



## Current Affairs of the Day

- SC backs summons to FB by Delhi govt. riots panel
- Cairn says it has got court nod to attach 20 Indian assets in Paris
- OIC should be watchful of vested interests: MEA
- Cabinet extends Agri Infra Fund loans to APMCs
- PM stresses local language education



## SC backs summons to FB by Delhi govt. riots panel

Social media can influence vast sections, says order.

### Highlights:

1. The Supreme Court upheld the authority of Delhi Assembly's Peace and Harmony Committee to summon Facebook India's senior official Ajit Mohan in connection with the February 2020 communal violence, saying the Capital can ill-afford another riot, and the role of Facebook "must be looked into" in this context.
2. "It is difficult to accept the simplistic approach adopted by Facebook — that it is merely a platform posting third-party information and has no role in generating, controlling or modulating that information," the court said.
3. The 188-page judgment referred to how Facebook itself claimed to be the most popular social media platform in India, with 270 million registered users.
4. Social media platforms such as Facebook have become "power centres" with the ability to influence vast sections of public opinions, the court noted.
5. These platforms are by no means altruistic in character. They employ business models that can be highly privacy-intrusive. It compared Facebook to a "mass-circulation media" with no or little editorial responsibility.

### No exceptional privilege:

1. "Facebook has acknowledged in their reply that they removed 22.5 million pieces of hate speech content in the second quarter of 2020 itself," Justice Kaul, who authored the judgment, observed.
2. Facebook cannot claim any "exceptional privilege" to abstain from appearing before the Peace and Harmony Committee. The court termed Mr Mohan's appeal "premature", saying no coercive action was taken or intended.

### FB cannot duck onus on content: SC

'Though it enabled free speech, it has also become a platform for disruptive voices'

1. In a stinging judgment, the Supreme Court said giant social media platforms such as Facebook, whose active users account for over one-third of the global



population, cannot evade responsibility by “simplistically” claiming they had no power over the third-party information they display.

2. The sheer population of our country makes it an important destination for Facebook. We are possibly more diverse than the whole of Europe in local culture, food, clothing, language, religion, traditions and yet have a history of what has now commonly been called ‘unity in diversity.’
3. This cannot be disrupted at any cost or under any professed freedom by a giant like Facebook claiming ignorance or lack of any pivotal role, the court said.
4. The court said social media entities like Facebook have to remain accountable to those who entrust them with their vast powers. The power and potentiality of the social media intermediaries run across borders.
5. They are multinational corporations with large wealth and influence at their command. Their influence extends over many populations. But this power must necessarily come with responsibility, the court underscored.

While admittedly Facebook has played a crucial role in enabling free speech by providing a voice to the voiceless, it has also simultaneously become a platform for disruptive messages, voices, and ideologies, the court said.

## Cairn says it has got court nod to attach 20 Indian assets in Paris

The Cairn Energy dispute with India over the settlement of a \$1.2 billion award from The Hague took a dramatic turn, with the company saying it had secured a French court order allowing it to freeze at least 20 Indian properties in central Paris.

### Highlights:

The Government of India, however, denied all knowledge of the latest order. It said it had filed an appeal against the tribunal decision of the Permanent Court at The Hague delivered in December 2020.

### Legal remedies

1. “Government is trying to ascertain the facts, and whenever such an order is received, appropriate legal remedies will be taken, in consultation with its counsels, to protect the interests of India,” a Union Finance Ministry statement



said, stressing that no notice, order or communication had been received by the government from any French court.

### Amicable settlement

1. “Our strong preference remains an agreed, amicable settlement with the Government of India to draw this matter to a close, and to that end, we have submitted a detailed series of proposals to them since February this year,” the Cairn spokesperson said.
2. “However, in the absence of such a settlement, Cairn must take all necessary legal actions to protect the interests of its international shareholders,” the spokesperson added in a statement.
3. According to sources, the award by the Tribunal judiciaire de Paris was the “necessary preparatory step” to taking ownership of the properties and ensuring all proceeds from the sale of the properties would be accrued to Cairn Energy PLC as part of its efforts to enforce the award from The Hague in favour of Cairn.
4. While the Paris properties are estimated to yield about \$23 million, Cairn sources had told The Hindu that they have identified assets worth about \$70 billion in several jurisdictions that they could potentially attach through court orders.
5. Cairn lawyers have registered The Hague award in courts in at least 10 jurisdictions including the U.S., the U.K., Netherlands, Canada, France, Singapore, Japan, the UAE and even the Cayman Islands.

### In New York court

1. In June, Cairn lawyers approached the court in the Southern District of New York, making the plea that Air India should be made liable for the outstanding settlement, and stating that other state-owned corporations could be targeted as well.
2. Last month, some foreign investors in Devas Multimedia filed a similar plea in the same court, seeking to declare Air India as the Indian government’s “alter ego” and recover a \$160 million compensation awarded to the firm after an international arbitration over its scrapped deal with ISRO’s commercial arm, Antrix Corporation.



3. The government has until next week to file its challenge to the Cairn Energy plea in the New York court. Even as the tax dispute has snowballed into a tussle in international courts, both the Indian government and Cairn Energy said they were open to continuing talks over the issue.
4. "Government has already filed an application on March 22, 2021 to set aside the December 2020 international arbitral award in The Hague Court of Appeal. Government of India will vigorously defend its case in Set Aside proceedings at The Hague," the Finance Ministry asserted on Thursday.

In December, the three-member tribunal in the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague ruled unanimously against the retrospective tax levied by India on Cairn in 2015. It ruled that the tax fell afoul of the bilateral investment pact between India and the U.K.

## OIC should be watchful of vested interests: MEA

### Highlights:

1. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should not allow itself be "subverted" by Pakistan, which may prompt it to interfere in India's internal affairs.
2. Indian Ambassador conveyed the need to correct some of the misperceptions about India that are perpetrated by vested interests in the OIC. Further, the OIC should be watchful that their platform is not subverted by these vested interests for comments on internal affairs of India or for anti-India propaganda through biased and one-sided resolutions.
3. The discussion between the two sides comes in the context of the reported back-channel talks between India and Pakistan that are being assisted by the UAE.
4. The OIC had stated that the meeting between Dr Sayeed (Indian Ambassador to Saudi) and Dr Al-Othaimen (OIC representative) reviewed a number of issues concerning the situation of Muslims in India, along with the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, and relevant UN and OIC resolutions opposing any unilateral actions on the issue.



## Cabinet extends Agri Infra Fund loans to APMCs

### Highlights:

1. The Centre has decided to allow state-run market yards to access financing facilities through its Agricultural Infrastructure Fund to calm the fears of protesting farmers that such market yards are being weakened.
2. On Friday, at its first meeting after the reshuffle, the Union Cabinet decided to extend the Central Sector Scheme of financing facility under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund to State agencies and Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs), as well as federations of cooperative organisations, Farmers Producers Organizations and self-help groups, according to an official statement
3. They will now be eligible for interest subvention for loans up to ₹2 crores, with APMCs allowed to access separate loans for different kinds of infrastructure projects to build cold storage, silos, sorting, grading and assaying units in their market yards.

### Multiplier effect

1. The period of the financial facility has been extended by two additional years up to 2025-26, while the overall period of the scheme has been extended to 2032-33.
2. The modifications in the Scheme will help to achieve a multiplier effect in generating investments while ensuring that the benefits reach small and marginal farmers.
3. The APMC markets are set up to provide market linkages and create an ecosystem of post-harvest public infrastructure open to all farmers.
4. Agriculture Minister said this was proof that “APMC will not end”. The Central government was committed to making APMC more powerful and useful for farmers, he said.
5. Thousands of protesting farmers have been calling for a repeal of three farm reform laws passed by Parliament last year.



## PM stresses local language education

### Highlights:

1. Prime Minister emphasised the importance of providing engineering education in local languages, during a virtual meeting with the heads of 106 Centrally funded technical institutions and newly appointed Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday.
2. According to one of the attendees, Mr Modi said even research papers and journals in English should be translated.
3. The PM added that we need to develop an ecosystem of technological education in Indian languages and translate global journals into regional languages.
4. This has been a key recommendation of the National Education Policy and the Education Ministry had set up a panel headed to explore ways to begin offering technical education in Indian languages at the highest level.
5. According to the statement, the Prime Minister said there is a need to adapt higher education and technical education to keep in tune with the changing environment.