



Current Affairs of the Day

PAPER 2:

➤ International Relations:

1. India and China hold fresh talks
2. 'Sputnik V will be made available to Indians'
3. India, Bangladesh to monitor projects
4. Sri Lanka to draft new Constitution

PAPER 3:

➤ Economy:

1. Govt. plans further stake sale in IRCTC

➤ Health & Sanitation:

1. Swachh Survekshan 2020 report



India and China hold fresh talks

- India and China on Thursday held another round of border talks aimed at breaking the impasse along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), with complete disengagement still remaining a far-off prospect.
- Thursday's talks marked the fourth meeting of the **Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC)** since tensions began this summer.
- More than 10 rounds of high-level talks have since been held, including five rounds between the Corps Commanders, in addition to the conversations between the Special Representatives and the Foreign Ministers.
- Both were in agreement that restoration of peace and tranquillity in the border areas would be essential for the overall development of bilateral relations.
- China has not accepted India's demand for a return to status quo ante before early May's tensions. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) remains on India's side of the LAC on the north bank of **Pangong Lake**, where most of the new fortifications it had built remain in place.
- Tensions also prevail in the **Depsang plains**, where the PLA has obstructed India's patrols from reaching the LAC, and in the Gogra-Hot Springs area.

Pakistan FM in China:

- Meanwhile, China and Pakistan began their annual two-day strategic dialogue on Thursday.

'Sputnik V will be made available to Indians'

- One week after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia registered the **world's first vaccine to combat COVID-19**, Kirill Dmitriev, the CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund that created the vaccine — Sputnik V — says it will be made available for India.
- In a written response to questions on concerns raised in several countries, he says the mechanisms used are the "safest" in the world.



India, Bangladesh to monitor projects

- India and Bangladesh will set up a mechanism to monitor bilateral projects.
- The announcement came a day after Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla returned after holding talks with the leadership of Bangladesh in Dhaka, where both sides agreed to jointly deal with the border killings and establish a closer partnership to deal with the COVID-19 crisis.
- The two countries also proposed that a high-level monitoring mechanism be set up to regularly review the progress of the ongoing projects.

Railway lines:

- The monitoring mechanism is expected to assist in timely completion of several ongoing projects, including the **Rampal Maitree Power Plant, India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, and rail links between Akhaura-Agartala, Chilahati-Haldibari and Khulna-Mongla rail line** that are to be completed by 2021.

Indore wins cleanest city title again

Swachh Survekshan 2020 report:

- For the fourth year in a row, Indore has been ranked the cleanest city in the country, according to a Swachh Survekshan 2020 report released by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry on Thursday.
- The survey of sanitation in over 4,000 cities was carried out over 28 days earlier this year.

Key findings:

- Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri said Swachh Survekshan, in its fifth edition, had become the world's largest sanitation survey, with 1.8 crore citizens giving their feedback.
- Among the cities with over 1 lakh population, Indore was ranked number one, followed by Surat, Navi Mumbai, Ambikapur, Mysore, Vijayawada, Ahmedabad, New Delhi, Chandrapur and Khargone. Among smaller cities, with population under 1 lakh, the top three cities — Karad, Sasvad and Lonavala — were all from Maharashtra.



- Chhattisgarh was ranked the cleanest State out of those with over 100 cities, while Jharkhand was the cleanest among those with fewer than 100 urban local bodies (ULBs) or cities. In the category of “Ganga towns”, Varanasi, Mr. Modi’s Lok Sabha constituency, was ranked the cleanest.
- Jalandhar got the top rank among cantonments and New Delhi was the cleanest capital city.
- Speaking about the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)-Urban, Mr. Puri said it had had a deep impact on health, livelihoods, quality of life and behaviour, which had come in handy when dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- When the mission was launched in 2014, waste processing was 18%. Now it had increased to 66%. Earlier in the event, Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said Swachh Survekshan, which began with a survey of 73 cities in 2016, had grown to cover 4,242 cities, 62 cantonment boards and 97 “Ganga towns” in 2020. Survey teams visited 58,000 residential and 20,000 commercial areas in 28 days, while 1.87 crore citizens’ feedbacks were received.

Second phase:

- Ministry was actively working on coming up with a second phase of the SBM-Urban, which was initially supposed to be till March 2020 but was extended till March 2021.
- The goal of the second phase would be take targets further, than making cities open defecation-free, to also include 100% sludge management and zero dumping of waste in the open.

Sri Lanka to draft new Constitution

- Sri Lanka will draft a new Constitution, jettisoning the **19th Amendment** passed in 2015 that imposed curbs on presidential powers and strengthened Parliament, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has said.
- Addressing the inaugural session of Parliament following the August 5 general election on Thursday, President Rajapaksa said: “As the people have given us the mandate we wanted for a constitutional amendment, our first task will be to remove the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. After that, all of us will



get together to formulate a new Constitution suitable for the country.” The new Constitution, he said, would prioritise the concept of “one country, one law for all the people.”

Poll promise:

- The ruling party’s poll campaign sought such a majority from the electorate, promising to abolish the 19th Amendment.

Background:

- The statute, passed in 2015 during the former President Maithripala Sirisena-Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe’s term, sought not only to clip the President’s executive powers, but also to strengthen independent commissions. It brought back the two-term limit on Presidency.
- It was hailed by many, including members of civil society, as a progressive legislation in contemporary Sri Lankan history, even as its critics found it falling short in some respects. The Rajapaksa camp viewed the 19th Amendment’s clauses as primarily intending to prevent its leaders’ return to power.
- Outlining his plans further, President Rajapaksa told Parliament that it was “essential to make changes to the current electoral system” while drafting a new Constitution, retaining elements of the proportional representation system currently followed. On the government’s task of reviving the country’s economy, he called for “out-of-the-box thinking” to overcome local and global challenges.

Govt. plans further stake sale in IRCTC

- The government plans to sell part of its stake in **Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corp (IRCTC)** this fiscal, and has invited bids from merchant bankers for managing the sale process.
- The Centre now holds 87.4% in IRCTC. To meet **SEBI’s public holding norm**, the government has to lower stake to 75%.