, which could fund other parts of the Chabahar development, including a free trade zone along the Makran coast, and oil infrastructure projects.
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Science & Technology and Environment

Daily snippets

1. The COVID-19 vaccine

- The vaccine candidate is based on an mRNA technology, which eschews the use of an infectious particle, such as a portion of the virus, and uses a piece of RNA that is then made into an antigen by the body's own machinery.
- This reduces the odds of untoward reactions. It also does not need to be cultured in chicken eggs or other mammalian cells, allowing it to be made faster and more inexpensively.
- This method is at the frontier of novel vaccine production methods, there are still no commercially available mRNA based vaccines.

2. Sputnik V vaccine 92% effective claims Russia

- **Russia's Sputnik V vaccine** has proven to be "92% efficacious" among a group of volunteers who are part of Phase 3 trials to test the vaccine, the Russian Health Ministry said in a statement.
- The results were based on an analysis of 20 participants in the trial who were confirmed COVID-19 positive. The trials consist of 20,000 people who got one dose of the vaccine, and 16,000 who got two, 14 days apart.
- Efficacy percentage means that when cases were split among the placebo group and the vaccinated group, 92% of those who were vaccinated were safe.
- The Russian trials are ongoing in multiple countries, a limited number of people in India are also under it. **Hyderabad based Dr. Reddy's Laboratories** is a partner of the Russian organisation, **Gamaleya Research Foundation**, that has developed Sputnik V.
- As with Pfizer's, the preliminary report of Sputnik V's efficacy is yet to be published in a peer-reviewed medical journal. It has also not been evaluated by an independent board of medical experts.

The vaccine and time for cautious optimism

1. The first interim analysis of the Phase3 trial of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine (BNT162b2) calls for cautious optimism.

2. What the earlier results showed

- Results of the Phase1 trial, showed that the vaccine induced neutralising antibodies and specific T cell (major components of the adaptive immune system) responses in younger and older adults.
- Neutralising antibodies in younger adults (18-55 years) were 3.8 times more than those in convalescent plasma and 1.6 times more in older adults (65-85 years) in the Phase1 trial.
- Neutralising antibodies and T cell responses were also seen in pre clinical trials on rhesus macaques.

3. Analysing the Phase-3 trials

- In the latest Phase-3 trials, much detail is not put out in the public domain, it is likely that neutralising antibodies and T cells responses would have played a vital role in preventing disease in many vaccinated participants — the vaccine showed more than 90% effectiveness in preventing disease.
- Ninety four confirmed cases of COVID-19 in trial participants were evaluated in the analysis, but the breakup of how many were among the vaccinated group has not been spelt out.

- The over 90% effectiveness reported is basically against symptomatic infection. But the nature of infection — mild, moderate or severe — that the vaccine can protect against is not clear. While the inability of the vaccine to prevent asymptomatic infection might not matter for protecting individuals against severe disease outcomes, it might matter in its ability to cut down on transmission.
- The efficacy, which was evaluated seven days after the second dose, indicates that protection is achieved 28 days after administration of the first dose, which is again encouraging; the second dose was given 21 days after the first. The endpoint to evaluate vaccine efficacy is when 164 trial participants get infected, irrespective of whether they received the vaccine or a placebo.
- What is a placebo? A **placebo** is anything that seems to be a "real" medical treatment -- but isn't. It could be a pill, a shot, or some other type of "fake" treatment. What all **placebos** have in common is that they do not contain an active substance meant to affect health.

4. The duration of protection

- The interim results do not reveal how effective the vaccine is in older adults, who are more likely to progress to severe disease and even die. For how long the protection lasts after vaccination is also not known.
 - Pfizer is not the only company to use the **mRNA platform** for COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID19 vaccine candidate of Moderna and NIAID, which is at an advanced Phase3 trial, too uses the same mRNA platform.
 - The Oxford University vaccine being tested by AstraZeneca and other vaccines too produced immune responses similar to Pfizer's in early stage trials and may show encouraging results in Phase-3 trials.
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Economics and Finance

Daily snippets

1. WhatsApp introduces payment services in India

- WhatsApp unveiled payments services in India following approval by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- However, not all users in India — one of the biggest markets for the unit of Face book — would be able to access the feature as NPCI had mandated expansion of WhatsApp's UPI user base 'in a graded manner starting with a maximum registered user base of 20 million.'
- The NPCI approval also follows another recent direction imposing a cap of 30% of the total volume of transactions processed in UPI, applicable to all third-party app providers, effective January 1, 2021.
- WhatsApp will now compete with players such as PayTm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and Phone Pe.

2. Amazon web services (AWS) to invest \$2.77 billion in second India region

- U.S. headquartered cloud services provider Amazon Web Services (AWS) will be investing \$2.77 billion (₹20,761 crore) in India to set up its second region in Hyderabad, comprising multiple data centres. The new AWS Asia Pacific (Hyderabad) Region will be available by mid-2022.
- AWS currently has nine regions and 26 availability zones across Asia in India, Australia, Greater China, Japan, Korea and Singapore. It opened its first region in India in Mumbai in June 2016. As per the AWS statement, the aim is to provide customers with more flexibility and choice, while allowing them to architect their infrastructure for even greater fault tolerance, resiliency, and availability across geographic locations.

3. Ather raises \$35 million

- **Ather Energy, an electric scooter maker**, has raised \$35 million in a Series D round of funding led by **Flipkart's co-founder Sachin Bansal**. Founded in 2013 by IIT Madras alumni Tarun Meh ta and Swapnil Jain, Ather Energy was one of the earliest start-up investments of Mr. Bansal who contributed \$23 million in the latest round. He had invested \$0.5 million as an Angel investor in 2014.

4. Economy expected to bounce back next fiscal : SBI Chairperson

- The country's economy, which had shown resilience to come out from a downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, was expected to bounce back from the next fiscal, **State Bank of India Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara** said.
- According to him, average capacity utilization among the corporations is around 69%. Investment demand from the corporate sector would take some time to pick up. The cash rich public sector units will initially embark upon their capital expenditure plan which will generate investment demand. The corporate sector would become "very careful about borrowings" and use their internal resources initially.
- However, Mr. Khara pointed out, the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors were the worst hit in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

5. [China's October exports surge](#)

- China's exports grew at the fastest pace in 19 months in October, while imports also rose, official data showed on Saturday, as the world's second largest economy continued to recover after being hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis earlier this year.
- Exports rose 11.4% from a year earlier, beating analysts' expectations of a 9.3% increase and quickening from a solid 9.9% increase in September.
- China's trade surplus with the United States widened to \$31.37 billion in October, from \$30.75 billion in September. Trade surplus is the difference between a country's exports and imports to another country.
- China's exports have stayed largely resilient amid the COVID19 pandemic, as strong demand for medical supplies and reduced manufacturing capacity elsewhere worked in China's favour. China's exports could stay strong in the rest of 2020 as domestic firms resume production faster than global rivals and sell more COVID-19 related goods such as face masks

6. [States may cut capital expenditure on Infrastructure by up to 40%](#)

- With COVID-19 severely impacting revenues of State governments, and additional expenditure towards health care and public welfare, the capital outlay on infrastructure by States could decline 10-40% in FY2021.
- States account for 37-40% of the total infrastructure capital expenditure. The major States together had budgeted a capital outlay of more than ₹5.7 lakh crore for 2020-21 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. [Amazon accuses Future of 'insider trading'](#)

- Amazon.com Inc. has asked the **Securities and Exchange Board of India** to investigate Future Retail Ltd. for insider trading. The U.S. firm has been pressing SEBI to review Reliance's deal to buy retail and other assets from Future for \$3.4 billion including debt.
- Amazon argues it had a 2019 agreement with Future which prevented the Indian group's retail assets from being sold to certain parties including Reliance Industries.
- On the injunction granted, the spat is being closely watched as a key test of whether Indian firms, courts and regulators will respect arbitration decisions made in accordance with overseas arbitration rules.

8. [GDP shrank 8.6% in Q2 pushing economy into recession](#)

- Though, the Indian economy rebounded sharply in the wake of the reopening from lockdowns, slowing the pace of its contraction to 8.6%, the estimate implies that India is likely to have entered a technical recession in the first half of 2020-21 for the first time in its history with two successive quarters of GDP contraction, wrote **Pankaj Kumar of the RBI's Monetary Policy Department** in the article titled '**An Economic Activity Index for India**'.
- Observing that "the unrelenting pressure of inflation" was the foremost risk, the RBI warned that a hit to external demand from the second wave and financially stressed households and companies could also undermine the recovery.

9. [Public Private partnerships in social infrastructure to get viability gap funding](#)

- The government expanded the provision of financial support by means of viability gap funding for public private partnerships (PPPs) in infrastructure projects to include critical social sector investments in sectors such as health, education, water and waste treatment.
- A total of ₹8,100 crore has been allocated under this programme between 2020-21 and 2024-25, of which ₹2,100 crore will be devoted to social sector projects.



Sports

Daily snippets

1. Player Profile

- **Sunil Chhetri** : He is an Indian professional footballer who plays as a striker or winger and captains both the Indian Super League side Bengaluru and the Indian national team. Popularly known as ***Captain Fantastic***, having scored the **second highest number of goals in international matches** among active male players after Cristiano Ronaldo, he is both the most-capped player and all-time top goal scorer for the Indian national team, with 72 goals in 115 appearances. He is the **current captain of the national team**.
- **Lovlina Borgohain** : She is an Indian amateur woman boxer who won a bronze medal at the **2018 AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships** and the **2019 AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships**. She won gold medal at **1st India Open International Boxing Tournament** held in New Delhi and silver medal at **2nd India Open International Boxing Tournament** held in Guwahati. She secured 3rd rank in the 69kg Welterweight category. She has become the first woman from Assam to qualify for the Olympics and the second boxer from the state to represent the country after Shiva Thapa. In 2020, she became the sixth person from Assam to receive the Arjuna Award.

2. Ningombam takes over as President

- **Gyanendro Ningombam's** ascension as Hockey India president was formalised after being elected unopposed at the 10th Hockey India Congress.
- Ningombam had been designated officiating president after former president Mohd. Mushtaque Ahmad had been forced to resign .
- **Hockey Mizoram** has been selected **2019-20's best State** unit for working towards the growth of hockey at all levels and developing a well-oiled coaching setup equipped with modern techniques.

3. Zverev stuns Nadal to enter finals of the Paris Masters

- Top seed Rafael Nadal's bid for a maiden Paris Masters title was halted on Saturday when the Spaniard was beaten 6-4, 7-5 in the semi finals by German fourth seed 23 years old **Alexander Zverev**.
- Zverev will look to claim his fourth Masters title against Russian third seed Daniil Medvedev, who qualified with a commanding 64, 7-6(4) victory against Canadian Milos Raonic.

4. Daniil Medvedev wins the Paris Masters

- **Third seed Daniil Medvedev** claimed his first Paris Masters title by beating Germany's Alexander Zverev 5-7, 6-4, 6-1 to secure his first trophy of the season and the eighth of his career. Continuing his strong run on the hard court, all of Medvedev's ATP titles have come on the surface.

5. Cricket : Pakistan vs Zimbabwe series

- Pakistan proved too strong for a sloppy Zimbabwe as it won the second Twenty20 International by eight wickets, to take an unassailable 20 lead in the three match series.
 - Riding on half centuries from skipper Babar Azam (51) and 20-year old Haider Ali (66 not out), Pakistan made short work of a modest 135run target, achieving victory with 29 balls to spare. Haider and Babar added 100 for the second wicket.
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