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## 'It's wait and watch on disengagement'

- The June 22 consensus reached between the Indian and Chinese Corps Commanders on disengagement is yet to be implemented, adding that it was “wait and watch by both sides”.



### Cause of concern:

- Meanwhile, satellite images and reports indicate a massive build-up and construction by China's People Liberation Army (PLA) along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh in Galwan Valley and in Depsang plains, threatening the Indian Army's positions in Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO).
- Fresh reports of Chinese ingress in this area threatens Indian positions at Burtse and Raki Nala well inside Indian territory, and further the DBO by bringing Chinese troops closer to the 255-km-long crucial Darbuk-Skyok-DBO road.
- Depsang is also close to the Karakoram pass overlooking the strategic Saltoro ridge and Siachen glacier, which the Army chief Gen Manoj Naravane earlier this year had called the closest point of “collusivity” between India and Pakistan.

### Plains occupied in 1962:

- India too has since moved its troops and armour closer, said another source. Depsang plains is one of the few places on the LAC where tank manoeuvres are possible. In the 1962 war, Chinese troops occupied the plains and in 2013, Chinese troops came 19 km inside and pitched tents, resulting in a 21-day stand-off.
- Satellite images also show a massive build-up of defensive positions by China between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on Pangong Tso, including on the ridge lines in the Finger 4 area overlooking the Indian positions.



- The mountain spurs, also referred to as Fingers, have been a major area of contention. The fresh build-up has prevented Indian patrols from going beyond Finger 4. India's claim of the LAC lies at Finger 8.

## India reiterates cultural linkages with Nepal

- India on Thursday reiterated cultural links with Nepal in response to the upcoming amendments to the Citizenship Act of Nepal which is likely to affect a large number of families that have cross-border kinship with India.

### Details:

- The reiteration of 'linkages' came days after the ruling Nepal Communist Party decided to support amendments to the citizenship rules that will require foreign-born women marrying Nepalese men to spend at least seven years before getting citizenship.
- The decision of the NCP's secretariat to go ahead with the amendments drew prompt opposition from the Nepali Congress and the leaders from its plain areas which have extensive cross border kinship with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. India has in the past described the relation as roti-beti (bread and bride).
- The current rulers of Nepal do not subscribe to the emotional aspect of bilateral ties and want it to be modified.
- In an interview with WION channel, Bishnu Rijal, deputy chief of the foreign affairs department of the NCP, described roti-beti as "old rhetoric".
- "We should reset our relationship based on our mutual benefit. Nepal and India have changed. Our aspirations have changed. We should put forward some bold steps in our relationship," said Mr. Rijal explaining his party's position.
- India has, however, maintained silence about the difficulties the amendments will cause for families with cross-border ties.
- Janata Samajvadi Party, largest political outfit of Nepal led by the Madhesis, have been protesting against the amendments which had been pending for years but received the NCP's support soon after the passing of the Second Constitutional Amendments during which all political parties voted displaying unity over the emotive issue of the new map that claimed Pithoragarh.



## Vande Bharat mission phase 4 from July 3

### Key Points:

- The fourth round of the Vande Bharat mission, meant for the repatriation of Indians from around the world, will begin from July 3.
- It will focus on bringing back Indians from the Gulf countries, Malaysia and Singapore, among others.
- Nearly 1,050 flights will be planned in the phase. Private Indian airlines will handle 750 of them and Air India the rest.
- Since the commencement of the mission on May 8, nearly 700 flights have repatriated 1,50,00 Indians.

## Panchayats to get ₹10 lakh cr. till 2026

### Key Points:

- The Panchayati Raj Ministry has pitched for a fivefold increase in Finance Commission funding for rural local bodies.
- **Finance Commission allocation:** In a meeting with the 15th Finance Commission on Thursday, the Ministry asked for ₹10 lakh crore to be allocated for the 2020-21 to 2025-26 period, in comparison to the ₹2 lakh crore allocated under the 14th Finance Commission. It noted that allocations had tripled between the 13th and 14th Commissions as well.
- An impact evaluation study showed a 78% utilisation rate for FC grants between 2015 and 2019, the Ministry told the Commission, according to a presentation seen by The Hindu.
- Road construction and maintenance, as well as drinking water supply have been the major projects carried out by panchayats using FC grants. The 2.63 lakh panchayats across the country have 29 functions under their ambit, according to the 11th Schedule of the Constitution.



- Panchayats have also gained importance as crucial nodal points in times of crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they ran 38,000 quarantine/isolation centres, apart from medical camps and contact tracing.
- Going forward, the new Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan will depend on panchayats to generate employment for newly returned migrant workers.

## Student unions seek recall of EIA draft

### Draft Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2020:

- Student unions from several universities and colleges from across India have petitioned Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar to put the draft of the proposed Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2020 on hold.
- The notification, which is open to public comments until June 30, is a proposed update to the existing EIA, 2006 that prescribes the procedure for industries to assess the ecological and environmental impact of their proposed activity and the mechanism whereby these would be assessed by expert committees appointed by the Ministry.

### Key points of dispute

- The key points of dispute with the proposed draft are that it shortens the period of public consultation hearings to a maximum of 40 days, and reduces from 30 to 20 days the time provided for the public to submit their responses during a public hearing for any application seeking environmental clearance.
- This would, in the petitioners view, hinder public access in places where information was not easily accessible or areas in which people weren't familiar with the process.
- Crucially, the draft also institutionalises "violation" projects.
- Under a provision issued in 2017, it allows projects that have come up flouting environmental norms to be reviewed by a committee of experts and, if they so decreed, legalise the project after paying a fine. This, several environmentalists have argued, is seriously contrarian to several established principles of environment law.





## 'IN-SPACE will be space industry regulator'

### Key Points:

- IN-SPACE, a new entity of the Department of Space, will have its own chairperson and Board, and regulate and promote building of routine satellites, rockets and commercial launch services through Indian industry and start-ups.
- These activities had been largely the domain of the 50-year-old Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) until now, but the change will not upset the core research activity of ISRO.

### About IN-SPACE:

- IN-SPACE, or **Indian Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre**, is touted as the body that will ensure a level playing field for Indian industry in a fast-growing global space sector. It will function autonomously and parallel to ISRO "without taking away anything from it".
- The entity was approved by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday and was unveiled by Minister of State for Space Jitendra Singh in Delhi.

### Own set-up:

- IN-SPACE will have its own directorates for technical, legal, safety and security, monitoring and activities promotion.
- The year-old NSIL [NewSpace India Ltd] will be strengthened and empowered with a larger role in what the government has called the new "open and inclusive" space sector.
- It will work with IN-SPACE and enable industry consortia to take on some of the activities of ISRO. These include launch vehicles and satellite production, launch services and space-based services.

### Navigation policy:

- A new satellite navigation policy, which has a strategic military element to it, is being proposed. The older ones, namely **Remote Sensing Data Policy** and the **SatCom Policy of 2000**, are being revised.
- These are apart from a proposed policy for space activities that has seen a draft.



## Ozone pollution sees a spike: report

### Key Points:

- While particulate matter and nitrous oxide levels fell during the lockdown, ozone — also a harmful pollutant — increased in several cities, according to an analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).
- Ozone is primarily a “sunny weather problem” in India, said CSE researchers, that otherwise remains highly variable during the year.
- It is a highly reactive gas; even short-term exposure of an hour is dangerous for those with respiratory conditions and asthma and that’s why an eight-hour average is considered for ozone instead of the 24-hour average for other pollutants.
- Ozone is not directly emitted by any source but is formed by photochemical reactions between oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and gases in the air under the influence of sunlight and heat. It can be curtailed only if gases from all sources are controlled.

### Analysis:

- The analysis was based on Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data from 22 cities in 15 States in lockdown days considered from March 25 to May 31.
- It emerged that more than two-thirds of the lockdown days in Delhi-NCR cities and Ahmedabad had at least one observation station that exceeded the standard. In Ahmedabad, the city-wide maximum eight-hour average of ozone exceeded the standard on 43 days; in Ujjain, it exceeded on 38 days.
- The city-wide maximum average of ozone in Gurugram exceeded the standard on 26 days — at least one observation station exceeded the standard on 57 days. The city-wide eight-hour maximum average in Ghaziabad exceeded the standard on 15 days, with at least one station exceeding on 56 days.
- In Noida, Uttar Pradesh, the city-wide maximum average exceeded the standard on 12 days; at least one station exceeded on 42 days.
- In Delhi, the maximum eight-hour average exceeded the standard on four days, and at least one station exceeded the standard on 67 days.



- In Kolkata, the city-wide average of ozone was exceeded on eight days; at least in one station the standard was exceeded on 17 days.
- Chennai and Mumbai did not register a single day of excess ozone at the city-wide level, but at least one station in both exceeded the standard on 61 days and five days, respectively.

## FATF report flags wildlife trade

### Money Laundering and the Illegal Wildlife Trade Report 2020:

- In its first global report on the illegal wildlife trade, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has described it as a “global threat”, which also has links with other organised crimes such as modern slavery, drug trafficking and arms trade.
- The illegal trade is estimated to generate revenues of up to \$23 billion a year. The report says a financial investigation is key to dismantling the syndicates involved, which can in turn significantly impact the associated criminal activities.
- The findings of the study, which expressed concern over the lack of focus on the financial aspects of the crime, are based on inputs from some 50 jurisdictions across the FATF global network, as well as expertise from the private sector and civil society.

### Fraud and tax evasion:

- The report said “criminals are frequently misusing the legitimate wildlife trade, as well as other import-export type businesses, as a front to move and hide illegal proceeds from wildlife crimes. They also rely regularly on corruption, complex fraud and tax evasion”.
- The study has highlighted the **growing role of online marketplaces and mobile and social media-based payments** to facilitate movement of proceeds warranting a coordinated response from government bodies, the private sector and the civil society.
- The FATF found that jurisdictions often did not have the required knowledge, legislative basis and resources to assess and combat the threat posed by the funds generated through the trade.





## Good practices:

- The report recommended that jurisdictions should consider implementing the good practices, as observed during the study.
- The report noted that in 2012, India amended the Prevention of Money Laundering Act removing a value threshold — of ₹30 lakh and above — that was earlier applicable to the wildlife trade predicates.

## Japan scraps U.S. missile system

### Aegis Ashore system:

- Japan has scrapped the deployment of a multi-billion-dollar U.S. anti-missile system, the government confirmed on Thursday, days after saying the programme had been suspended.
- Interceptors for the Aegis Ashore system were to be placed in two regions under the costly programme.