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## News Analysis (12 Aug, 2020)

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### India-Nepal Talks

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#### Why in News

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The ambassadors of **India and Nepal** are likely to meet in Kathmandu (Nepal) to review projects funded by the Indian government.

The meeting is likely to take place via videoconference in view of the **Covid-19** pandemic situation.

#### Key Points

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- This meeting will be a part of **India- Nepal Joint Oversight Mechanism**.  
The mechanism was established in **2016** to review ongoing bilateral economic and development projects.

- The government of **India** has allocated **Rs. 800 crore** in **budget 2020-21** for

**projects** in Nepal.



- These projects include building **roads in the Terai region**, helping Nepal in its **post-earthquake (2015) reconstruction work**, building railway lines, a police training academy, a polytechnic college, an oil pipeline and border check posts.
- Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between India and Nepal for the **construction of a sanitation facility at the Pashupatinath Temple**, Kathmandu.
- This meeting is important in light of recent **tensions between India and Nepal**.
  - In 2017, Nepal signed up to **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, which sought to create highways, airports and other infrastructure in the country. **BRI was rejected by India** and this move of Nepal was seen as an inclination towards China.
  - In 2019, a **new political map of India**, made after the bifurcation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, showed Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura as part of Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand state.
 

India and Nepal have border disputes over Kalapani - Limpiyadhura - Lipulekh trijunction between India-Nepal and China and Susta area (West Champaran district, Bihar).
  - **Nepal objected** strongly against this map and opinionated that the issue should be resolved through negotiations.
  - Further, the **inauguration of a road up to Lipulekh Pass** (for **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**) by the Indian government on the border with China sparked more protests from Nepal.
  - In retaliation, **Nepal released a new map** that includes all the disputed territories claimed by India.

## Way Forward

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- India and Nepal should together strive towards clearing the tensions between the two countries which have historically shared close ties. **Nepal's growing affinity with China** can also pose a security concern for India amidst the **India-China conflicts**.
- As India has adopted **a Neighbourhood First** Policy, it must work more proactively with Nepal in terms of people to people engagement, bureaucratic engagement as well as political interactions.
- In this context, the **Gujral Doctrine** which helped in resolving India-Bangladesh dispute can be of much help.

**Source: IE**

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## **Depsang Plains**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, India and China have held talks at the **Major General-level** to discuss issues concerning the **strategic Depsang Plains**.

The talks were held at **Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO)** and were limited to Depsang to discuss issues of varying claims and also blocking patrols by each other.

### **Key Points**

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- **About the Meeting:**
  - This was the first high level talks post **Galwan clash** of 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Military talks since then have been limited to Corps Commander level.
  - The meeting **only discussed routine patrolling patterns** by both sides as part of border management **leaving aside disengagement or de-escalation**.

- **Depsang Plains:**



- The Depsang Plains along with **Pangong Tso** are the **two major areas** of concern in the ongoing standoff along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in **eastern Ladakh**.
- Despite the strategic importance of the Depsang Plains, the series of military talks held so far have focussed on the standoff areas at **Galwan, Gogra Hotsprings and Finger area of Pangong Tso**.
- Depsang is one of the few places on the LAC where **tank manoeuvres are possible**.
  - During the **1962 war**, Chinese troops **occupied the Plains**. In **2013**, Chinese troops **came 19 km inside and pitched tents** resulting in a 21-day standoff.
- **Issues:**
  - There is a **heavy Chinese presence** at a crucial area called the **Bulge**, in the Depsang Plains.
  - Chinese troops have **blocked the Indian Army patrols** from reaching the various patrolling points.
  - There has also been a **build-up of tanks and armoured vehicles** on the Chinese side very close to the LAC.
- **Threats:**
  - It **threatens Indian positions** at Burtse and Raki Nala inside Indian territory and further DBO by bringing Chinese troops closer to the 255 km long crucial **Darbuk-Shyok-DBO road**.
  - Depsang is also close to the **Karakoram Pass**, overlooking the very strategic **Salto Ridge** and **Siachen glacier**.

- **Challenges:**

- While addressing the **[email protected] Summit** organised by the **Confederation of Indian Industries** (CII), the External Affairs Minister of India held that **reaching an understanding with China** is a huge challenge before Sino-Indian relations.

Both countries are **demographically very unique** with the billion-plus populations.

- There is a **parallel but differential rise** happening at a time when both are **neighbours as modern states** which puts a huge premium on reaching some kind of equilibrium or understanding between the two.

## Way Forward

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- Finding a balance or equilibrium is very central and crucial for Indian foreign policy calculation.
- At this moment, it is particularly important to revisit the original aspiration of establishing **diplomatic relations** 70 years ago and carry forward the spirit of good neighbourliness and friendship, unity and cooperation.
- India and China are amongst the largest economies, demography, markets and militaries of the world. Therefore, it is in the interests of both the countries to align their energies for the growth and development of their people, region and global peace.

## Source: TH

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## Russian Covid Vaccine: Sputnik V

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### Why in News

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Recently, Russia became the first country to officially register a **Covid-19 vaccine** and declare it ready for use.

### Key Points

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- The vaccine has been called **Sputnik V**, named after the **first artificial Earth satellite, Sputnik-I** launched by the Soviet Union.
- It is the **first Covid-19 vaccine to be approved.**

However, a Chinese vaccine had been cleared for 'limited use' before this. It is an **adenovirus vector vaccine** approved to be administered only on soldiers of the **People's Liberation Army**.

- The Russian vaccine has outrun other Covid-19 vaccines like **Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer** which are still in trials.
  - India's **Covaxin** has been approved for human clinical trials. Another Indian vaccine **ZyCoV-D** has entered phase I/II of clinical trials.
- This vaccine has been developed by Moscow's **Gamaleya Institute** in collaboration with the Russia's defence ministry.
- The vaccine is based on the **DNA** of a **SARS-CoV-2** type **adenovirus**, a common cold virus.
  - The vaccine uses the weakened virus to deliver small parts of a pathogen and stimulate an immune response.
  - The vaccine is administered in two doses and consists of two types of a human adenovirus, each carrying an **S-antigen of the new coronavirus**, which enter human cells and produce an **immune response**.
- Russian officials have said that large-scale production of the vaccine will start in September, and mass vaccination may begin as early as October.
- **Adenovirus Vector Vaccine :**
  - In this vaccine, adenovirus is used as a tool to deliver genes or vaccine antigens to the target host tissue.
  - **Adenovirus:** Adenoviruses (ADVs) are **DNA viruses** ranging from 70-90 nanometre in size, which induce many illnesses in humans like cold, respiratory infection etc.
  - Adenoviruses are preferred for vaccines because their DNA is **double stranded** which makes them **genetically more stable** and the chances of them changing after injection are lower.
  - **Rabies vaccine** is an adenovirus vaccine.
  - However, there are drawbacks of adenovirus vector vaccines like **pre-existing immunity in humans, inflammatory responses etc.**
    - Just as human bodies develop immune responses to most real viral infections, they also develop immunity to adenoviral vectors. Since adenoviral vectors are based on natural viruses that some humans might already have been exposed to, these vaccines **might not work for everyone**.

- **Concerns Regarding the Vaccine:**

- Experts expressed concerns over the safety and efficacy of the vaccine due to its **extremely fast production and lack of published data** on the vaccine.
- Russia has only made **public** the **results of phase-I** of the clinical trials, which it claimed were successful and produced the desired immune response.
- The human trials, which take several years in normal circumstances, have been completed in less than two months for Sputnik V. The late-phase human trials are important because the vaccine's efficacy can differ on different population groups.

Russia, however, has claimed that this was made possible due to the fact that its Covid-19 vaccine candidate closely resembled a vaccine for **Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)** disease, caused by another coronavirus, that had already been tested extensively.

- **Use in India:**

- Russia has claimed that around 20 countries have shown interest in the Sputnik V vaccine, including India.

India has also **partnered with the USA** for development of Covid-19 vaccine.

- The approval for a vaccine is given by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

- **The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)**, under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.
- Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, CDSCO is responsible for **approval of Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice.**

- CDSCO can ask Russia **to conduct late-phase human trials**, usually both phase-2 and phase-3, on an **Indian population**.

This is the usual requirement for all vaccines developed outside of India.

- CDSCO can also give **emergency authorisation** without late-phase trials, considering the extraordinary situation.

The drug **remdesivir** was recently granted similar emergency approval to be used as a therapeutic on novel coronavirus patients.

- However, this is unlikely as vaccines are given to a large number of people, and the risks involved are much higher.

- There are also issues in manufacturing the vaccine as there is **no agreement for its production in India right now.**

Pune-based Serum Institute of India, **the world's largest manufacturer of vaccines by volume**, has already entered into tie-ups with developers to mass-produce their vaccines. Other Indian companies have also done similar agreements but there is none with Russia.

## **Development of a vaccine**

- The general stages of the development cycle of a vaccine are:
  - Exploratory stage
  - Pre-clinical stage
  - Clinical development
  - Regulatory review and approval
  - Manufacturing and
  - Quality control.



- The Clinical development is a three-phase process:
  - Clinical trials in humans are classified into **three phases: phase I, phase II and phase III** and in certain countries formal regulatory approval is required to undertake any of these studies.
  - The **phase I** clinical studies carry out initial testing of a vaccine in small numbers (e.g. 20) of healthy adults, to test the properties of a vaccine, its tolerability, and, if appropriate, clinical laboratory and pharmacological parameters. Phase I studies are primarily **concerned with safety**.
  - **Phase II** studies involve larger numbers of subjects and are intended to provide preliminary information about a vaccine's ability to produce its desired effect (usually immunogenicity) in the target population and its general safety.
  - Extensive **phase III** trials are required to fully assess the protective efficacy and safety of a vaccine. The phase III clinical trial is the pivotal study on which the **decision on whether to grant the licence is based** and sufficient data have to be obtained to demonstrate that a new product is safe and effective for the purpose intended.
  - Many vaccines undergo **Phase IV** formal ongoing studies after the vaccine is approved and licensed.

## Way Forward

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The Russian Vaccine, although, is a welcome step, concerns regarding its efficacy and safety must be addressed by the developers on a priority basis. Also, the manufacturing and distribution procedures need to be clearly laid down so that they can be administered to everyone in a quick and efficient manner.

**Source: IE**

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## Restoration of 4G Internet in J&K

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### Why in News

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Recently, a **special committee set up by the Supreme Court of India** has recommended **restoration of 4G internet services** in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).

### Key Points

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- **Committee's Recommendation:**

- The committee is of the view that the **threat perception on the security front** in J&K continues **to be high**.
- However, it has recommended to restore 4G internet services **after 15<sup>th</sup> August 2020 on a trial basis** in a careful manner in specified areas to assess the impact on the security situation.
- The **internet could be restored in one district each of Jammu region and Kashmir region** which are away from the international border or line of control, and has low intensity of terrorist activities.
- Telecom operators in the districts which are allowed to have 4G services on a trial basis may also **have to submit reports of data usage** volume and which apps are being used the most.
- The committee is also of the view that **internet speed related restrictions are not posing any hindrance** to **Covid** control measures, access to education programmes or carrying out business activities.

According to it there is adequate access to the internet through broadband services available over landline to business and healthcare institutions.

- **Background:**

- High speed internet services in J&K were suspended in August 2019, when the **Centre announced revocation of J&K's special status** and **bifurcation** of the state into two Union Territories (UTs).
- According to the Centre, the same was being done in order **to avoid violence**. It has maintained that faster internet services can be misused in the region by elements opposed to peace, who act at the behest of a hostile neighbour to spread rumours and arouse passions of the public and disturb the atmosphere in the J&K.

- **Impact of Lifting the 4G Ban:**

- **Promote Commercial Activity:** Resumption of 4G in the J&K will be beneficial for citizens engaged in commercial activities that are dependent on high-speed internet. E.g. e-commerce, travel bookings, filing of GST and income tax returns.
- **Education and Job:** It will also help the students to access the online classes, till the school and colleges are closed due to Covid-19 pandemic.  
It will allow people to work from home.
- **Health:** 4G services are necessary to provide access to the medical fraternity including patients to access latest information, advisories, and guidelines.

## Way Forward

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The Centre needs to balance between security of the J&K and rights to the people. It is required to continuously assess the situation in J&K and take further actions accordingly.

## **SC Verdict on Hindu Women's Inheritance Rights**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the **Supreme Court** (SC) has expanded the Hindu women's right to be the **coparcener** (joint legal heir) and inherit ancestral property on terms equal to male heirs.

The judgment pertains to the **Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005**.

### **Key Points**

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- **Current Ruling:**

- It ruled that a **Hindu woman's right to be a joint heir to the ancestral property is by birth** and does not depend on whether her father is alive or not.

**Coparcenary** (joint-heirship) **is by birth**, so the father doesn't need to be living as on 9th September 2005, when the **Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act** was enacted.

- The SC expanded and promoted the amendments done in 2005 which removed the **discrimination as contained in Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956** by giving equal rights to daughters.
- It also **directed High Courts to dispose of cases involving this issue within six months** since they would have been pending for years.

- **Hindu Succession Act, 1956:**

- The **Mitakshara school of Hindu law** codified as the **Hindu Succession Act, 1956** governed **succession and inheritance of property** but only **recognised males as legal heirs**.
- It **applied to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew** by religion. **Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj**, are also **considered Hindus** for this law.
- In a Hindu Undivided Family, several legal heirs through generations can exist jointly. Traditionally, **only male descendants** of a common ancestor along with their mothers, wives and unmarried daughters are considered a joint Hindu family. The **legal heirs hold the family property jointly**.

- **Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005:**
  - The 1956 Act was **amended in September 2005** and **women were recognised as coparceners** for property partitions arising from 2005.
    - Section 6 of the Act was amended to make a daughter of a coparcener also a coparcener by birth “in her own right in the same manner as the son”.
    - It also gave the daughter the same rights and liabilities “in the coparcenary property as she would have had if she had been a son”.
  - The law **applies to ancestral property and to intestate succession** in personal property, where **succession happens as per law and not through a will**.
  - **Background for the Amendment:**
    - The **174<sup>th</sup> Law Commission Report** had recommended the reform in Hindu succession law.
    - Before the 2005 amendment, **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu** had made this change in the law and **Kerala had abolished the Hindu Joint Family System in 1975**.
- **Government’s Stand:**
  - The Solicitor General of India has **argued in favour of an expansive reading of the law to allow equal rights for women**.
  - He **criticised the Mitakshara coparcenary 1956 law** because it contributed to **discrimination on the ground of gender** and was also **oppressive and negated the fundamental right of equality (Articles 14 to 18)** guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

### Schools of Hindu Laws

Mitakshara Law School	Dayabhaga Law School
The term Mitakshara is derived from the name of a <b>commentary written by Vijnaneswara</b> , on the <b>Yajnavalkya Smriti</b> .	The term Dayabhaga is derived from a <b>similarly named text written by Jimutavahana</b> .
It is <b>observed in all parts of India</b> and <b>subdivided</b> into the Benares, the Mithila, the Maharashtra and the Dravida schools.	It is observed in <b>Bengal and Assam</b> .
<b>A son, by birth acquires an interest in the ancestral property</b> of the joint family.	A son has <b>no automatic ownership</b> right by birth but <b>acquires it on death of his father</b> .
All the members <b>enjoy coparcenary rights during the father’s lifetime</b> .	Sons <b>do not enjoy coparcenary rights when the father is alive</b> .

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A coparcener's **share is not defined** and **cannot be disposed of**.

The share of **each coparcener is defined** and **can be disposed of**.

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A **wife cannot demand partition** but has the **right to a share in any partition between her husband and her sons**.

Here, the **same right does not exist for the women** because the **sons cannot demand partition** as the father is the absolute owner.

**Source: IE**

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## **Student Entrepreneurship Programme 2.0: AIM**

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### **Why in News**

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**Atal Innovation Mission** (AIM - an initiative by the **NITI Aayog**) in collaboration with Dell Technologies has launched the **second edition of its Student Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP 2.0)** for student innovators of **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs)**.

**SEP 1.0** was launched in January **2019**.

### **Key Points**

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- **SEP 2.0:**
  - **Objective:** It will allow student innovators to work closely with Dell volunteers. They will receive mentor support; prototyping and testing support; end-user feedback; **intellectual property** registration and patenting of ideas, processes, and products; manufacturing support; as well as the launch support of the product in the market.
  - **Background:**
    - As many as **1500 innovations** were submitted in the last season of **ATL Marathon (2019)**. ATL Marathon is a **nationwide contest** where students identify community challenges and create grassroots innovations and solutions within their ATLs.
    - 50 teams were selected and mentored by **Atal Incubation Centres** via the **Student Innovator Programme 2.0**.  
Student Innovator Programme provides training on business and entrepreneurship skills to students.
    - The **top 8** will take their prototypes to product through **SEP 2.0**.
- **SEP 1.0:**

SEP 1.0 was a **10-month-long programme** through which the **top 6 teams of ATL Marathon 2017** got a chance to transform their innovative prototypes into fully functioning products, which are now available in the market.

- **ATLs:**
  - **Vision:**
    - AIM is establishing ATLs in schools across India with a vision **to cultivate one million children in India as neoteric (modern) innovators.**
    - It is aimed at disrupting the Indian education system, creating a paradigm shift where children as young as 12 years of age are being introduced to the world of technology innovation.
  - **Objectives:** To foster **curiosity, creativity and imagination** in young minds; and inculcate **skills** such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing etc.
  - **Eligibility:** Schools (minimum Grade VI - X) managed by Government, local body or private trusts/society.
  - **Financial Support:** AIM provides **grant-in-aid of Rs. 20 Lakh** to each school that includes a one-time establishment cost of Rs. 10 lakh and operational expenses of Rs. 10 lakh for a maximum period of 5 years to each ATL.
  - **Features:**
    - ATL is a **work space** where young minds can give shape to their ideas through hands on do-it-yourself mode; and learn innovation skills.
    - Young children get a chance to work with tools and equipment to understand the concepts of **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).
      - **CollabCAD** was launched in ATL schools to provide students experience in creating and modifying 3D designs.
    - In order to foster inventiveness among students, ATL conducts different activities ranging from regional and national level competitions, exhibitions, workshops on problem solving, designing and fabrication of products, lecture series etc. at periodic intervals.

**Source: PIB**

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## **Indonesia's Mt. Sinabung Erupted**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, Mt. Sinabung, an active **volcano on Indonesia's Sumatra island** has erupted.

Mount Sinabung is located in Karo regency, North Sumatra.



## Key Points

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- **Mt. Sinabung:**
  - It is among more than **130 active volcanoes in Indonesia**, which is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the **Pacific's Ring of Fire**.
  - The volcano **was dormant for 400 years** before exploding in 2010. It exploded again in 2014 and 2016.

- **Ring of Fire:**

- The Ring of Fire, **also referred to as the Circum-Pacific Belt**, is a path along the Pacific Ocean **characterized by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes**.
- It **traces boundaries between several tectonic plates**—including the Pacific, Cocos, Indian-Australian, Nazca, North American, and Philippine Plates.
- **75% of Earth's volcanoes** i.e. more than 450 volcanoes are located along the Ring of Fire. **90% of Earth's earthquakes** occur along its path.
- The abundance of volcanoes and earthquakes along the Ring of Fire is **caused by the amount of movement of tectonic plates** in the area.
  - Along much of the Ring of Fire, plates overlap at convergent boundaries called **subduction zones**. That is, the plate that is underneath is pushed down, or subducted, by the plate above. As rock is subducted, it melts and becomes magma. The abundance of magma so near to Earth's surface gives rise to conditions ripe for volcanic activity.
  - A significant exception is the border between the Pacific and North American Plates. This stretch of the Ring of Fire is a **transform boundary**, where plates move sideways past one another. This type of boundary generates a large number of earthquakes as tension in Earth's crust builds up and is released.



**Source: IE**