

**G.K snippets...**



**Law, Policy and Governance**



[Daily snippets](#)

**1. [HC dismisses plea seeking CBI probe into Disha Salian's death](#)**

- The Bombay High Court dismissed a petition seeking a court monitored CBI probe into the **death of Disha Salian**, former manager of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni observed that the petitioner had no **locus standi** to file such a plea.
- *"There is nothing on record to show that the petitioner has approached the police. The petitioner has, in fact, directly approached the Supreme Court,"*. The apex court last month refused to hear the plea and directed Mr. Dhanda to approach the high court first, following which Dhanda filed a petition in the Bombay HC.

**2. [Beneficiaries of Roshni Act move SC](#)**

- Roshni Act was passed by **J&K legislature in 2001** to confer **ownership rights on occupants of State land** to raise ₹25,000 crore for hydel projects, but only ₹ 76 crore was collected. In 2018, the then **Lieutenant Governor Satyapal Malik** repealed the Act. Later, the High Court also scrapped the Act and directed the authorities to retrieve the land from the occupants.
- A petition has been filed before the Supreme Court by the beneficiaries claiming they *"were not even heard by the J&K High Court as it passed the directions"*. They expressed concerns that the credibility of governments will be lost if the practice of retrospective annulment of laws is allowed.

**3. [Protect right of ordinary people to bail, SC tells judges](#)**

- The Supreme Court gave a clarion call to judges to protect personal liberty and the **right of ordinary people to bail**. Common citizens without the means or resources to move the High Courts or the Supreme Court were languishing in jails as undertrials, the Supreme Court reminded.

- On the top court's recent decision to grant bail to **Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami** in an abetment to suicide case, the judgment said that prima facie, the FIR against Mr. Goswami did not establish the charges against him.

#### 4. Tech tact (commentary) : On India's decision to ban apps

- India's decision to block another 43 Chinese mobile applications hardly comes as a surprise. The latest instance of app blocking has come at a time when the two sides, while still talking, are struggling to come up with an agreement for **disengagement along the Line of Actual Control**.
- China, not for the first time either, has charged India with using national security as an excuse to target Chinese apps. However, China crying discrimination is ironical as its version of the Internet is tightly controlled and heavily censored, and has been so for years.
- In the short run, it may be useful for India to use its vast market for Internet services as leverage in its attempts to keep China in check at the border. Indian app alternatives may also find the much needed space to grow now.
- On the other side, this approach runs the risk of triggering an unconventional battle between the two countries in the **larger technology realm**, if not in the larger business space. Also, moves such as blocking apps would be perceived adversely by global investors and Internet companies. India must stick to a rules based approach in regulating the Internet. Also, there is an urgent need to implement the long pending data protection law.

#### 5. Farmers reject center's call for talks, say Burari is an open jail

- Farmer groups have rejected the Home Minister's conditional invitation for talks, and refused to shift to the designated protest grounds in Burari, calling it an "open jail". Tens of thousands of farmers are massed at the borders of Delhi, demanding the repeal of the **Centre's three agricultural reform laws** and withdrawal of an electricity Bill.
- Equipped with rations that could last for months, they have threatened to block five of the entry points into the capital if their demands are not heard. Leaders also expressed scepticism about the government's offer for talks, saying that two previous rounds of dialogue had shown that the government had nothing to offer, and there had been no concrete response.

#### 6. Plea to maintain data on transgender prisoners

- A petition before the Delhi High Court has sought a direction to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** to recognize and classify transgenders as a separate third gender in their annual publication of **Prison Statistics India**.
- The plea filed by law graduate Karan Tripathi has claimed that NCRB continued to fail to include the third gender or transgenders in the sexwise statistics of the prison inmates all over India in its annual Prison Statistics India since the past seven years. The petition argued that **unless NCRB does not assign a proper sex to the prison inmates** who may be transgenders, there cannot be a proper guarantee of their civil rights, constitutional rights and even basic human rights.

#### 7. DST denies moral policing in recruitment

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has denied highlighting a clause in its recruitment rules for a particular post that disqualifies an applicant on grounds of bigamy.
- A leading national daily, on November 27, reported on a notification by the DST prescribing the recruitment method for appointing a 'Mission Director' for one of its programmes that prominently highlighted bigamy as a disqualification. The newspaper in its report noted that the clause was routine in the 'conduct rules' for government job recruits.

## 8. [Persons with disabilities and the problems they face in prison](#)

- Given the nature of overcrowded and underfunded prison environments, the difficulties persons with disabilities face in society are exacerbated in prison. It is precisely for this reason that both international and domestic laws recognise and protect the rights of disabled prisoners.
- Under international law, the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** and the **Nelson Mandela Rules**, approved by the UN General Assembly through a resolution in 2015, on the standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners are the guiding protocols.
- Under the domestic laws, the constitutional guarantees under **Articles 14 and 21** of the Constitution are available to persons with disabilities and **The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** provide the guiding principles.

## 9. [Install cameras at NIA, CBI offices: SC](#)

- The Supreme Court ordered the Centre to **compulsorily install CCTV cameras and recording equipment** in the offices of central agencies like National Investigation Agency (NIA) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which have the power to carry out “interrogations”.
- The CCTVs and recording equipment, the court said, would be used as a measure to protect the **fundamental right to dignity and life**. The court ordered that the Principal Secretary/Cabinet Secretary/Home Secretary of each State/ Union Territory should give it a “firm action plan with exact timelines for compliance” within the next six weeks.

## 10. [Calls for a woman Chief Justice of India](#)

- Attorney General (AG) **K.K. Venugopal** took the Supreme Court’s invitation to suggest **ways to gender sensitise judges** as an opportunity to tell the court it has **never had a woman Chief Justice**. He told the Supreme Court that more women judges in constitutional courts would certainly improve gender sensitivity in the judiciary.
- The top law officer was responding to a request from the court to assist it in a case from the Madhya Pradesh High Court. Mr. Venugopal, in his written submissions, said judges need to be trained to place themselves in the shoes of the victim of sexual violence while passing orders.

## 11. [NEP upholds quota norms, says Minister](#)

- The National Education Policy (NEP) upholds the reservation policy enshrined in the Constitution, Education Minister **Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank** said, rebutting an allegation that the NEP 2020 seeks to end reservation for the disadvantaged groups. There is no intention to dilute the provisions of reservation in the country’s educational institutions, Mr. Nishank said.
  - The policy affirms the constitutional mandate of reservation enshrined in **Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution**.
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## National News/ Interventions



### Daily snippets

#### 1. Trade Unions join farmers' protests

- The strike called by a joint platform of **10 Central trade unions** on Thursday in support of the **farmers' agitation and workers' demands** partially affected life in some parts of the country.
- The **All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee**, an apex organisation of farmers' groups, had come out in support of the workers' demands. They said 25 crore workers had participated in the strike.
- The workers demanded monthly cash transfers of ₹7,500 for all families that did not fall in the income tax bracket, 10 kg of free monthly rations to every person in need, expansion of the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme**, withdrawal of the new farm laws and labour codes, a stop to privatisation of the public sector, withdrawal of the decision on "forced premature retirement" of government employees and payment of pension to all.
- The RSS affiliated **Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh** did not support the strike, saying in a statement that it was "**politically motivated**".

#### 2. First 'wave' of vaccination to cover 30 crore Indians

- About 30 crore people will be part of the first "wave" to get the COVID-19 vaccine in India. They consist of health care workers, police personnel, those above 50 and those younger with underlying illnesses that make them vulnerable, said **Principal Scientific Adviser K. Vijay Raghavan**.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** had asked State governments to set up **steering committees and block wise task forces** to prepare for the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and disbursement as and when they become available. Vaccines will be available **when they pass regulatory stages**.

#### 3. Shringla in Nepal to mend ties

- **Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla** reached Kathmandu on Thursday in a major outreach to Nepal, which has been caught in a bitter boundary dispute with India regarding the **Kalapani region** for more than a year.
- Mr. Shringla met with his counterpart **Bharat Raj Paudyal** and the Nepalese leadership and discussed a number of issues, including the border dispute. Both sides discussed multiple plans like the **Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project** as well as the starting of an air travel bubble between Nepal and India.

#### 4. PM pitches for 'One Nation, One Election'

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched for '**One Nation, One Election**', saying it is the need of the country as elections taking place every few months hamper development works. He also said there should be a **single voter list for all polls** in the country.
- Emphasising the need for coordination between all three wings of the state - **legislature, executive and judiciary** - he said that everything, from their role to their decorum, was described in the Constitution itself.

#### 5. GDP contracts 7.5% in second quarter

- India's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** contracted **7.5% in the second quarter** of 2020-21, following the record 23.9% decline recorded in the first quarter, as per estimates released by the **National Statistical Office**.

- The economy's performance between July and September when lock down restrictions were eased is better than most rating agencies and analysts anticipated. While **most estimated a contraction of around 10%**, the Reserve Bank of India projected a 8.6% decline in the second quarter.
- **Agriculture**, which was the only sector to record growth between April and June this year, grew at the same pace of 3.4% in the second quarter. **Manufacturing** gross value-added (GVA) staged a sharp recovery to record 0.6% growth between July and September after collapsing 39.3% in the first quarter. **Electricity, gas and other utility services** saw 4.4% growth in the second quarter from a 7% contraction in Q1. However, it remained bleak for several sectors, including **mining, services such as retail trade and hotels, and construction**.
- Rating agency CRISIL attributed the better than expected growth to pent-up demand, support from agriculture and select export sectors, cost savings for corporates and a 'learning to live' attitude.

#### 6. [Extradition of Tahawwur Rana from the US](#)

- There was some "progress" in the extradition proceedings of **Tahawwur Rana**, key accused in the **26/11 Mumbai terror** attacks, a senior NIA official said.
- Rana, who is currently lodged in a jail in the U.S., was arrested in 2009 for providing material support to Pakistan based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) that planned and executed the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, which claimed 166 lives, including six Americans. He helped **David Coleman Headley**, the prime suspect in the Mumbai attacks, to open an immigration firm in Mumbai that was used as a cover to conduct reconnaissance on possible targets that were attacked on **November 26, 2008**.

#### 7. [Centre willing to have talks with the farmer organisations](#)

- The Centre is quite willing to hold talks with farmers' groups if they are prepared to shift to the **designated protest site in Burari**, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said. The farmers' groups said they would respond after internal consultations. The farmer groups have repeatedly given calls about the peaceful nature of the protests fully adhering to all the laws.

#### 8. [China's nod for downstream dam on Brahmaputra](#)

- China's media reported that authorities have given the go-ahead for a **Chinese hydropower company** to construct the first downstream dam on the lower reaches of the **Brahmaputra river, or Yarlung Zangbo as it is known in Tibet**, marking a new phase in China's hydro power exploitation of the river with **potential ramifications for India**. The report however, did not mention the location of the planned downstream project.
- The report mentions that the 60 million kWh hydropower exploitation at the downstream of the Yarlung Zangbo River could provide 300 billion kWh of clean, renewable and zero carbon electricity annually" and the project "will play a significant role in realising China's goal of reaching a carbon emissions peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality in 2060".
- China in 2015 operationalised its first hydropower project at Zangmu in Tibet, while three other dams at Dagu, Jiexu and Jiacha are being developed, all on the upper and middle reaches of the river. The report said this will be the **first time the downstream sections of the river will be tapped**.
- India has expressed concerns to China over the four dams on the upper and middle reaches. A dam at the Great Bend, if approved, would raise fresh concerns, considering its location downstream and just across the border from Arunachal Pradesh.

#### 9. [Centre invites farmers' unions for talks](#)

- Farmer unions from Punjab, which have been protesting at key entry points to Delhi against the recent farm sector laws, have been invited for talks with the Centre, the Agriculture Ministry said. Farmer leaders said they would decide their response to the invitation.

- The unconditional invitation for dialogue came after a day of hard talk from their leaders, who said it was time for the Prime Minister to listen to the “**mann ki baat**” of the farmers or pay a heavy price for not doing so.

#### 10. Rajasthan plans electrification of anganwadis

- The proposal is worth over ₹260 crore, which will include one time expenditure on installation of solar power units and recurring cost of ₹55 crore annually towards electricity bill. There are a total of 82,000 anganwadis in Rajasthan, but the proposal is for those facilities that are outside school premises.
- As per the **government data presented in Parliament**, 3.6 lakh anganwadis centres don't have toilet facilities and 1.6 lakh don't have drinking water facilities. As of June 2019, as many as 12% anganwadi centres also operated out of kutcha buildings.

#### 11. Sheetal Amte, social worker, no more

- Sheetal Amte Karajgi, social worker and CEO at **Maharogi Sewa Samiti** (Leprosy Services Committee), was found dead. She was found unconscious and was rushed to the government hospital in Warora, where she was declared dead on arrival.
- Sheetal was the granddaughter of human rights activist and **Padma Vibhushan award winner, the late Baba Amte**, who founded the **Maharogi Sewa Samiti in 1949**. The institution has been a pioneer in medical treatment and rehabilitation of leprosy patients.
- Sheetal, a medical doctor, was a disability specialist and was known as an environmentalist, painter and photographer. Her model of dense plantation of native trees, adopted for Indian conditions from the '**Miyawaki method of afforestation**', was adopted by the government of Maharashtra and renamed '**Anandwan Dense Forest Model**'.

#### 12. Opinion/ Explainer : Recalibrating India-Nepal ties

- India continues to think that by providing largesse to Nepal in the form of aid and development projects, it can win Nepali hearts. But despite pouring billions of rupees into Nepal over decades, it has still not been able to do so.
- Two issues are important to understand here. First, all aid to Nepal from countries other than India and China go **through the Plans of the Government of Nepal**. Indian aid is seen in Nepal as a favour bestowed on a constituency it wants to garner support from rather than a contribution to Nepal's planned development. Second, India competes with China in providing aid outside government budgets. And China picks up projects of visibility and strategic location. Chinese involvement in Nepal has increased since the April 2015 earthquake and Nepal is surely an area of strategic influence in **China's Belt and Road Initiative**.
- Indian workers in Nepal constitute a big part of the workforce and **send about \$3 billion to India every year**. In terms of **remittances to India, Nepal ranks eighth**. So, the Government of India needs to keep in mind that many households in India are being run with remittances from Nepal. Second, **Nepalis have migrated in the past 20 years to more than a hundred countries**; India is not the only country that Nepalis rely on for jobs or education.
- There are some fundamentals that we simply cannot forget: geography will not change, the border will remain open as millions of livelihoods on both sides depend on it, and China is going to be a big global player with varied interests in the neighbourhood. Therefore, the India-Nepal relationship has to be recalibrated.

#### 13. DRL begins phase 2/3 trials for Sputnik V

- Clinical trials for **Russian COVID-19 vaccine candidate Sputnik V** have commenced in India and are set to involve 1,600 volunteers at nine sites across the country.
- Dr. Reddy's Laboratories and the **Russian Direct Investment Fund**, which partnered the drug maker for the trials and distribution of the first 100 million doses in India, said the adaptive phase 2/3 trials had begun after receiving clearance from the Central Drugs Laboratory, Kasauli.

- It will be a multicentre and randomised controlled study. The Clinical Trials Registry India said the trials were planned to be conducted on 1,600 subjects - 100 in phase II and 1,500 in phase III.

#### 14. [Violations in the CharDham project](#)

- Environmentalists have alleged that the contractors deputed by the government to make roads as part of the Chardham project are violating the Supreme Court orders on the appropriate road width to be followed in mountainous terrain.
- The ₹12,000crore project aims at constructing wider roads - spanning 825 km - connecting key pilgrimage spots in Uttarakhand. The implementation has been controversial with environmentalist groups pointing out that hill cutting was rampant with mountain ecosystems being irreversibly harmed in the process.

#### 15. [SII reiterates vaccine safety](#)

- Amid allegations by a “Covishield” volunteer of “adverse reaction” during trials, the Pune-based **Serum Institute of India (SII)** on Tuesday reiterated that the vaccine was “safe” and “immunogenic”.
- The SII said that following the incident, it had submitted all reports and data related to the incident to the **Drugs Controller General of India (DGCI)**. It further said that it wanted to assure everyone that the vaccine would not be released for mass use unless it was proven immunogenic and safe.

#### 16. [No move for universal vaccination](#)

- The government has never spoken about vaccinating everyone against COVID-19, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said on Tuesday, speaking at a press conference in the Capital. Mr. Bhushan added that it is important to discuss such scientific issues based on factual information only.

#### 17. [Former HC judge Karnan held](#)

- Former **Calcutta High Court judge C.S. Karnan** was arrested by the Central Crime Branch (CCB) of the Greater Chennai Police. He was arrested in connection with vulgar remarks he reportedly made against Supreme Court judges and their spouses.

#### 18. [Jaishankar on India-China talks](#)

- Talks with China on the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** could take much longer, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar indicated. He drew a parallel to a similar military stand off in Arunachal Pradesh’s ‘**Sumdorong Chu**’ in **1986** that took nearly nine years to resolve. **The Sumdorong Chu crisis of 1986**, several years of talks were fruitless before the two armies, which were eyeball to eyeball in the Tawang region, disengaged in 1995. In between, the two sides signed the breakthrough 1993 agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control.
- Adding that India and China must take a “long view” of the border dispute and not just the “incidents” at the LAC this year, Mr. Jaishankar cautioned Beijing against dealing with India through the prism of a “third party”, in a reference to India’s close ties with the United States.
- He added that reports of Chinese occupation of land in **Depsang and north Pangong Tso** did not set out “the totality of the ground picture fairly”. India had undertaken an “enormous military response” in reaction to the Chinese deployment.

#### 19. [Winners of the Infosys prize](#)

- The **Infosys Science Foundation (ISF)** announced the winners of the **Infosys Prize 2020** in six categories for their contributions to science and research - Engineering and Computer Science, Humanities, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences. The prize consists of a gold medal, a citation and a purse of \$1,00,000.

- The winners are: **Hari Balakrishnan** from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (**Engineering and Computer Science**); **Prachi Deshpande** from the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata (**Humanities**); **Rajan Sankaranarayanan** from the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad (**Life Sciences**); Sourav Chatterjee from Stanford University (**Mathematical Sciences**); Arindam Ghosh from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (**Physical Sciences**) and Raj Chetty from Harvard University (**Social Sciences**).

#### 20. [Central government plans professional courses in mother tongue](#)

- The Centre is drafting a road map to ensure that students of medicine, engineering, law and other professional programmes can study in their own mother tongue. The decision was taken by Education Minister **Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank**, after a meeting on the implementation of the **National Education Policy (NEP)**.

#### 21. [Farmers demand special session of Parliament](#)

- Farmers' groups have demanded that the Centre call a special session of Parliament to repeal the three new agriculture reform laws. If their demands are not met, they threaten to "choke" the capital by blocking more highways entering the city. The leaders said they were not willing to get bogged down in a **clause-by-clause discussion** as their demand was full repeal.

#### 22. [Honey and adulteration with sugar](#)

- Prominent Indian brands failed a key test of purity, **the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** has claimed, citing an investigation it conducted. Current regulations specify around 18 parameters that honey must comply with for producers to label it 'pure honey'.
- Most brands passed muster but when subjected to one test, called **Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR)** that was done at a lab in Germany, only three brands passed. The **NMR test is not required by Indian law** for honey that is being marketed locally but is needed for export.

#### 23. [Drop in active COVID-19 caseload](#)

- India's total active COVID-19 caseload dropped to about 4.28 lakh on Wednesday, which was the lowest after 132 days. The total active cases were a little over 4.26 lakh on July 23.
- In the past three days, the daily new cases added to the country's COVID-19 numbers have been around 30,000. The number of daily new cases in the last 24 hours was 36,604. While 43,062 patients recovered and were discharged in the past 24 hours, the number of daily recovered cases surpassed the daily new cases in the past five days.

#### [Profile : F.C Kholi](#)

1. **Faqir Chand Kohli** assumed leadership of a tiny division of Tata Sons called **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** in 1969. An engineer first, he became fascinated with computing technology, which was reshaping the world. He felt that India had the capability to participate in the IT industry on equal terms along with the giants in the western world.
  2. Right from the early 1970s, he wanted an international presence for TCS. He worked with Indian universities to create Computer Science departments in those early days.
  3. **Creating the IT ecosystem**
    - He started a world class R&D centre in Pune to work on many areas in software technologies. He created a Software Products division in TCS, to market software products in India and overseas.
    - The ecosystem that he helped set up and its track record of successful projects paved the way for many other talented entrepreneurs to get into this industry and make India a global force in IT. He developed stalwarts like **Mr. S. Ramadorai** and **Mr. N. Chandrasekaran**. He is thus referred to as 'the father of the IT industry'.
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## International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

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### Daily snippets

#### 1. Saudi Activist's trial transferred to terrorism court

- Saudi authorities have transferred the trial of jailed **activist Loujain al-Hathloul** to an anti terrorism court. Ms. Hathloul, 31, was arrested in May 2018 with about a dozen other women activists just weeks before the historic **lifting of ban on female drivers**, a reform they had long campaigned for. Some of the activists have been released, many others including Ms. Hathloul remain imprisoned on opaque charges that include aiding enemies of the state as well as contacting foreign media, diplomats and activist groups.

#### 2. With self-reliance push, China looks to reset ties with the world

- “**Dual circulation**” is the name that Beijing has given this approach favoured by Mr. Xi, of boosting the domestic economy (**or internal circulation**) while recalibrating China’s external relations (**the other circulation**) - an anodyne term that blurs the increasing importance of self-reliance in Beijing’s outlook today.
- The second pillar of this strategy, as he put it, was to “*optimise and stabilise production chains and supply chains.*” The pandemic, he said, was “*a stress test under combat conditions*” and had served warnings of the dangers of decoupling.
- The most revealing part of Mr. Xi’s essay was his statement that China “**must tighten international production chains’ dependence on China**” with the aim of “*forming powerful countermeasures and deterrent capabilities*”. This would give China leverage should countries threaten to limit access to key technologies, as the U.S. has done with semiconductors.
- The key difference with India’s own “self-reliant” emphasis is that China is at the same time embracing new trading arrangements such as the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**, from which India withdrew last year, and **the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)**, the other big regional trading bloc that succeeded the TPP after America’s withdrawal, which Mr. Xi has expressed interest in joining.

#### 3. Top Iranian nuclear scientist killed

- An Iranian scientist long suspected by the West of **masterminding a secret nuclear bomb** programme was killed in an ambush near Tehran on Friday that could provoke confrontation between Iran and its foes in the last weeks of Donald Trump’s presidency.
- The military adviser to **Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei** blamed Israel for the assassination of **Mohsen Fakhrizadeh**, and vowed to retaliate for his killing. A U.S. official confirmed earlier this month that Mr. Trump had asked military aides for a plan for a possible strike on Iran.

#### 4. Courts ban remembrance events for LTTE cadre on 'Heroes Day'

- Many Tamil families living in Sri Lanka's north and east on Friday marked '**Heroes Day**' - an **annual commemoration of LTTE cadre** who died in the civil war - by lighting lamps in the quiet confines of their homes, after the government obtained a court order banning the remembrance. Government lawyers and police argued that such an event could lead to the "**revival of the LTTE**" or potentially cause disharmony among communities.
- The LTTE began commemorating its fallen cadre on '**Maveerar Naal**' [Heroes Day] in 1989 on November 27 - marking the day that a member, for the first time, died in combat in 1982. Since then, members and families have followed the **practice of paying respects to the dead combatants every year**. The **Rajapaksa administration** is widely credited for bringing the war to an end in 2009, but the armed forces are accused of **grave human rights violations** during the three decade-long war.

## 5. [India to host SCO summit](#)

- India will host the Heads of Government Council meeting of the eight nation **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** on Monday, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not attend the meeting, which will be **chaired by Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu** instead. According to a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs, the Prime Ministers of **China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan** will attend the virtual conference.
- **Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan** has also decided to miss the meeting, deputing his Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Andleeb Abbas, in his place. Apart from the eight member states, the meeting will be attended by four observer states of the SCO. President of **Afghanistan** Ashraf Ghani will attend along with the First Vice-President of **Iran**, the Prime Minister of **Belarus** and the Deputy Prime Minister of **Mongolia**. **Turkmenistan** has been invited as a special guest by India and will be represented by the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers.

## 6. [Neighbors agree on intel sharing](#)

- **India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives** agreed to expand the **scope of intelligence sharing**, including terrorism and cyber security, after a meet in which they discussed "**common security threats**".
- **National Security Adviser Ajit Doval**, called on **Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa** and participated in the discussions with the Indian Ocean neighbors. **Maldivian Defence Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi** arrived in Colombo for the meeting while the Sri Lankan side was represented by Kamal Gunaratne, Secretary, Ministry of Defense.
- In a joint statement following the meeting, Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence said the **4th National Security Adviser level trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation meeting** - the practice has been revived after a six year gap - sought to promote meaningful cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region, with focus on common issues pertaining to maritime security.

## 7. [China's first domestically made nuclear reactor](#)

- China has powered up its first domestically developed nuclear reactor - **the Hualong One** - a significant step in Beijing's attempts to **become less dependent on Western allies** for energy security and critical technology.
- The reactor can generate **10 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity** each year and cut carbon emissions by **8.16 million tons**, according to **China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC)**.
- Nuclear plants supplied less than five percent of China's annual electricity needs in 2019, according to the National Energy Administration, but this share is expected to grow as Beijing attempts to become **carbon neutral by 2060**. Reducing its dependence on Western allies in **critical high-tech sectors** such as power generation is a key goal in Beijing's "**Made in China 2025**" plan.

- China has **47 nuclear plants** with a total **generation capacity of 48.75 million kilowatts** - the world's third highest after the U.S. and France. Beijing has invested billions of dollars to develop its nuclear energy sector in recent years as it struggles to wean its economy from coal. Thirteen nuclear plants are under construction, more than in any other country.

#### 8. [Pope appoints first African American cardinal](#)

- Pope Francis on Saturday installed 13 new cardinals, including the first African American - **Archbishop of Washington, Wilton Gregory** - to hold the high rank, further expanding the pontiff's impact on the group that will one day elect his successor.

#### 9. [Unilateralism is hurting the global economy : Suresh Prabhu](#)

- India's **Sherpa to the G7 and G20** Suresh Prabhu has said that the growing tendency among nations to frame **inward-looking policies** and spurn multilateralism is a **recipe for a greater disaster for the global economy** that is already hobbled by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- He stated that there was a strong **need to revive multilateralism** in order to boost prospects of meeting the world's immediate challenges of providing COVID-19 vaccines universally along with healthcare coverage, reviving the global economy and mitigating climate change. There is a need for integration with the rest of the world with transparent and democratic rules based mechanisms - reviving the role of global forums like the WTO and UN.
- Conceding that even the UN and WTO must be asked to change with the changing times to correctly reflect the global order of things, he said that outright denial of multilateralism, however, is 'not just a folly, but a definite recipe for more disasters to come'.
- India will assume the **presidency and host the G20 summit in 2023**, while Italy and Indonesia will steer the presidency in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

#### 10. [Chinese Defence Minister meets Nepal's top leadership](#)

- **China's Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe** met **Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli** and held talks with **Nepal Army chief General Purna Chandra Thapa** on various issues of bilateral interest, aimed at bolstering bilateral military cooperation and taking the existing friendly ties to a new height. This is the highest-level visit from China after **President Xi Jinping's** two-day state visit that took place in October last year.
- Gen. Wei's visit comes days after **India's Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla** wrapped up his maiden two day visit to Nepal. China's political profile in Nepal has been on the rise in recent years with billions of dollars of investments under Beijing's multi-billion-dollar **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, including the building of the **Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network**. Besides the investments, China's Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi has made open efforts to garner support for Mr. Oli, who faced a massive rebellion in his party headed by 'Prachanda'.

#### 11. [French police face charges over black man's beating](#)

- Four French police officers should face charges over the beating and racial abuse of a black music producer, Paris's top prosecutor said on Sunday, an incident that intensified controversy over a **new security law**.
- Tens of thousands protested across France on Saturday against **the security Bill** - *which would restrict the right of the press to publish the faces of on duty police* - with the rally in Paris ending in bitter clashes.
- The beating of **music producer Michel Zecler** has become a rallying cause for anger against the police in France, accused by critics of institutionalized racism, including singling out blacks and Arabs.

## 12. Ethiopia launches search for Tigray leaders

- The Ethiopian government launched a manhunt for leaders of a rebellious faction in the northern region of Tigray after announcing federal troops had taken over the regional capital **Mekele** and military operations were complete.
- **The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** said hospitals in Mekele are running low on supplies such as gloves to care for the wounded, and one hospital is lacking body bags for the dead. **Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed** has been trying to quell a rebellion by the **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)**, a powerful ethnically based party that dominated the central government for nearly three decades before Mr. Abiy came to power in 2018.
- **TPLF leader Debretsion Gebremichael** later told Reuters that his forces were withdrawing from around the city but would fight on, raising the spectre of a drawn-out guerrilla war. Thousands of people are believed to have been killed and nearly 44,000 have fled to neighbouring **Sudan** since fighting began on November 4.
- The conflict has been another test for Mr. Abiy, who is trying to hold together a patchwork of ethnic groups that make up Ethiopia's 115 million people. The flow of refugees and attacks by the TPLF on neighbouring **Eritrea** have also threatened to destabilize the wider **Horn of Africa** region.

## 13. India rejects OIC reference to Kashmir

- India 'strongly' rejected the criticism of its Kashmir policy by the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**. The Ministry of External Affairs hinted at Pakistan and said the OIC is being used by the country for its campaign against India.
- The report of the OIC Secretary General on its activities submitted to the 47th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers referred to **the situation in J&K** and said, "The decision of the Indian government on 5 August 2019 towards changing the demographic and geographic composition of the territory, and the continuous blockade and restrictions together with human rights abuses, had awakened renewed efforts of the international community towards a resolution of the conflict."
- What is OIC ? **The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation**, formerly the Organization of the Islamic Conference, is an **international organization founded in 1969**, consisting of 57-member states, with a collective population of over **1.8 billion as of 2015 with 49 countries being Muslim-majority countries**. The organisation states that it is "the collective voice of the Muslim world" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".

## 14. Actor Dave Prowse, who played Darth Vader, dies

- **Dave Prowse**, the British weightlifter-turned-actor who was the body, though not the voice, of arch-villain **Darth Vader** in the original **Star Wars trilogy**, has died. He was 85. Born in Bristol, England, in 1935, Prowse represented England in weightlifting at the 1962 Commonwealth Games. Director George Lucas saw Prowse in a small part in *A Clockwork Orange* and asked the actor to audition for the villainous Vader or the Wookiee Chewbacca in Star Wars. Prowse later told the BBC he chose Darth Vader because "you always remember the bad guys." Prowse donned Darth Vader's black armor and helmet for Star Wars (1977), The Empire Strikes Back (1980) and Return of the Jedi (1983).

## 15. Tahawwur Rana's extradition

- **Tahawwur Rana, key accused in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack**, wanted it to be conveyed to one of the Pakistani co-conspirators a year after the **2008 attacks** that he deserved a 'medal' for 'top class' contribution and that the "Indians deserved it," papers filed by the U.S. government in a California court say. Rana, wanted by the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** in the 2008 terror attack case, is currently lodged in a Los Angeles prison, awaiting extradition to India.

- Ten heavily armed men, trained by Pakistan based terror outfit **LeT** and officials in the Pakistan security establishment, launched coordinated attacks on 12 locations in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, killing 166 people, including six Americans.
- The 10th terrorist - **Ajmal Kasab** - was caught and later hanged to death at a Pune prison in 2012. On September 28, the U.S. federal prosecutors filed an “extradition memorandum” in the district court of California, regarding Rana’s extradition. On December 4, 2019, in accordance with the provisions of the Extradition Treaty between India and the U.S, the Embassy of India submitted a diplomatic note formally requesting **Rana’s extradition**.

#### **16. Cross-border terror biggest challenge for SCO region : Venkaiah**

- **Cross-border terrorism** is the biggest challenge for countries belonging to the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation**, said **Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu** while chairing a meeting of the SCO heads of government, comprising **India, Russia, China, Pakistan and four Central Asian states**. Without identifying Pakistan, he stated that India was concerned about state sponsored terrorism.
- A **virtual exhibition on the shared Buddhist heritage** of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) countries was launched by Vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu during the meeting.

#### **17. U.K mercenaries' role in Sri Lanka war under lens**

- London police said on Monday they have launched an investigation into **alleged war crimes by British mercenaries** who trained a security force accused of brutalising Tamil people during Sri Lanka's civil war.
- The investigation concerns **Keenie Meenie Services (KMS)**, a now defunct private security company that trained an elite unit of the Sri Lankan police called the **Special Task Force (STF) in the 1980s** to fight Tamil separatists, according to the BBC. The STF has been accused of summary executions of alleged Tamil Tiger rebels and killings of Tamil civilians.
- Sri Lanka's **Tamil separatist war ended in 2009**. More than 100,000 people lost their lives, according to United Nations estimates. The United Nations has accused the Sri Lankan forces of killing at least 40,000 Tamil civilians in its military campaign, an allegation denied by successive governments.

#### **18. Moderna to seek US, EU vaccine authorisation**

- **Moderna Inc** will apply for **U.S. and European emergency authorization for its COVID-19 vaccine** after full results from a late stage study showed it was **94.1% effective** with no serious safety concerns, the company said. Moderna also reported that its vaccine’s efficacy rate was consistent across age, race, ethnicity and gender demographics as well as having a 100% success rate in preventing severe cases of a disease that has killed nearly 1.5 million people. **Pfizer** has already applied for emergency use authorisation in the United States and Europe, putting it about a week ahead of Moderna.
- The vaccines developed by both Moderna and Pfizer/ BioNTech use a new technology called synthetic messenger RNA (mRNA) whereas others, such as Britain’s AstraZeneca, are using more traditional methods. **AstraZeneca** has announced an average efficacy rate of 70% for its shot and as much as 90% for a subgroup of trial participants who got a half dose, followed by a full dose. But some scientists have expressed doubts about the robustness of the 90% efficacy figure for the smaller group.

#### **19. Australia-China relationship**

- Australia demanded an apology after a senior Chinese official posted a fake image of an Australian soldier holding a knife with blood on it to the throat of an Afghan child, calling it “truly repugnant” and demanding it be

taken down. **Prime Minister Scott Morrison** called a media briefing to condemn the posting of the image, marking another downturn in deteriorating relations between the two countries.

- Australia's relationship with China has deteriorated since Canberra called for an international inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic. Earlier this month, China outlined a list of grievances about Australia's foreign investment, national security and human rights policy, saying Canberra needed to correct its actions to restore the bilateral relationship with its largest trading partner.

#### **20. Effective information sharing crucial, says FATF**

- **The Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** has apprised about 400 experts from both the public and private sectors of the latest risk findings related to money laundering and terror funding. During its annual joint experts' meet, attended by participants from various government agencies all over the world and international bodies such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and Interpol, the FATF also informed them about solutions and its ongoing projects.

#### **21. Joe Biden administration likely to nominate Neera Tanden as OMB chief**

- **U.S. President-elect Joe Biden** intends to nominate Indian-American **Neera Tanden** as the **Director of the Office of Management and Budget**, a top position inside the White House responsible for managing the administration's budget, according to media reports. If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, 50-year-old Ms. Tanden would be the first woman of colour to head the influential office at the White House. Ms. Tanden is **currently the chief executive of the Centre for American Progress**, a public policy research and advocacy organization.

#### **22. BRICS Media Forum on fighting 'Fake News'**

- Representatives of media organisations from **BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa)** called for the five nations to work together to jointly combat the "virus of disinformation" in the pandemic era. At the **fifth BRICS Media Forum**, held virtually to coincide with the recently concluded BRICS summit, media organizations discussed ways in which journalists from the grouping could collaborate more closely to tell stories, with the countries facing many similar challenges, from economic issues to public health, as they grapple with COVID-19.

#### **23. Pakistan-China sign military deal**

- China and Pakistan have signed a new military memorandum of understanding to boost their already close defence relationship, as China's Defence Minister and People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Wei Fenghe met Pakistan's leadership in Islamabad and visited the headquarters of the Army at Rawalpindi.
- Gen. Wei also discussed ongoing projects under the **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, in which the Pakistani military is playing an increasingly prominent role. The Chinese Defence Minister also had talks with Pakistan's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza, and both sides "reaffirmed their commitment to **'Iron Brotherhood' and 'All Weather' friendship**."
- **Gen. Wei's visit followed his day-long visit to Nepal**, where he was the highest ranking Chinese official to visit since President Xi Jinping's visit in October last year.

#### **24. Facebook NEWS to launch in UK next year**

- Facebook said it will launch its news tab feature in Britain from next year, paying publishers for stories delivered through the world's leading social network. The arrival of **Facebook News** in January comes after the service was rolled out in the U.S. in late 2019 and is part of plans to extend it worldwide, the company said.

- Titles covered in the first wave of deals include **The Economist, The Guardian, The Independent** and **the Mirror**, and local newspapers the London Evening Standard, the Manchester Evening News and the Scotsman. Lifestyle magazines such as Cosmopolitan, GQ, Vogue and Tatler have also signed up, while there is a video partnership with Channel 4 News.

## 25. [Role of Russia in Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict](#)

- The vicious war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the disputed mountain enclave of **Nagorno-Karabakh** has settled into a tense truce enforced by heavily armed Russian troops. For Russia, long a provocateur in the broader **Caucasus** region, the peacemaker role is a switch - a new test and opportunity for a country struggling to maintain its influence in the former Soviet lands.
- It was Mr. Putin, the Russian President, who by all accounts stopped the war that killed thousands this fall. But he did so by departing from the iron-fisted playbook Russia has used in other regional conflicts in the post Soviet period, when it intervened militarily in Georgia and Ukraine while invading and annexing Crimea.
- Russia has a mutual defence alliance with Armenia, but Mr. Putin insisted it did not apply to Nagorno-Karabakh. He has maintained close personal ties to **President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan**. The strategy seems to have paid immediate dividends, providing the Kremlin with a military foothold in the region and welding Armenia firmly into Russia's sphere of influence, without alienating Azerbaijan.

## 26. [Explainer/Opinion : Regional priorities](#)

- Three years after joining the eight nation **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**, India hosted the SCO heads of governments (HoG) meeting for the first time on Monday. The focus of the 66-point joint communiqué at the end of the virtual conference was in developing a *"Plan of Priority Practical Measures for 2021-2022 to overcome the socio-economic, financial and food consequences of COVID-19 in the region"*. Members committed to strengthening multilateralism and the UN charter while welcoming the fact that the grouping is now being seen as an "influential and responsible participant in the modern system of international relations".
- Although the HoG Council consists of the Prime Ministers of all SCO countries, **neither Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan attended the meet**, ostensibly due to a protocol mismatch between the position of PMs in parliamentary democracies versus those in the former Soviet bloc and China. Mr. Modi was represented by **Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu**, who made strong observations on **cross-border terrorism**; he called it the SCO region's "biggest challenge", in comments aimed at Pakistan. Pakistan's representative too spoke of the need to combat what she called "state terrorism" in disputed areas, in a reference to Jammu and Kashmir.
- India also marked its **differences with China over the BRI** by not joining other SCO members in a paragraph endorsing the BRI. Mr. Naidu made a pitch for "transparent and trustworthy" trade practices, seen as a sidebar aimed at China.
- The SCO is **one of the few regional structures India is a part of now**, given a decline in its engagement with SAARC, **BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal)** and the RCEP. The SCO provides India a convenient channel for its outreach - trade and strategic ties - to Central Asian countries. It has afforded a platform, when needed, for bilateral discussions with the two countries India has the most tense ties with: China and Pakistan.

## 27. [Olympic rings back in Tokyo Bay](#)

- The Olympic rings are back in Tokyo Bay. They were removed for maintenance four months ago shortly after the Olympics was postponed until next year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rings will be lighted at night and herald the coming of the Olympics, which are to open on July 23, 2021, followed by the Paralympics on Aug. 24.

- The reappearance of the rings is the latest sign that organisers and the International Olympic Committee are increasingly confident that 15,400 Olympic and Paralympic athletes can safely enter Japan during the pandemic.

#### **28. [Britain approves Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine](#)**

- Britain approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine. Prime Minister Boris Johnson touted the green light from the U.K.'s medicine authority as a global win and a ray of hope amid the pandemic.
- The **Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)** granted emergency use approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which they say is 95% effective in preventing illness, just 23 days since Pfizer published the first data from its final stage clinical trial.

#### **29. [China buys first Indian rice in decades amid scare supply](#)**

- China has begun importing Indian rice for the first time in at least three decades due to tightening supplies from Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam and an offer of sharply discounted prices. India is the world's biggest rice exporter and China the biggest importer.
- China's traditional suppliers, such as Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar and Pakistan, have limited surplus supplies for export and were quoting at least \$30 per tonne more compared with Indian prices

#### **30. [Wong defiant as he is jailed for protest](#)**

- **Joshua Wong**, 24, one of Hong Kong's most prominent democracy activists, was jailed on Wednesday for more than 13 months over an unlawful anti-government rally in 2019, the toughest and **most high-profile sentence for an opposition figure this year**. Mr. Wong's sentence comes as critics say the Beijing-backed government is intensifying a crackdown on Hong Kong's opposition and chipping away at freedoms guaranteed after the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997, a charge authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong reject.

#### **31. [China's #MeToo case gets its moment in court](#)**

- A sexual harassment case against a powerful Chinese media figure began in Beijing on Wednesday, with his accuser calling it a major moment in the country's still-young **#MeToo movement**.
- **Zhou Xiaoxuan**, now 27, sparked a social media storm in 2018 after accusing prominent television host **Zhu Jun** of groping and forcibly kissing her when she was an intern at state broadcaster CCTV. China's first-ever civil code - passed in May - **expanded the definition of sexual harassment**, but many women are still reluctant to come forward and it is rare for cases like this to make it to court. Zhu is a former host of the country's annual Spring Festival **Gala** — one of the world's most-watched television shows.

#### **32. [Biden sets new demands for return to Iran Nuclear deal](#)**

- **U.S. President-elect Joe Biden** will insist Iran agrees to new demands if it wants the U.S. to return to a nuclear deal and lift sanctions, mentioned a report published in the New York Times. The Times said the Biden administration would seek to extend the duration of "restrictions on Iran's production of fissile material that could be used to make a (nuclear) bomb" in a new round of negotiations.
- Iran would also have to address its "malign" regional activities through proxies in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen in the talks that would have to include its Arab neighbours like Saudi Arabia, the report said. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018 and has reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran as part of a "maximum pressure" campaign against the US's arch enemy. The 2015 nuclear deal - known formally as the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA** - gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

### 33. [Global alert on vaccine frauds](#)

- Interpol has issued a **global alert to law enforcement agencies of its 194 member countries**, asking them to prepare for the targeting of COVID-19 vaccines, both physically and online, by **organised crime networks**. “The **Interpol Orange Notice** outlines potential criminal activity in relation to the falsification, theft and illegal advertising of COVID-19 and flu vaccines, with the pandemic having already triggered **unprecedented opportunistic and predatory criminal behaviour**,” it said on Wednesday. The notice includes examples of crimes in which individuals were found to be advertising, selling and administering fake vaccines.

### 34. [Boris Johnson invited as chief guest for Republic Day](#)

- India has invited the U.K. **Prime Minister Boris Johnson** as **chief guest for the Republic Day celebrations** in January 2021 and a decision on this is awaited from London. There has been no top-level visit since U.S. President Donald Trump’s visit in February due to COVID-19. Also, with the number of COVID-19 cases in India crossing 9.5 million, there is **still no clarity on the Republic Day celebrations** next year.
- **Defence cooperation**, a priority area for the two countries, has seen a lot of activity in the past few years. A **mutual defence logistics support agreement** is in the advanced stages of being signed, while a **defence training Memorandum of Understanding** is also in the works. A **Defence Technology and Industrial Capability Cooperation MoU** was signed in April 2019.
- The two countries are close to signing a government-to-government agreement on **jet engine technology development**. In addition, the U.K. government is working on a government-to-government framework for **defence deals in future**. The U.K. has already announced its intent to **deploy a Liaison Officer** at the Indian Navy’s Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region meant to **improve Maritime Domain Awareness**.
- The U.K. has also made a pitch to India for joint technology development of sixth generation fighter technologies which can go into India’s fifth generation **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft** as well as offered design of its Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier for the Indian Navy’s proposed second indigenous carrier.

### 35. [Explainer/ Opinion : Behind China's wolf war diplomacy](#)

- While Beijing’s recourse to nationalistic aggression as a foreign policy stratagem has gained the euphemism of **‘wolf warrior diplomacy’** only recently, it has been a work-in-progress for much longer and involves a state sponsored and systemic indoctrination campaign. Under Mr. Xi, this process has become even more intense and has acquired the dynamics of **‘Chinese nationalism with Xi Jinping at [the] Core’**. Today, this nationalism derives its inspiration from the idiom of **‘Great Rejuvenation’** and its obsession with re-achieving the glories of an imaginary past.
- The first concerted attempt by the Chinese Communist Party to shape Chinese nationalism came with the launch of the **‘Patriotic Education Campaign’** in the 1990s. Consequently, a narrative of **‘Century of humiliation’** was invented and etched in public memory as a historical fact. At the core of this campaign was the grand design to project the Chinese Communist Party as the harbinger and sole guarantor of the peace, prosperity and sovereignty of the **eternally ‘victimised’ Chinese nation**. In fact, the campaign has earned Mr. Xi the epithet of **‘fandui fubai’**, or the one who is opposed to corruption among the Chinese public.
- The Chinese Communist Party’s patriotic indoctrination efforts consist of dedicated programmes for both the Party members, and the general public. The new ‘Patriotic Education’ guidelines were introduced in 2019, along with the **‘2019-2023 National Work Program for the Education and Cultivation of Party Members’**.
- In addition to dictating the academic curriculum, these guidelines promote extra-curricular activities such as **‘Red Education’** history tours which include visits to Chinese Communist Party museums and **‘martyrdom commemoration sites’**, **‘Study Lei Feng Volunteer Service’** programmes, etc. The stated aim of such programmes is to achieve Mr. Xi’s mission to cultivate future generations of Chinese youth with **‘Red DNA’**.

- The promotion of the Xi Jinping personality cult has become an intrinsic component of Chinese nationalism, as with Mr. Xi's '**Two Centennial Goals**', the meticulously cultivated nostalgia of the Chinese people for the fabled Middle Kingdom appears more tangible than ever. Today, several elite institutions in China have either established research centres or introduced mandatory courses in '**Xi Jinping Thought**'
- The Xi Jinping cult of personality is set to gain further momentum after the recently concluded fifth plenum of the Party which approved a plan for China to become a global leader in technology by 2035. With this 15-year plan, Mr. Xi has further declared his intentions to remain at the helm of China's affairs long after his due retirement date as **General Secretary of the Party in 2022**.

## What does the killing mean for Iran

### 1. Assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh

- The assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a top Iranian nuclear scientist and a brigadier general in the **elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**, on the outskirts of Tehran on Friday has triggered a new crisis in West Asia. It is the most high profile killing of an Iranian regime figure since the assassination of **General Qassem Soleimani** in January this year by the U.S. in Baghdad.

### 2. Role of US/Israel/Saudi Arabia in the killing

- Iran started violating the terms of **the nuclear deal** after President Trump unilaterally pulled the **U.S.** out of the agreement in May 2018. The loss of Fakhrizadeh, at a time when Iran is taking steps to expand its nuclear programme, either as a strategy or as a bargaining chip, is a clear setback to its plans.
- **Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zariff** has said there are "serious indications" that **Israel** was involved in the attack. The attack comes weeks after **President Trump** reportedly sought options to bomb Iran before he leaves office on January 20.
- It's hardly a secret that **Israel, Saudi Arabia and the Trump administration** would want to stop the Iran nuclear deal being revived, which could lead to the lifting of sanctions on Iran and leave the Islamic Republic stronger. When the **leaders met in Neom**, there were speculations that something was brewing in West Asia. Then came the attack on Fakhrizadeh.

### 3. Retaliation options of Iran

- Iran has threatened to "strike as thunder" in retaliation. But Iran's options against Israel appear to be limited, unless **Hezbollah**, the **Lebanese Shia militia-cum-political party**, is ready to attack northern Israel from its bases in southern Lebanon.
  - Iran faces a growing dilemma. If it doesn't retaliate in the wake of repeated provocations, there would be questions, both inside and outside the country, about its ability to protect the regime's top leaders or take counter-measures against what it calls "terrorism". If it takes any major retaliatory step, it could escalate the conflict, providing room for **Israel and the Trump administration** to take rapid military measures, which would cut off the diplomatic path for the Biden administration to take the U.S. back to the nuclear deal.
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## Science & Technology and Environment

### Daily snippets

#### 1. GMRT accorded prestigious IEEE milestone status

- **The Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT)** has been selected as a **'Milestone' facility** by the U.S - based **Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)**, which is the world's largest technical professional organization dedicated to advancing technology in all areas related to electrical and electronics engineering. The IEEE Milestones programme honours significant technical achievements which have global or regional impact.
- This is only the third such IEEE 'Milestone' recognition for an Indian contribution. The previous two Indian IEEE Milestones were for the pioneering work done by **Sir J.C. Bose to demonstrate the generation and reception of radio waves in 1895** (recognized in 2012), and for the **Nobel Prize-winning (in 1930) 'scattering of light' phenomenon** observed by **Sir C.V. Raman** in 1928.

#### 2. 'Sea sparkle' has affected marine food chain : CMFRI

- The bloom of **Noctiluca Scintillans**, commonly known as **"sea sparkle"** that the Karnataka coast has been witnessing since about a month, has displaced microscopic algae called **diatoms**, which form the basis of the marine food chain. This has deprived food for the planktivorous fish, scientists from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Mangalore, have said.

#### 3. Dry swab RT-PCR COVID-19 test gets ICMR nod

- The **CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research)-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB)** got permission from the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** to commercially use the "game changing technology" of dry swab RNA-extraction-free testing method for COVID-19. Developed by an in-house research team, it will help the authorities scale up testing at a fraction of the current cost of conventional RT-PCR tests and also give results more quickly.

#### 4. Hetero to produce Russia's COVID-19 vaccine in India

- Russia's **COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V** will be produced in India by **generic pharmaceutical firm Hetero**. Announcing an agreement with Hetero, sovereign wealth fund RDIF - which is piloting the vaccine - said **more than 100 million doses of the vaccine** would be produced. The vaccine's interim clinical trial results show 95% efficacy on the 42nd day after the first dose.

#### 5. The rising threat of Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

- **Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** is growing at an alarming rate. Globally, about 35% of common human infections have become resistant to available medicines. About 700,000 people die every year because available antimicrobial drugs - antibiotics, antivirals, antiparasitic and antifungals - have become less effective at combating pathogens.

- Resistance to **second and third line antibiotics** - the last lines of defence against some common diseases - are projected to **almost double between 2005 and 2030**. According to a study published in *The Lancet*, an estimated 58,000 new born children die annually from sepsis in India alone because antibiotics can no longer treat certain bacterial infections.
- Micro-organisms develop resistance to antimicrobial agents as a natural defence mechanism. The misuse and overuse of antimicrobials for humans, livestock and agriculture is probably the biggest reason for this, but other factors also contribute. Research also points to the **role of environment and pollution** in AMR.
- Once consumed, up to **80% of antibiotic drugs are excreted unmetabolized**, along with resistant bacteria. Their release in effluents from households and health and pharmaceutical facilities, and agricultural runoff, is propagating resistant microorganisms. Wastewater treatment facilities are unable to remove all antibiotics and resistant bacteria. In India, there is capacity to treat only about 37% of the sewage generated annually, the rest is discharged into natural water bodies without treatment. Water, then, may be a major mode for the spread of AMR, especially in places with **inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene**.
- The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** identified **antimicrobial resistance** as one of six emerging issues of environmental concern in its **2017 Frontiers Report**. UN agencies are working together to develop the **One Health AMR Global Action Plan (GAP)** that addresses the issue in human, animal, and plant health and food and environment sectors.

## [The complexities of cyclone forecasting](#)

### 1. [Cyclone Nivar](#)

- Cyclone Nivar, that barrelled through Tamil Nadu and brought copious rain in its wake, was the third major cyclone to land on India's coast this year, besides **Amphan and Nisarga**. The Nivar storm originated in the Bay of Bengal and whipped up **wind speeds close to 125-145 kmph**. However, relatively fewer lives were lost compared to the havoc wreaked by **Amphan in West Bengal in May**. What aided relief operations in the anticipation of Nivar was that it largely conformed to forecasts issued by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.

### 2. [How are cyclones forecasted?](#)

- Over the years, India's ability to track the formation of cyclones has improved significantly. There is a network of **12 doppler weather radars (DWR)** along India's coast, there are 27 in all in the country. Depending on where a storm is forming, these radars send pulses of radio waves to gauge the size as well as the speed at which water droplets are moving. The earlier generation of radars was unable to track such progress in real time, but with DWRs, now the base standard of weather radars, it is usually **possible to detect a potential storm at least four-five days in advance**. The IMD also collaborates with similar international networks, such as **the Japan Meteorological Agency, the U.S. National Hurricane Center, and the U.S. Central Pacific Hurricane Center**, and these bodies constantly send warnings and forecasts about changes in the ocean weather.
- The IMD follows a five stage classification for cyclones, with the lowest a **'cyclonic storm' generating wind speeds of 62-87 kmph**, and the highest a **'super cyclonic storm', generating winds over 222 kmph**. **April-June and October-December** are India's cyclone seasons. The arriving monsoon, as well as its retreat, stir up the surrounding seas and generate cyclones. Though the Bay of Bengal is three times more likely to generate cyclones, the ones that originate in the Arabian Sea are trickier, as the cyclone, while ostensibly moving away from India's western coast, can suddenly 'recurve' and move back in. There are also fewer radars along India's west coast than the eastern coast, and all these reasons **make the Bay of Bengal cyclones more tractable**.

- The ubiquity of mobile communication makes it much easier to quickly give warnings. The **IMD also issues flood forecast maps**, in collaboration with urban bodies that forecast which pockets in a city are likely to be flooded and where crop damage is likely to be maximum.

### [NASA's SpaceX Crew-1 launch : Significance and way forward](#)

#### 1. Background :

- Collaboration with NASA and SpaceX. With its reusable rockets, large capsules to carry payloads and crew and competitive pricing, Elon Musk founded **SpaceX has revolutionised the space sector**.
- Recent accomplishments of SpaceX include the launch of the **Crew Dragon spacecraft** on November 15, which carried to **the International Space Station four astronauts** - Michael Hopkins, Victor Glover and Shannon Walker of NASA and Soichi Noguchi of the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency ( JAXA). Another recent feat is the launch of **60 more Star link Internet relay satellites** into orbit. The total number of satellites sent by SpaceX now stands at 955.

#### 2. Picture in India

- India has a **strong government control** on the space industry with ISRO leading the way. The control is loosening with ISRO hiring vendors and actively outsourcing rocket components and allowing external agencies to use ISRO facilities. It is not too much to expect that, soon, India may also see the emergence of collaborations like that between SpaceX and NASA.

#### 3. Commercialisation of Space sector and Space tourism

- **Dr. Mylswamy Annadurai**, former director of ISRO Satellite Centre, notes that the collaboration between NASA and SpaceX is remarkable because it has in fact taken the American space programme to a level that had not been possible for NASA to achieve by itself.
- Such partnerships also open space for curiosity-driven science. Space tourism could become more common as space travel becomes less expensive. There are companies now, such as **Virgin Galactic, Blue Origin and SpaceX**, that will offer space flights.

### [RT-LAMP : a new technology for detecting COVID-19](#)

#### 1. Current method

- The current method for SARS CoV2 diagnosis is the **real time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test**. This detects the presence of viral nucleic acids in nasopharyngeal swab samples. However, the test requires complex and costly equipment. It requires extensive training for potential users. As the **specificity and sensitivity of the test** is about 95%, there is a possibility of false negative results. The turnaround time is about 10 hours. The RT-PCR tests may not be able to keep pace with the increasing demand.
- COVID-19 serology tests : **COVID-19 serology tests** are also in use to detect antigens that are associated with the virus infection. These tests are easy to use with rapid results, as well as have minimal expenses. However, **serology immunoassay lacks the necessary accuracy** to be a reliable diagnostic test due to its **low sensitivity and high false negative/positive rates**.

#### 2. Superior Technique

- RT-LAMP (Reverse Transcriptase loop mediated isothermal amplification) technology, this is a one-step nucleic acid amplification method to multiply specific sequences of RNA of the coronavirus. The **RNA is first made into cDNA** by the **usual reverse transcription**. Then, the DNA is amplified by the LAMP technique.

### 3. Advantages over RT-PCR

- The RTPCR test needs different temperatures in one cycle. The PCR test needs an expensive thermal cycler as well as the real-time PCR machines. On the other hand, the new **RT LAMP technology is done at 65 degrees C, where the DNA amplification is done at a constant temperature** (isothermal), so that expensive thermal cycler is not required.
- The **quantity of DNA amplified in the LAMP technology** is hundred thousand times more than that is taking place in PCR. Therefore the final assay is possible with a simple colour reaction, removing the need for very costly real time PCR machines. The results in case of RT-LAMP can be obtained within 30 minutes.
- In case of RT-LAMP, the reagents are to be **stored at 4 degree C** (ordinary fridge), whereas the **PCR based reagents** are to be stored and transported at -20 degrees C, which **needs deep freezers that escalate the cost**.

### 4. Approval for LAMP testing

- The LAMP technology has been recently validated by the Indian Council of Medical Research with sensitivity 98.7% and specificity 100%. Thus, in the case of LAMP based kits, the Positive predictive value is 100% and Negative predictive value is 98.8% with accuracy of 99.38%.

### Study on the lifetime risk of diabetes in metros

1. Disturbing new research published in *Diabetologia* ( journal of the European Association for the Study of **Diabetes**) shows that more than half of men (55%) and some two thirds (65%) of women **aged 20 years in India** will likely develop diabetes, with most of those cases **(around 95%) likely to be type 2 diabetes**.
  2. India already has a significant health burden caused by diabetes and **estimates suggest that 77 million adults** have diabetes and this is expected to **almost double to 134 million by 2045**.
  3. Such high probabilities of developing diabetes will have severely negative implications for India's already strained health system and also out-of-pocket expenditure on diabetes treatment by patients, unless diabetes is immediately acknowledged for what it is: one of the most important threats to public health in India.
  4. The researchers noted that - **urbanisation, decreasing diet quality and decreased levels of physical activity** - are all contributing to this hidden epidemic. **Obesity** had a substantial impact on these projections.
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## Economics and Finance

### Daily snippets

#### 1. Nielsen widens estimate for FMCG contraction to 1-3%

- The **FMCG sector in India** is expected to **contract by 1% to 3% in 2020** despite green shoots seen recently in economic indicators, due to significant headwinds seen in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, according to **market research firm Nielsen**.
- According to the firm, the sector saw significant degrowth in the second quarter ended June and it was highly unlikely that that would get compensated for in the fourth quarter.

#### 2. \$20 billion potential in renewable sector : PM

- India's renewable energy deployment plans for the coming decade are likely to generate business opportunities worth \$ 20 billion a year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the inaugural session of the **Global Renewable Energy Investment Meeting and Expo**. He added that India's renewable energy capacity was now the fourth largest in the world.
- He urged global investors to consider tapping the recently approved **production linked incentive scheme** for manufacturing **high efficiency solar power modules in the country**.

#### 3. Fiscal deficit reaches 120% of annual targets

- The Union Government's fiscal deficit further widened to ₹9.53 lakh crore, or close to **120% of the annual budget estimate**, at the end of October of the current fiscal, according to official data released by the Controller General of Accounts. . The lockdown imposed to curb spreading of coronavirus infections had significantly impacted business activities and in turn contributed to sluggish revenue realisation.
- The difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government is termed as **fiscal deficit**. It is an indication of the total borrowings needed by the government. [Further Reading](#)

#### 4. S&P global to acquire HIS Markit

- **Data giant S&P Global Inc.** has agreed to buy IHS Markit Ltd. in an all stock deal **worth \$44 billion** that will be the biggest corporate acquisition of 2020. This will create a heavyweight in the increasingly competitive market in financial information. The deal highlights the growing importance of big data in financial markets governed by **information hungry trading algorithms**.
- S&P Global is best known for providing debt ratings to countries and companies, as well as data on capital and commodity markets. It became a standalone business in 2011 when its then parent McGraw-Hill separated S&P. IHS Markit was formed in 2016 when IHS, whose business includes data on automotive and technology industries to publish **Jane's Defence Weekly**, bought Markit for about \$6 billion.

#### 5. Kaspersky, CERT-in link pact on cybersecurity

- Kaspersky said it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERTIn)** for collaboration in the **area of cybersecurity**. The MoU will facilitate cooperation for detection of latest cyber threats and to devise security measures, the firm said in a statement.

#### 6. [India to surpass 350 million 5G connections by 2026](#)

- India, which has the **highest average monthly mobile data traffic per smartphone**, is expected to **surpass 350 million 5G subscriptions by 2026**, accounting for 27% of all mobile subscriptions in the country, according to a report by Swedish telecom equipment maker Ericsson's "**The Ericsson Mobility Report 2020**".
- The report added that in the India region, LTE (long-term evolution technology) subscriptions are forecast to increase from 710 million in 2020 to 820 million in 2026 by which time 3G will be phased out.
- The report added that in India, the reliance of people on mobile networks to stay connected as well as work from home during the pandemic has resulted in **average traffic per smartphone** user rising from 13.5 GB a month in 2019 to **15.7 GB in 2020**, the highest globally.

#### 7. [Fate of bank capital in Asia](#)

- Banks in India and Sri Lanka are expected to **post larger declines in the absence of public or private funds injections**, Moody's Investors Service said in its Emerging Markets Financial Institutions Outlook report.
- The report added that Non Performing Loans (NPLs) will rise most for banks in India and Thailand because of the greater shock to their economies and the historically poor performance of certain loan types. In India, stress among non bank financial institutions will also curtail their capacity to lend. Profit growth will be modest because of **low interest rates and subdued lending**, but lower loan volumes will aid capital.

#### 8. [GST inflows top 1 lakh crore for second month in a row](#)

- Gross revenues from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) crossed ₹1 lakh crore for the second month in a row, with ₹1,04,963 crore collected in November 2020. Cumulatively, the GST revenues from the first eight months of 2020-21 add up to ₹6,64,709 crore, reflecting a 17.4% dip from the ₹8,05,164 crore collected in the same period of 2019-20.
- Among the major States, Andhra Pradesh (12%), Gujarat and Jharkhand (11%), followed by Tamil Nadu (10%), were the only ones to record double-digit growth in November's GST revenues compared to a year ago.

#### 9. [Rolls-Royce partners Infosys for engineering](#)

- Aerospace and defence technology major Rolls Royce and tech consulting and digital services firm Infosys have entered into a partnership for sourcing engineering and R&D services for Rolls-Royce's civil aerospace business.

#### 10. [Chinese Fintech major mulls at selling stake in PayTm](#)

- **Chinese fintech giant Ant Group** is considering selling its 30% stake in Indian digital payments processor Paytm amid tensions between the two Asian neighbours. Financial details of the possible transaction have not been firmed up and Ant, the Alibaba backed payments-to-consumer credit behemoth, has not launched a formal sale process yet. Paytm, which is also backed by **SoftBank Group**, was valued at about **\$16 billion during its latest private fundraising** round a year ago.
- Ant's possible exit from Paytm would mark another reversal for the Chinese firm following the suspension of its **\$37 billion listing last month**, which would have been the world's largest.
- Since the clash India has tightened rules for investments from China and banned **dozens of Chinese mobile apps**, including from tech giants Tencent, Alibaba and ByteDance. It banned 43 more apps late last month.

- Indian start-ups are heavily funded by Chinese investors such as Alibaba and Tencent. Alibaba has invested over \$4 billion in India so far and had plans to invest about \$5 billion in 2021. Ant first invested in Paytm in 2015 and owns 30% via its parent company, One97 Communications.
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## Sports

### Daily snippets

#### 1. Belgium stays No.1 in FIFA rankings

- Belgium is still at number one in the **FIFA released final rankings for 2020**. Defending World Cup champion France is second, with Brazil third and England fourth. European champion Portugal rounds out the top five, with Spain in sixth.

#### 2. Delhi Half Marathon

- Farmer groups have rejected the Home Minister's conditional invitation for talks, and refused to shift to the designated protest grounds in **Burari, calling it an "open jail"**. Tens of thousands of farmers are massed at the borders of Delhi, demanding the repeal of the **Centre's three agricultural reform laws** and withdrawal of an electricity Bill.
  - Equipped with rations that could last for months, they have threatened to block five of the entry points into the capital if their demands are not heard. Leaders also expressed scepticism about the government's offer for talks, saying that two previous rounds of dialogue had shown that the government had nothing to offer, and there had been no concrete response.
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## Suggested Readings

1. Vaccine nationalism and its ill effects, [Link to article](#)
2. Tougher laws and online abuse, [Link to article](#)
3. Legal matrix of Online Fantasy Sports in India, [Link to article](#)
4. India's Data Protection Bill, [Link to article](#)
5. Neom, the future city, [Link to article](#)
6. BIT arbitration awards, [Link to article](#)
7. UP ordinance criminalizing religious conversion by marriage, [Link to article](#)
8. Deregulated imperfect agricultural markets, [Link to article](#)
9. 7th Sunil Memorial Lecture, [Link to article](#)
10. Idea of exclusive belonging, [Link to article](#)
11. Indifference to the Basic structure doctrine, [Link to article](#)
12. The art of policy making, [Link to article](#)
13. Reforestation Hero : Jadav Payeng, [Link to article](#)
14. Caste among Muslims and reservation, [Link to article](#)
15. Democratizing the cyber laws, [Link to article](#)
16. Contempt for free speech, [Link to article](#)

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

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