



## Current Affairs of the Day

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- Supreme Court declines EC plea to restrain media reports

### GS Paper III

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- What's Facebook's Oversight Board
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- Russia approves one-dose 'Sputnik Light'



## EU to discuss U.S. vaccine patent plan at Friday summit

France joined the United States in supporting an easing of patent and other protections on COVID-19 vaccines that could help poorer countries get more doses and speed up the end of the pandemic.

### Highlights:

1. The move to support waiving intellectual property protections on vaccines under World Trade Organization rules marked a dramatic shift for the United States — and drew cheers from activists, complaints from Big Pharma, and a lot of questions about what comes next.
2. Attention is now turning to those richer nations, notably in the European Union, and France was the first to voice its support.
3. Russian President Vladimir Putin also said he supported the idea of a waiver on patent protections for coronavirus vaccines.
4. The EU Commission said the 27-nation bloc was ready to talk about the U.S. proposal — but cagily remained non-committal for now. “We are ready to discuss how the U.S. proposal for a waiver could help”.

## Supreme Court declines EC plea to restrain media reports

Real-time reportage of court proceedings, including the oral exchanges in courtrooms between judges and lawyers, is part of the right to freedom of speech, the Supreme Court held in a judgment.

### Highlights:

1. “With the advent of technology, we are seeing reporting proliferate through social media forums which provide real-time updates to a much wider audience. This is an extension of the freedom of speech and expression that the media possesses. This constitutes a virtual extension of the open court,” the court observed in a judgment.
2. The court said that except in cases of child sexual abuse and marital issues, the phenomenon of a free press should extend to court proceedings.
3. “Citizens have a right to know about what transpires in the course of judicial proceedings. The dialogue in a court indicates the manner in which a judicial



proceeding is structured. Arguments addressed before the court, the response of opposing counsel and issues raised by the court are matters on which citizens have a legitimate right to be informed,” Justice Chandrachud observed.

4. The court referred to how the Gujarat High Court had recently introduced live-streaming of its proceedings in a bid to enhance public participation in the dispensation of justice.
5. In this backdrop, it would be retrograde for this court to shield the daily operations of the High Courts and this court from the media in all its forms.

## The patent waiver will help fight virus: govt.

### Highlights:

1. In view of COVID-19, India and South Africa had in October last year proposed a relaxation in the norms of the TRIPS agreement to ensure quick and affordable access to vaccines and medicines for developing countries.
2. India welcomed the U.S. government’s support for this initiative. “We are hopeful that with a consensus-based approach, the waiver can be approved quickly at the WTO,” it said.
3. India said a temporary waiver of certain provisions of the intellectual property rights under a World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement would be an important step to enable the scaling up of manufacturing and the timely availability of affordable COVID-19 vaccines and essential medical products.

## What’s Facebook’s Oversight Board

Facebook’s Oversight Board upheld the social media network’s decision to block the then-U.S. President Donald Trump from its platform. Facebook had decided to indefinitely block Mr Trump for using the platform to “incite violent insurrection against a democratically elected government”.

### The Oversight Board

The Oversight Board has been set up as an independent body that will help Facebook figure out what content can be allowed on the platform and what ought to be removed. The decisions of the board are binding on Facebook.



## The ruling of the Board:

1. The board did uphold Facebook's decision to block Mr Trump but also said: "it was not appropriate for Facebook to impose the indeterminate and standardless penalty of indefinite suspension".
2. Its point was that Facebook usually responded to violations by either removing such content, or suspending the user for a specific time period, or effecting a permanent ban. Indefinite suspensions aren't part of its response mix, which is what has been flagged. The Board has now given Facebook six months to come up with a "proportionate response that is consistent with the rules that are applied to other users of its platform."
3. The investigation showed that prior to the January 6 Capitol riots by Trump supporters, five of Mr Trump's posts had been found violating Facebook's community standards. They were, therefore, removed.

## Drugmakers say Biden misguided over the patent waiver

U.S. President supports waiving intellectual property rights for COVID vaccines.

### Highlights:

1. Drugmakers said U.S. President Joe Biden's support for waiving patents of COVID-19 vaccines could disrupt a fragile supply chain and that rich country should instead share more generously with the developing world.
2. Mr Biden on Wednesday threw his support behind waiving intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines, angering research-based pharmaceutical companies.
3. If adopted by the WTO, the proposal would invite new manufacturers that lack essential know-how and oversight from the inventors to crowd out established contractors, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) said.
4. "I have heard many (vaccine makers) talking about 'our resources are stretched, our technicians are stretched'," IFPMA said.
5. Vaccine developers echoed his comments that waiving intellectual property rights was not a solution.



## ‘Unfathomable amounts’

“Since mRNA technology has emerged as the key technology in the fight against COVID-19, the world now needs the same raw materials in unfathomable amounts. The biggest problem is how to coordinate this,” a spokeswoman said.

## Russia approves one-dose ‘Sputnik Light’

### Highlights:

1. Sputnik Light is the first component — recombinant human adenovirus serotype number 26 (rAd26) — of the Sputnik V vaccine that has been approved by over 60 countries, including India.
2. There is a big interest already in Sputnik Light and it is likely to be registered in several countries as early as next week.
3. It can be used as a booster shot for other vaccines. Cocktail of vaccines like Sputnik V is the way to go, and they work very well,” he said.
4. Sputnik Light demonstrated 79.4% efficacy. The efficacy of Sputnik V was 92%.