

### NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

A detoxing pilot project has brought a river back from the dead, the Meghalaya government has claimed. The Lukha — “reservoir of fish” in the local Pnar language — was considered toxic beyond redemption a decade ago. The Meghalaya Pollution Control Board had in its 2012 investigative report blamed the contamination on acid mine drainage and runoff from the coal mines. The Lukha river is in the East Jaintia Hills district where most of Meghalaya’s rathole coal mines are located. Forest and Environment Minister James Sangma said the pilot project to rejuvenate the Lukha by using algae to remove toxic contents from the water has become a success. The detoxification process is called phycoremediation.

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, including some former cadre of the defunct Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), are “seriously concerned” over the largescale and long term investments by the Chinese Government in Sri Lanka, Indian intelligence agencies have said. In a note to States, a Central agency referred to a conclave of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora held in London recently and said the delegates felt that India had not taken it seriously to safeguard the interests of the Sri Lankan Tamils and even lost its influence over the island nation. The conclave was convinced that the fate of the Sri Lankan Tamils would be in jeopardy if the Chinese established their presence in northern Sri Lanka.

As the movement against the agricultural reform laws builds towards its one year anniversary, it is clear that the bulk of farmers in eastern States have not been as motivated to join the agitation as their counterparts in the northwest, as they have not even experienced many of the benefits that the laws threaten to take away. In fact, farmers in these States, with densely populated rural areas, bear the double burden of low procurement as well as low prices in the open market, partly because grains procured in the northern and western States are dumped into the eastern region at subsidised rates via the public distribution system (PDS), a situation exacerbated by additional free grain distribution as COVID19 relief.

### CONSEQUENCES OF GROWING DIGITAL DIVIDE

1.The Supreme Court has flagged the consequences of growing digital divide. It observed, the digital divide caused by online classes will defeat the fundamental right of every child to education.

2.How have online classes impacted children? Little children whose parents are too poor to afford laptops, tablets or an “optimum” Internet package at home for online classes during the pandemic have dropped out of school and even run the danger of being drawn into child labour or worse, child trafficking. Even, the right to education has now hinged on who could afford “gadgets” for online classes and who could not.

3.**What’s the issue?** The court was hearing a petition filed by private school managements challenging a Delhi High Court order of September 2020, directing them to provide their 25% quota EWS/DG students online facilities free of cost. The High Court had said the schools could get reimbursement from the government. The Delhi government had said it had no resources to reimburse the schools for the online gadgets. Though the Supreme Court had stayed the High Court order in February 2021, the court said both the Centre and States such as Delhi could not bow out of their responsibilities towards children.

4.**What is Digital Divide?** It means discrepancy between people who have access to and the resources to use new information and communication tools, such as the Internet, and people who do not have the resources and access to the technology. It also means discrepancy between those who have the skills, knowledge and abilities to use the technologies and those who do not.

5.**Status in India:** Although India has 220 million smartphone users and is the second largest smartphone market in the world, the overall penetration is still just about 30 per cent of the population. There is a huge rural- urban and inter-state digital divide in India. according to statistics, more than 75 per cent of the broadband connections in the country are in the top 30 cities.

6.**Impact of Digital Divide:** Low female representation: Due to huge digital divide in gender, thousands of Indian girls in these far-flung areas are refused access to Information and Communications Technology (ICTs), which is a primary cause of low female representation in jobs. Denial to information/knowledge: This lack of equal opportunities to access online services and information deprive people of higher/quality education and skill training that could help them contribute to the economy and become leaders on a global level. Non delivery of welfare schemes: As many schemes have started using ICT in their delivery, at the same time due to digital divide it will create more problem.

### ROHINGYA CRISIS

1.Bangladesh is planning to send more than 80,000 Rohingya refugees to a remote island- Bhasan Char- in the Bay of Bengal after sealing an agreement for the United Nations to provide help. Some 19,000 of the Muslim refugees from Myanmar have already relocated from crowded camps on the mainland to Bhasan Char island, despite doubts raised by aid groups.

2.**Background: Bhasan Char is an island specifically developed to accommodate 1,00,000 of the 1 million Rohingya who have fled from neighbouring Myanmar.** While human rights groups have criticised the move and some are being forced to go against their will, the government has insisted that refugees moving to the island have done so voluntarily.

3.**Who are Rohingyas?** They are an Ethnic group, mostly Muslims. They were not granted full citizenship by Myanmar. They were classified as “resident foreigners or associate citizens”. Ethnically they are much closer to Indo-Aryan people of India and Bangladesh than to the Sino-Tibetans of the Country. Described by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as “one of, if not the, most discriminated people in the world”.

India and China held the 13th round of Corps Commander talks on Sunday at Moldo on the Chinese side with focus on working out the third phase of disengagement from patrolling Point 15 in Hot Springs as part of overall disengagement and deescalation along the Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh.

Terming any fear of disruption in power supply due to coal shortage “misplaced”, the Government on Sunday said coal stocks at power plants would “gradually improve” and were currently sufficient for 24 days. The Coal Ministry and Coal India promised that there was ample coal available to meet the demand of power plants.

The Quad is a “non defence, non-military” arrangement, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said during her visit to India and Pakistan last week, indicating at two separate interactions that the purpose of the Australia, India, Japan-U.S. grouping is meant to cooperate on what are considered “softer” issues. “The Quad is [a] vehicle which largely operates in security realms that are nonmilitary, non-defence. Things we do together on vaccines, and infrastructure, supply chains, technology and climate — all the forward thinking areas in which we need to gain confidence and ensure security for our people,” Ms. Sherman said.

A minority based organisation in Assam has asked the State Government to issue a white paper on the eviction of farmers over the past five years with all data pertaining to the displaced, land under encroachment and the area repossessed. The Assam Civil Society also sought to know how and where the evicted people have been rehabilitated besides demanding the reopening of government run schools and health centres in Darrang district’s Dhalpur Gorukhuti where an eviction drive on September 23 led to clashes and the death.

Nepalese political parties have a general consensus over the fact that Kalapani in Uttarakhand is part of Nepal’s sovereign territory, said former Foreign Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat. Mr. Mahat blamed the previous government of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli for not holding dialogue on this issue with India, and said the Nepali Congress (NC), which is leading the current coalition government steered by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, is interested for a national consultation on amending the constitution to reflect Nepal’s Hindu identity.

## OECD/G20 INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORK TAX DEAL

1. The two-pillar solution under the above mentioned framework will be delivered to the G20 Finance Ministers meeting in Washington DC on 13 October, then to the G20 Leaders Summit in Rome at the end of the month. Countries are aiming to sign a multilateral convention during 2022, with effective implementation in 2023.

2. Background: India has already joined the G20–OECD inclusive framework deal that seeks to reform international tax rules and ensure that multinational enterprises pay their fair share wherever they operate. 130 countries and jurisdictions, representing more than 90% of global GDP, have signed the deal.

3. Two pillars of framework: Dealing with transnational and digital companies. This pillar ensures that large multinational enterprises, including digital companies, pay tax where they operate and earn profits. Dealing with low-tax jurisdictions to address cross-border profit shifting and treaty shopping. This pillar seeks to put a floor under competition among countries through a global minimum corporate tax rate, currently proposed at 15%.

4. **Expected outcomes: If implemented, countries such as the Netherlands and Luxembourg that offer lower tax rates, and so-called tax havens such as Bahamas or British Virgin Islands, could lose their sheen.**

5. Impact/implications on India: India will have to roll back the equalisation levy that it imposes on companies such as Google, Amazon and Facebook when the global tax regime is implemented.

## G-SAP-SECURITIES ACQUISITION PLAN FOR MARKET BOOST

1. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is halting its bond buying under the G-Sec Acquisition Programme (GSAP) for now. It said that the measure had succeeded in ensuring adequate liquidity and stabilising financial markets.

2. Impacts and outcomes: Coupled with other liquidity measures, it facilitated congenial and orderly financing conditions and a conducive environment for the recovery. About the Government Security Acquisition Programme (G-SAP): The G-Sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP) is basically an unconditional and a structured Open Market Operation (OMO), of a much larger scale and size. RBI has called the G-SAP as an OMO with a ‘distinct character’. The word ‘unconditional’ here connotes that RBI has committed upfront that it will buy G-Secs irrespective of the market sentiment.

3. **Objective: To achieve a stable and orderly evolution of the yield curve along with management of liquidity in the economy. Significance: The GSAP would provide more comfort to the bond market.** As the borrowing of the Government increased this year, RBI has to ensure there is no disruption in the Indian market. The programme will help to reduce the spread between repo rate and the ten-year government bond yield. The G-SAP will almost serve the purpose of an OMO calendar, which had been on the bond market’s wish list for a long time.

4. What is OMO? Open market operations is the sale and purchase of government securities and treasury bills by RBI or the central bank of the country. The objective of OMO is to regulate the money supply in the economy. It is one of the quantitative monetary policy tools.

## TAWANG

1. Tawang was historically part of Tibet. The 1914 Simla Accord defined the McMahon Line as the new boundary between British India and Tibet. By this treaty Tibet relinquished some of its territories, including Tawang, to the British. But it was not recognised by China.

2. In 1950, Tibet lost its de facto independence and was incorporated into the newly established People’s Republic of China. Later, in 1959, when the current Dalai Lama fled Tibet, he came into India through Tawang. During the Sino-Indian war of 1962, Tawang fell briefly under Chinese control, but China voluntarily withdrew its troops at the end of the war.

3. **Tawang again came under Indian administration, but China has not relinquished its claims on most of Arunachal Pradesh including Tawang.** Why in the News? India and China

**Taiwan President Tsai Ingwen said on Sunday Taiwan will not “bow to pressure” and would “resist annexation”, speaking amid rising tensions with China and a day after Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged to realise “complete reunification”. Ms. Tsai, during her National Day address in Taipei, said Taiwan’s “position on cross strait relations remains the same: neither our goodwill nor our commitments will change.” “We call for maintaining the status quo, and we will do our utmost to prevent the status quo from being unilaterally altered.”**

patrols face off in Tawang. Chinese soldiers were detained, let off later.

**4.**Face-offs occurred because of the differing areas of perception due to the demarcated boundary, and as both sides undertook patrolling activities up to their line of perception.