



## Current Affairs of the Day

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#### ➤ Health:

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## MCI replaced by National Medical Commission

- The **National Medical Commission (NMC)** has replaced the Medical Council of India (BoG-MCI), as per information released by the Health Ministry on Friday.
- The change was aimed at bringing in reforms in medical education.
- The government dissolved the MCI in 2018, replaced it with a BoG, which was chaired by Dr. VK Paul, member (health), NITI Aayog, said the Ministry.

## Quad discusses Indo-Pacific infrastructure and 5G

- Senior officials from the Foreign Ministries of “the **Quad**” group of countries — **India, the U.S., Australia and Japan** — met virtually on Friday, during the United Nations high level week, as part of their periodic consultations on the Indo-Pacific region.

### Key takeaways:

- Officials discussed ongoing and proposed practical cooperation in the **areas of connectivity and infrastructure development**.
- The U.S. State Department spelt out the discussion on connectivity more. Noting the importance of **digital connectivity and secure networks**, the officials discussed ways to promote the use of trusted vendors, particularly for fifth generation (5G) networks.
- In an effort to stop Chinese G5 giant Huawei from setting up shop networks in other countries, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo has been promoting “clean telcos” — a list of companies considered by the U.S. administration to be free from security risks and the risk of surveillance by the Chinese government.
- Other topics discussed by the Quad officials, as per the statements, included **counter-terrorism, cyber and maritime security, and quality infrastructure in the region**.

### ASEAN inclusiveness:

- Both countries’ statements say the officials committed support to the concept of ASEAN-centrality in the Indo-Pacific and ASEAN’s leadership in the architecture of the region.



- The U.S. statement says the officials “explored ways to work together in the Mekong sub-region, in the South China Sea, and across the Indo-Pacific to support international law, pluralism, regional stability, and post-pandemic recovery efforts”.
- The MEA statement says the officials reiterated their readiness to work with ASEAN and all other countries towards realising “a common and promising vision for the Indo-Pacific”.
- The U.S. statement describes collective efforts to advance “a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region”.
- The phrase normally used by Washington is “free and open Indo-Pacific”. India had, at least initially since the Quad was revived after a ten year hiatus in 2017, been hesitant for the Quad to be seen as a framework to exclude or contain China.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had articulated an inclusive vision for the Indo Pacific in 2018 at the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore, when India-China relations were on a high relative to this year, when there have been tensions and clashes along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

## Value Added Information

### About Quad:

- Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is the informal strategic dialogue between India, USA, Japan and Australia with a shared objective to ensure and support a “free, open and prosperous” Indo-Pacific region.
- The idea of Quad was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it, apparently due to Chinese pressure.
- In December 2012, Shinzo Abe again floated the concept of Asia's “Democratic Security Diamond” involving Australia, India, Japan and the US to safeguard the maritime commons from the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific.
- In November 2017, India, the US, Australia and Japan gave shape to the long-pending "Quad" Coalition to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence (especially China).



## Mahinda to discuss fishermen's concerns with Modi

- Following a meeting with Sri Lanka's northern fisher leaders, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has promised to take up their concern over "trespassing Indian trawlers" with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the virtual summit scheduled on Saturday.
- "Our fisher leaders from the Northern Province raised the issue of Indian trawlers poaching in our waters, and using banned fishing practices, often damaging the boats and fishing nets of Sri Lankan fishermen. "There is a fear that our Navy may not be arresting them fearing the Indian fishermen might be carriers of the coronavirus," he added.
- Bilateral cooperation, including development partnership, regional security, COVID-19 response and the political situation are expected to be discussed.
- Sri Lanka's Tamil leadership has expressed hope that the leaders will discuss the pending Tamil question, especially in the wake of some in government calling for abolition of provincial councils, the only structural guarantee so far of a measure of power devolution to the provinces.

## 'One-third of funding by AIIB has gone to India'

- Out of the \$20 billion in loans issued by the Beijing-based **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**, about \$6 billion has gone to India, the bank's second-largest shareholder after China, says D.J. Pandian, who, as the lender's vice-president of Investment Operations, oversees all sovereign and non-sovereign lending in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Before moving to Beijing, Mr. Pandian spent 35 years in the Indian Administrative Service. Excerpts:

### How has the AIIB been involved in infrastructure projects in India so far?

- As far as India is concerned, the pipeline of projects is very strong. We have supported around \$5 billion worth of projects in India.
- The bank will complete 5 years in January 2021, and we may add another \$1 billion in India by then, and maybe it will be \$6 billion in total. The bank has just started, building up the team and policies. Out of the total \$20 billion of projects approved, \$6 billion has come to India, which is almost one-third.



- We are supporting unique projects, including the Chennai Metro Corridors 4 and 5 and Chennai Peripheral Ring Road, which are at an advanced stage, and the Grand Anaicut scheme to modernise the canal system in the Cauvery delta region which we are preparing with the government of Tamil Nadu, which will help save almost 20% of water leakages.
- The Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System is a high-speed rail that will reduce travel time from 3-4 hours to within one hour. This is being co-financed with the Asian Development Bank.

**In June, the AIIB announced a \$750 million loan to India for COVID-19 assistance. Are there other projects being considered this year?**

- There are at least two regular investment projects which we can take up to the Board in the next 2-3 months. One is a power transmission line project in Assam which is around \$300 million, and the other is the Delhi-Meerut high speed rail which is \$500 million.
- Also, we may look at two cities in Punjab, Amritsar and Ludhiana, for water supply municipal rejuvenation projects.

**In July, President Jin Liqun said on current India-China tensions, that the bank's decision-making is only based on economic merits; will the problems between the two biggest shareholders impact the bank?**

- President Jin is absolutely right. We are apolitical. Our decisions are based on the merit of the project, not on what is happening, or on internal or external problems.
- China is the largest shareholder; so some in India, including the Opposition, have criticised the government for taking loans in June, saying you're a Chinese bank...
- This is a lesson for us, that we need to educate people about what the bank really is, and build our brand. We are very, very, apolitical. We are a multilateral bank of 103 members, of which 77 are active members. All of Europe are Bank members. Canada, Australia, New Zealand are also members.
- The Vice President of Investment Operations is an Indian!





## How has COVID-19 changed the projects for AIIB?

- We have already been able to build up a pipeline of projects in Asia. Those conventional infrastructure projects that were already at an advanced stage, we were able to bring it to the Board for approval.
- As soon as the COVID response facility was set up, when it began as an emergency response led by the World Bank, we have also committed almost \$13 billion, of which so far we have approved \$6 billion.
- This is for both health preparedness and to provide liquidity to the governments so that they can buy equipment, particularly medical equipment, and enlarge hospital facilities to take care of their immediate requirement.
- Initially, the idea of social infrastructure was not the focus of the bank, but we cannot avoid this any more; we are going to do that but we need to build up expertise within the bank to do health care and other social infrastructure projects.

## Value Added Information

### What is AIIB?

- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond.
- It is headquartered in Beijing.
- It commenced operations in January 2016.
- By investing in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors today, it aims to connect people, services and markets that over time will impact the lives of billions and build a better future.

### Various organs of AIIB:

- **Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors consists of one Governor and one Alternate Governor appointed by each member country. Governors and Alternate Governors serve at the pleasure of the appointing member.
- **Board of Directors:** Non-resident Board of Directors is responsible for the direction of the Bank's general operations, exercising all powers delegated to



it by the Board of Governors. This includes approving the Bank's strategy, annual plan and budget; establishing policies; taking decisions concerning Bank operations; and supervising management and operation of the Bank and establishing an oversight mechanism.

- **International Advisory Panel:** The Bank has established an International Advisory Panel (IAP) to support the President and Senior Management on the Bank's strategies and policies as well as on general operational issues. The Panel meets in tandem with the Bank's Annual Meeting, or as requested by the President. The President selects and appoints members of the IAP to two-year terms. Panelists receive a small honorarium and do not receive a salary. The Bank pays the costs associated with Panel meetings.

### Significance of AIIB:

- The United Nations has addressed the launch of AIIB as having potential for "scaling up financing for sustainable development" for the concern of global economic governance. The capital of the bank is \$100 billion, equivalent to 2/3 of the capital of the Asian Development Bank and about half that of the World Bank.