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Current Affairs of the Day

PAPER 2:

➤ International Relations:

1. 'Provocative action' by PLA again: MEA
2. India, Russia to hold naval drills in Andaman Sea
3. India aims for balance with slew of multilateral meetings

PAPER 3:

➤ Economy:

1. GST revenue falls 12% in August at ₹86,449 crore

➤ Health:

1. Number of accidental deaths, suicides grew in 2019: NCRB



'Provocative action' by PLA again: MEA

- Chinese troops engaged in “provocative action” along the disputed boundary in Ladakh once again on August 31, even as Commanders of the two sides were in discussion to de-escalate the situation.
- As Brigadier-level talks continued for the second day in Chushul, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held a high-level meeting to review the ground situation.
- A defence source said that on August 31, PLA troops came closer to the posts dominated by the Indian Army but “they were dissuaded”.
- Mr. Srivastava said the Foreign Ministers and Special Representatives had agreed that the situation should be handled in a responsible manner and either side should not take any provocative action or escalate matters. The Chinese side violated this understanding and engaged in “provocative military manoeuvres” in the late night of August 29 and 30 in an attempt to change the status quo in the south bank area of Pangong Lake.
- The Indian Army took “appropriate defensive measures” to safeguard our interests and defend the territorial integrity”. The actions and behaviour of the Chinese side since earlier this year along the LAC had been in clear violation of the bilateral agreements and protocols concluded between the two countries.

GST revenue falls 12% in August at ₹86,449 crore

- Goods and Services Tax revenue in August stood at ₹86,449 crore, just over 1% lower than the ₹87,422 crore collected in July. On a year-on-year basis, GST collections dropped 12% from August 2019, according to data released by the Finance Ministry on Tuesday.
- State-wise data shows that Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have posted a marginal increase in collections, while Haryana and Rajasthan saw a marginal decrease. Major States still showing a significant drop include Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.
- Overall, revenues from import of goods dropped 23% from the previous year, while revenues from domestic transactions dropped 8%. The Ministry



noted that small businesses with a turnover less than ₹5 crore have till September to file returns.

India, Russia to hold naval drills in Andaman Sea

Indra 2020:

- Amid high operational alert by the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) due to the ongoing stand-off with China in Ladakh, India and Russia are scheduled to hold the bilateral naval exercise, Indra 2020, in the Andaman Sea, close to the strategic Strait of Malacca later this week.
- Three Russian Navy ships will take part in the exercise on September 4 and 5 along with an equal number from the Indian Navy, along with some aircraft.
- This is also the first bilateral naval exercise since all such engagements were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The timing of the exercise coincides with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Russia for the **Shanghai Cooperation organisation (SCO)** Defence Ministers meet. It also comes just after India withdrew from the **Kavkaz-2020** multinational exercise in Russia that is scheduled for later this month.
- While the stated reason for the withdrawal was the COVID-19 pandemic, defence sources had said that it was due to the participation of Chinese troops.
- So instead of exercising with Chinese troops in Kavkaz 2020, we would exercise with Russian Navy near the mouth of Malacca.

Exercise with U.S.

- In July, frontline warships of the Indian Navy conducted a **Passage Exercise (PASSEX)** with the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Nimitz strike group in the same area near the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) islands as it was transiting the Indian Ocean.
- USS Nimitz was returning from the South China Sea through the Malacca Strait where it undertook freedom of navigation operations.



India aims for balance with slew of multilateral meetings

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will meet with their Russian and Chinese counterparts next week for the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** meeting, while New Delhi is planning to host their American counterparts for the **Indo-U.S. "2+2"** talks as well as a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the **"Quad"**, including Australia and Japan in October, several officials confirmed.
- The plans for the meetings by the government indicates it is still pursuing both strategic formations despite rising tensions at the **Line of Actual Control** with China.
- On Wednesday, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will leave for Moscow to "attend the SCO Defence Minister's meeting" on September 3, the Minister's office tweeted on Tuesday. He will attend the meeting alongside defence ministers of China and Pakistan, although the only bilateral meeting planned is with Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu.
- On September 4, Mr. Jaishankar will attend a virtual meeting of the **Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS)** foreign ministers. He is then is due to fly to Moscow for the SCO foreign ministers' meeting on September 10, as well as a bilateral meeting with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov.
- It remains to be seen whether Mr. Jaishankar will speak separately to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, their first face-to-face meeting since the People's Liberation Army began its aggressive moves at the LAC in May.
- Both Mr. Singh and Mr. Jaishankar's visits are on track despite New Delhi's decision to pull out troops from military exercises with 18 armies, hosted by Russia in Astrakhan this month ostensibly over the optics of exercising together while the Armies are facing off at the LAC in Ladakh.
- Meanwhile, U.S. State Department Deputy Secretary Stephen Biegun confirmed on Monday that a meeting of Ministers of the Quadrilateral is being planned "this fall", and officials confirmed that it would be in October.

"There's going to be meeting of the Quad, a ministerial meeting with the Quad this fall in Delhi — that is the intention anyway," said Mr. Biegun



while speaking at a **U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF)** event.

Number of accidental deaths, suicides grew in 2019: NCRB

National Crime Records Bureau report 2020:

- The number of suicide cases and accidental deaths registered an increase across the country last year from the 2018 figures, according to the annual National Crime Records Bureau report. The most cases of mass/family suicides were reported from Tamil Nadu (16), followed by Andhra Pradesh (14), Kerala (11) and Punjab (9) and Rajasthan (7).
- Suicides in the country went up slightly from 1,34,516 to 1,39,123. Of the 97,613 male suicides, the most were of daily wage earners (29,092), followed by self-employed persons (14,319) and the unemployed (11,599). Of the 41,493 female, over half were housewives.
- The most suicides by unemployed persons were in Kerala at 14% (1,963), followed by 10.8% in Maharashtra, 9.8% in Tamil Nadu, 9.2% in Karnataka and 6.1% in Odisha. Most suicides by those in business activities were in Maharashtra (14.2%), Tamil Nadu (11.7%), Karnataka (9.7%), West Bengal (8.2%) and Madhya Pradesh (7.8%).
- The suicide rate in cities (13.9%) was higher compared to the all-India average.
- In the Central Armed Police Forces, a total of 36 personnel died by suicide, 38.9% were due to “family problems”. Five such suicides were reported in Rajasthan, followed by four in Tamil Nadu. In all, 104 personnel died in various accidents.

Accidental deaths:

- Accidental deaths in the country increased by 2.3%. Compared with 4,11,824 in 2018, the figure stood at 4,21,104 last year.
- The rate (per lakh population) increased from 31.1 to 31.5.
- The most casualties of 30.9% were reported in the 30-45 age group, followed by 26% in the 18-30 age group.



- Maharashtra reported the highest deaths (70,329), amounting to nearly one-sixth of the total figure.
- Uttar Pradesh, the most populous State, accounted for 9.6% cases, followed by Madhya Pradesh (10.1%).
- A total of 8,145 deaths was due to the causes attributable to forces of nature, including 35.3% due to lightning, 15.6% by heat/sun stroke and 11.6% deaths in floods. The most deaths (400) due to lightning was reported each from Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, followed by Jharkhand (334) and Uttar Pradesh (321).
- The major causes were 'traffic accidents' (43.9%), 'sudden deaths' (11.5%), 'drowning' (7.9%), 'poisoning' (5.1%), 'falls' (5.1%) and 'accidental fire' (2.6%). A majority (57.2%) of deaths was in the age groups of 18-45 years.

Those who require assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health suicide prevention helpline 011-4076 9002.