



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper II

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- Ghani to meet Biden as U.S. exit looms
- Pakistan to remain on FATF greylist
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Prelims

- Tibet gets first bullet train, links Lhasa to India border



Afghan exit by the U.S. may bring infiltrators: Army

1. The Army said the U.S. pull-out from Afghanistan this year may result in some militants moving into Kashmir.
2. Whatever happened 30 years ago has caused huge distress to the people of Kashmir. However, the situation is not what it was 30 years ago.
3. The Army was ready and fully geared to foil all infiltrations and face every challenge, whether on the Line of Control (LoC) or the hinterland. There had been zero infiltration this year.
4. All the parameters of violence in Kashmir have come down by 50% and the situation was very good with stability across the Valley.

Ghani to meet Biden as U.S. exit looms

Deep uncertainty: Afghan leader Ashraf Ghani faces the cold reality of the end of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan when he meets with President Joe Biden in the White House.

Highlights:

1. Under increasing threat from an emboldened Taliban insurgency, Mr Ghani will be hoping for a significant commitment of U.S. aid to his government, which will be without the on-the-ground support of U.S. forces for the first time in nearly two decades.
2. But any hopes for a delay in America's exit from its longest war are likely to be snuffed.
3. Speaking in Paris on Friday, U.S. said the U.S. could no longer adhere to the same approach to Afghanistan of the past 20 years, despite the fresh Taliban gains on the ground.
4. But the White House will also pressure the Afghan leader to strike a deal with the Taliban. We believe that a negotiated political settlement is the best way to end the conflict.
5. The looming U.S. exit has left the country in a deep state of uncertainty, with many worried about the return to power of extremists who applied a brutal version of Islam to the population when they ruled from 1996-2001.



Pakistan to remain on FATF greylist

1. Pakistan was retained on the greylist, or the list of countries under “increased monitoring”, by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), as the Paris-based UN watchdog judged it deficient in prosecuting the top leadership of UN Security Council-designated terror groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e Mohammad, Al Qaeda and Taliban.
2. The FATF said despite completing 26 of the 27 tasks it had been handed, Pakistan’s failure to complete the last task on convicting terrorists and terror entities meant it would not be delisted for now. In addition, the FATF handed down another six-point list of tasks, mainly on money laundering actions.

U.P. ranked best under Smart Cities Mission

1. Uttar Pradesh was ranked the best State, and Indore and Surat were jointly named the best cities by the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry for their work under the Smart Cities Mission.
2. At a virtual event to mark the sixth anniversary of the launch of the Smart Cities Mission, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U), the Ministry announced that Uttar Pradesh had been ranked one, Madhya Pradesh was second and Tamil Nadu third in the India Smart Cities Awards 2020.

Study links air pollution to COVID-19 cases and deaths

Cause of concern: Rising pollution load is a catalyst in aggravating COVID-19 cases, the study showed.

Highlights:

1. A first-of-its-kind pan India study says Mumbai and Pune are among hotspots where high air pollution from the transport and industrial sectors is related to a higher number of COVID-19 cases and deaths.
2. The study is titled ‘Establishing a link between fine particulate matter (PM2.5) zones and COVID-19 over India based on anthropogenic emission sources and air quality data.



3. Maharashtra recorded the second-highest emission load in India — 828.3 gigagrams per year (Gg/Yr) of PM2.5 — based on the National Emission Inventory developed by us. Uttar Pradesh had the highest.
4. Among the 16 cities captured in the study, Mumbai and Pune recorded the third- and the fourth-highest number of “bad air quality days”, respectively. Delhi and Ahmedabad stood first and second, respectively.

Tibet gets first bullet train, links Lhasa to India border

1. China started operating the first bullet train line in Tibet, linking Lhasa to Nyingchi near the border with Arunachal Pradesh.
2. The China State Railway Group said the 435-km line, on which construction began in 2014, has a designed speed of 160 km per hour and would connect the capital city of the Tibet Autonomous Region to the border city of Nyingchi with a travel time of three and a half hours.
3. Over 90% of the track is 3,000 metres above sea level, state media quoted the railway group as saying, and the line is the first electrified high-speed rail (HSR) line, as China refers to bullet trains, in Tibet. China has the world's longest HSR network.
4. The Lhasa-Nyingchi rail is one among several major infrastructure projects recently completed in Tibet's southern and southeastern counties near the Arunachal border.
5. Last month, China completed the construction of a strategically significant highway through the Grand Canyon of the Yarlung Zangbo river, as the Brahmaputra is called in Tibet. This is the “second significant passageway” to Medog county that borders Arunachal.