

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

China must not view India through the lens of its ties with other countries, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, as they met on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan, on Thursday. Both discussed the ongoing impasse at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh which, they said, had left relations at a “low ebb”. A statement issued after the meeting, held after the two last met in the same city at the SCO Foreign Ministers’ meeting in July, said they agreed to more talks by military and diplomatic officials to resolve the “remaining issues on disengagement”.

The Indian Railways, the country’s largest employer and transporter, is heading for a major restructuring plan that could lead to the closure of key establishments, merger of decades old organisations and private participation in running of its schools and hospitals. The recommendations of the Principal Economic Adviser Sanjeev Sanyal for Rationalisation of Government Bodies and Proposal for the Ministry of Railways calls for winding up the Central Organisation for Railway Electrification (CORE), the Central Organisation for Modernisation Of Workshops (COFMOW), the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) and the Indian Railways Organisation for Alternative Fuel.

With about a month and a half to go before the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26), the UN climate conference in Glasgow, U.S. President Joe Biden announced the Global Methane Pledge, a U.S.-EU led effort to cut methane emissions by a third by the end of this decade.

The Supreme Court Collegium, led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, is proceeding with staggering speed to fill vacancies and strengthen the judiciary as seen in the latest slew of recommendations, which include eight new Chief Justices for the High Courts, the transfer of five High Court Chief Justices and the shuffling of 28 High Court judges across the country.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST)

WORLD BANK DISCONTINUES DOING BUSINESS RANKINGS

1.The World Bank Group has decided to discontinue publication of its ‘Doing Business’ rankings of country business climates after a review of data irregularities in the 2018 and 2020 reports.

2.Issue- In August 2020, World Bank paused the publication of Doing Business reports following a number of irregularities were reported regarding changes to the data. The irregularities in Doing Business reports had affected four countries: China; Saudi Arabia; United Arab Emirates; and Azerbaijan. A probe of data irregularities cited “undue pressure” by top bank officials, including then-Chief Executive Kristalina Georgieva, to boost China’s ranking in 2017. This raised ethical matters involving former bank staff and board officials.

3.Why the report matters-World Bank’s annual report matters to several nations, especially developing ones, since it greatly influenced investor decisions by releasing a ranking of economies based on how easy it is to open up, and operate, a business. But while the report was hugely popular among investors, it was heavily criticized by many governments for its methodology that, leaders said, inaccurately captured the realities on the ground.

4.About Doing Business project- **It provides objective measures of business regulations and their enforcement across 190 economies and selected cities at the subnational and regional level.** Launched in 2003, looks at domestic small and medium-size companies and measures the regulations applying to them through their life cycle. It ranks countries on the basis of Distance to Frontier (DTF) score that highlights the gap of an economy with respect to the global best practice.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION

1.The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) is planning to hold large military drills in Tajikistan next month, amid what it described as a deteriorating situation in neighbouring Afghanistan.

2.Implications and rationale behind this: **Tajikistan is the only country out of the six-member bloc led by Russia that shares a border with Afghanistan.** Moscow has moved to cement its position as a key player in the region after the United States’ hasty retreat from Afghanistan and the Taliban’s takeover of the country. The group also said it has taken “collective measures” to ensure Tajikistan’s security in case of an “aggravation” on its border with Afghanistan.

3.About Collective Security Treaty Organization: It is an intergovernmental military alliance (six countries) that came into effect in 2002. Its’ origin can be traced to the Collective Security Treaty, 1992 (Tashkent Treaty). The headquarter is located in the Russian capital of Moscow. The objectives of the CSTO is to strengthen peace, international and regional security including cybersecurity and stability, the protection on a collective basis of the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the member states.

4.Composition-**Current CSTO members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan.** Afghanistan and Serbia hold observer status in the CSTO.

5.CSTO membership means that member states are barred from joining other military alliances, limiting, for example, their relationship with NATO. Most importantly, membership presumes certain key security assurances – the most significant of which is deterring military aggression by third countries. In the CSTO, aggression against one signatory is perceived as aggression against all. It however remains unclear whether this feature works in practice.

AUKUS

1.The UK, US and Australia have announced a historic security pact in the Asia-Pacific, in what’s seen as an effort to counter China. It is called the AUKUS pact and AUKUS alliance.

2.About the AUKUS Pact: **Under the AUKUS alliance, the three**

Council has decided to keep petroleum products out of the GST regime, while consumers will have to keep paying the Compensation Cess levied on products like automobiles till March 2026 instead of July 2022 as originally envisaged at the time of rolling out the indirect tax regime.

The political change in Afghanistan did not lead to an inclusive system and the process was not conducted through negotiation, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his first extensive comments since the Taliban overthrew the government of President Ashraf Ghani. In a speech at the Afghanistan-themed outreach summit between the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), he stated that the neighbours of Afghanistan would be seriously impacted by the developments in that country.

Australia had informed India about the new enhanced trilateral security partnership with the U.S. and the U.K. — AUKUS — before it was formally announced, Australian High Commissioner Barry O'Farrell said. The decision for the partnership reflected a much more "challenging strategic environment", which they shared with India, where "great power competition is intensifying", and territorial tensions in the South China Sea, Taiwan and elsewhere were becoming "more challenging".

China's President Xi Jinping called on the new government in Afghanistan "to adopt prudent and moderate" policies and said its neighbours should encourage Kabul to do so, with Beijing stepping up its diplomacy with countries in the region, including Russia, Pakistan and Iran.

Myanmar's junta will put ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi on trial for corruption, her lawyer said, adding to a raft of ongoing cases that could see her jailed for decades. Ms. Suu Kyi has been under house arrest since her National League for Democracy (NLD) government was deposed by the military in a February coup that sparked a mass uprising and a brutal crackdown on dissent.

The telecom sector reforms package announced by the Centre will sustain telcos' businesses, is credit positive for operators including Bharti and Jio, and provides support

nations have agreed to enhance the development of joint capabilities and technology sharing, foster deeper integration of security and defence-related science, technology, industrial bases and supply chains. Under the first major initiative of AUKUS, Australia would build a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines with the help of the US and the UK, a capability aimed at promoting stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

3.China's response: China has condemned the agreement as "extremely irresponsible". Concerns raised by China: The Alliance undermines regional peace and stability and intensifies the arms race. It shall reinvent a "Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice".

4.Rationale behind the formation of this alliance: **The new partnership was announced in a joint virtual press conference. And while China was not mentioned directly, the three leaders referred repeatedly to regional security concerns** which they said had "grown significantly". In recent years, Beijing has been accused of raising tensions in disputed territories such as the South China Sea. Western nations have been wary of China's infrastructure investment on Pacific islands, and have also criticised China's trade sanctions against countries like Australia.

5.Why nuclear-powered submarines-These submarines are much faster and harder to detect than conventionally powered fleets. They can stay submerged for months, shoot missiles longer distances and also carry more. Having them stationed in Australia is critical to US influence in the region, analysts say. The US is sharing its submarine technology for the first time in 50 years. It had previously only shared technology with the UK.

EDIBLE PLANTS INTO VACCINES

1.Scientists attempt to turn edible plants like lettuce into mRNA vaccine factories under the edible vaccine.

2.The edible vaccine project: **The project, backed by a US \$500,000 grant from the US National Science Foundation, has three goals: Showing that DNA containing the mRNA vaccines can be successfully delivered into the part of plant cells where it will replicate.** Demonstrating the plants can produce enough mRNA to rival a traditional shot. Determining the right dosage. If this new project is successful, plant-based mRNA vaccines which can be eaten could overcome this challenge with the ability to be stored at room temperature.

3.What makes it possible in plants-Key to making this work is chloroplasts, small organs in plant cells that convert sunlight into energy the plant can use. They're tiny, solar-powered factories that produce sugar and other molecules which allow the plant to grow. They're also an untapped source for making desirable molecules.

4.**Messenger RNA or mRNA technology works by teaching our cells to recognize and protect us against infectious diseases.**

One of the challenges with this new technology is that it must be kept cold to maintain stability during transport and storage.

GUPTA PERIOD INSCRIPTION

1.Archaeological Survey of India discovered remains of an ancient temple dating back to the Gupta period in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Etah district.

2.Findings - **The Bilsarh site was declared 'protected' in 1928. Every year, the ASI undertakes scrubbing work at the protected sites.**

3.This year, the team has discovered, Two decorative pillars close to one another, with human figurines, 'Shankhalipi' inscriptions in the stairs of the temple saying, 'Sri Mahendraditya', the title of Kumaragupta I of the Gupta dynasty.

SHANKHALIPI SCRIPT

1.Shankhalipi or 'shell-script' is a term used to describe ornate spiral characters assumed to be Brahmi derivatives that look like conch shells or shankhas.

2.**They are found on temple pillars, columns and rock surfaces across north-central India and they date to between the 4th and 8th centuries.** Both Shankhalipi and Brahmi are stylised scripts used primarily for names and signatures.

3.The inscriptions consist of a small number of characters, suggesting that the shell inscriptions are names or auspicious symbols or a combination of the two.Prominent sites with shell inscriptions include the Nagarjuna group of caves in the Barabar Hills near Gaya, Mundeshwari Temple in Bihar, Udayagiri Caves

for 3+1 players structure, Moody's Investors Service said.

in Madhya Pradesh, Mansar in Maharashtra.