1. Covid cases are on the rise. In India, there have been 343,091 cases confirmed, 9,900 people have died and 180,013 people have recovered from the virus
2. India China standoff worsens as 20 Indian soldiers are martyred.
3. Indian doctors have said the reported success of dexa methasone — an inexpensive steroid that retails for less than ₹10 for 10 ml and is made by several Indian ma nufacturers — in saving the lives of COVID19 patients on ventilators is good news for the country. Dexamethasone is a type of corticosteroid medication. It is used in the treatment of many conditions, including COVID-19 respiratory side effects, rheumatic problems, a number of skin diseases, severe allergies, asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease, croup, brain swelling, eye pain following eye surgery, and along with antibiotics in tuberculosis. In adrenocortical insufficiency, it should be used together with a medication that has greater mineralocorticoid effects such as fludrocortisone. In preterm labor, it may be used to improve outcomes in the baby. It may be taken by mouth, as an injection into a muscle, or intravenously. The effects of dexamethasone are frequently seen within a day and last for about three days

The Ministry of External Affairs slammed the Nepal government's approval of a new Nepalese map that shows territories contested with India as a part of Nepal.

Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli asserted that Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura belong to Nepal and vowed to "reclaim" them from India through political and diplomatic efforts, as his Cabinet endorsed a new political map showing the three areas as Nepalese territory.
Nepal has also claimed a large tract of land across Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur in Susta as a part of its territory in the new maps and has since asked India to remove "encroachments" from the area.
India called the move a unilateral act which is not based on historical facts and evidence. It urged Kathmandu "to respect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity".
Why these regions - Reprise of an old story

Modi government's most recent gift to Hindu pilgrims is a road to reach Kailash-Manasarovar in Tibet. The road traverses territory claimed by Nepal. Hence, in a bid to assert its claim over the territory, the government of Nepal unveiled a new political map of the country which included the regions of Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura as part of its sovereign territory. Nepal has rejected India's claim over these territories.

India carried out four escalatory actions in a row -

First, in May 2015 it signed an agreement with China to use the Lipu Lekh Pass for trade; Kathmandu immediately protested to both New Delhi and Beijing.
Second, in November 2019 India published a new map that showed Kalapani within its territory.
Third, India's defence minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated a road link to Lipu Lekh amid Covid-19 and an ongoing political crisis in Kathmandu.
Fourth was the statement by Indian Army Chief General M.M. Naravane, implying China had instigated Nepal to lay claims on the area.

However, India's sovereignty over the Lipulekh Pass is yet to be established as it continues to be a disputed region.

India's claims do not acknowledge the fact that, in the last 26 years of discussions, the Nepal-India Joint Technical Level Boundary Committee, which was able to settle nearly 97% of the border, has failed to resolve the dispute over Kalapani and Susta.
In 2009, the then Indian external affairs minister, Pranab Mukherjee, on a visit to Nepal said that both sides had "agreed to resolve the long standing border disputes between the two countries at various places, including Kalapani and Susta through further discussions."

The Lipulekh Pass, which lies at the centre of the current dispute, is situated at an altitude of 5,000 metres. Nepal claims that the Indian army has encroached 372 square kilometres towards Limpiyadhura from Kalapani since the 1962 Indo-China war. At that time, Nepal, as a friendly neighbour, granted permission to the Indian army to set up a camp in the region.
Subsequently, despite several firm requests by Nepal's prime minister at the time, Kirti Nidhi Bista, to evacuate the camp, Indian troops stayed put. Because of the asymmetric power relationship between the two countries, Nepal has not been able to force India to withdraw its troops from the area.
Treaty of Sugauli

Demarcation of the modern India-Nepal border began on March 4, 1816, after the Treaty of Sugauli was signed between the British East India Company and the Kingdom of Nepal in 1911. The treaty, which declared the Mahakali River of Nepal as the border between the two countries, was expected to resolve border issues. It didn't.

Can rivers be the decision makers?

The Kali River is formed by the union of two headwaters: the Kalapani river that originates below the Lipulekh Pas and the Kuthi Yankit river that rises below the Limpiyadhura range. Both the streams have been termed 'Kali River' on different occasions. The Kali River serves as the boundary between Uttarakhand (Kumaon region) and Nepal from Limpiyadhura (30.227°N 80.920°E). The Lipulekh pass, as well as the Limpayadhura pass (or Limpiya pass), are on Nepal border with Tibet.

In addition to Mahakali/Sharda (West), Gandak/Narayani (South) and Mechi (East) are two other rivers which demarcate the border between India and Nepal. Around 600 kilometres of the India-Nepal border is defined by rivers: the Mechi in the east, Mahakali in the west, and Naryani in the Susta area.

Over the decades, these rivers have changed courses several times, giving rise to disputes, claims and counterclaims on land. The Nepal government claims that by taking advantage of Nepal's negligence in guarding its borders, India has encroached on its borderland. Reports from Nepal claim that Indians from UP and Bihar have encroached on over 60,000 hectares of land in 23 out of the 75 bordering districts.

This is a classic case of misunderstanding between two friends who share open borders and free movement of people.

The former director-general of the Department of Survey of Nepal, claims that maps from 1850 and 1856, prepared by the Survey of India with the participation of Nepali authorities, clearly state that the Mahakal River originates from Limpiyadhura, 16 km northwest of Kalapani, thereby proving that Kalapani belongs to Nepal.

However, India has consistently refused to accept those maps as proof. Indian officials insist that a map drawn up by the British colonial government in 1875 should be considered instead. This map allegedly shows the origin of the Mahakali River to the east of Kalapani. Unlike the maps from 1850 and 1856, the 1875 map does not have Nepal's certification.

The Way Forward

As both countries are laying claim to the same piece of land, the time has come for both countries to sit for talks to solve this issue. This time, the Prime Minister of Nepal should hold a direct conversation with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to resolve the territorial issue.

Nepal should come up with all historical evidence available and present its case. Due to political instability in Nepal and India's strong influence in domestic politics, Nepal's leaders were reluctant to discuss this issue seriously. Nepal should be ready to face India and India should be ready to hold serious bilateral dialogues to resolve this issue.

Recently, the Government of India in the event of struggle against Covid-19 has suspended Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme or MPLADS funds for two years (2020 and 2021) and directed these funds to be transferred to the Consolidated Fund of India.

The Government is seeking to garner around Rs 7,900 crores by suspending the MPLADS for two years.

The government is of view that the transfer of these sums to the Consolidated Fund of India would help judicious deployment of fund, but political opposition has criticized this move, as in their opinion the decision may undermine the decentralized manner of funding local area development.

Apart from this political tussle, the decision has revived the debate regarding the relevance of MPLAD scheme.

What is the MPLAD Scheme?

The MPLAD scheme was formulated in 1993 to enable Members of Parliament (MPs) to recommend development works in their constituencies with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets based on the locally felt need.
Durable assets of national priorities and community needs viz. drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation and roads, etc.
Initially, the Scheme was under the control of the Ministry of Rural Development and Planning.
In October, 1994, the scheme was transferred to the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.
Under this scheme,every MP is entitled to spend Rs 5 crore annually.
Similar to MPLADS, several states have enacted schemes called Member of Legislative Assembly Local Area Development Scheme (MLALADS) where funds are given to MLAs.
According to the 'Guidelines on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)' published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in June 2016, the MPLAD funds can also be used for implementation of the schemes such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan), conservation of water through rain water harvesting and Sansad Aadarsh Gram Yojana, etc.

Issues Related to MPLAD Scheme

Breach of Federalism
Union Government can incur expenditure only with respect to matters over which it has subject domain as per seventh schedule.
MPLADS encroaches upon the domain of local self governing institutions and thereby violates Part IX and IX-A of the Constitution.

Conflict with Doctrine of Separation of Powers

The Scheme disturbs the scheme of separation of powers under the Constitution, as MPs are getting involved in executive functions.

Implementation Lapses

MPLAD scheme gives scope for MPs to utilise the funds as a source of patronage that they can dispense at will.

The CAG has flagged instances of financial mismanagement and artificial inflation of amounts spent.

Also, the scheme is alleged to be marred by the nexus of MP and private firms.

Due to this sometimes spending of MPLADS funds is seen for private works, recommending funds to ineligible agencies, diverting funds to private trusts, etc.

No Statutory Backing

The MPLAD Scheme is not governed by any statutory law and is subject to the whims and fancies of the government of the day.

Some Commission Recommendations

In 2002, the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution recommended immediate discontinuation of the MPLAD scheme on the ground that it was inconsistent with the spirit of federalism and distribution of powers between the centre and the state.

Similar thing has also been taken by the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission's report 2007.

Constitutionality of the Scheme

Based on above arguments the MPLADS was challenged in the Supreme Court (SC) in 2010. A five-judge bench of the SC held that:

Indian Constitution does not recognise strict separation of powers.

Even though MPs have been given a seemingly executive function, their role is limited to 'recommending' works and actual implementation is done by the local authorities.

Therefore, the scheme does not violate separation of powers

India has a quasi-federal nature of the Constitution.

Article 282 held that both the Union and the State have the power to make grants for a purpose irrespective of whether the subject matter of the purpose falls in the Seventh Schedule provided that the purpose is "public purpose" within the meaning of the Constitution.

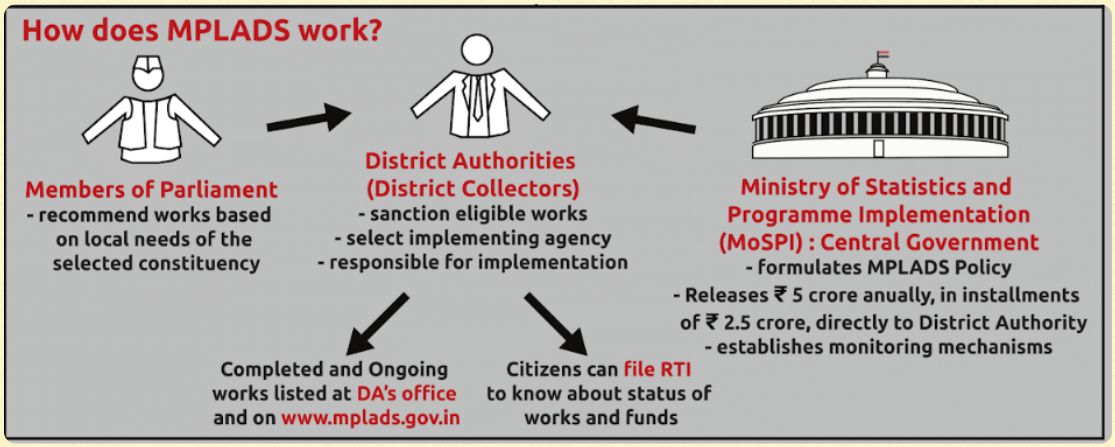
Also, the Scheme falls within the meaning of "public purpose" aiming for the fulfillment of the development and welfare of the State as reflected in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Also there are robust accountability mechanisms for the scheme as it comes under the RTI Act.

Way Forward

While the question of constitutionality of the MPLAD scheme may have been put to rest by the Supreme Court ruling, other issues related to implementation of the scheme still remain. These can be rectified by:

Better transparency and monitoring of funds spent and sanctioned works.
The scheme can be made more inclusive by including citizens for which project to be executed from MPLAD funds.
Also, lapsable funds can put pressure on MPs for optimum utilisation and prevent build up of unutilised funds
Given the decentralized nature of the MPLAD scheme, with adequate monitoring and sufficient political will, it can work as an indispensable tool of development at the grassroot.



Consumers do not get benefits even after the fall in oil prices, while they spend the most when prices are high.

Introduction

The oil and gas sector is among the eight core industries in India and plays a major role in influencing decision making for all the other important sections of the economy.

India's economic growth is closely related to energy demand; therefore, the need for oil and gas is projected to grow more, thereby making the sector quite conducive for investment.

The Government of India has adopted several policies to fulfil the increasing demand. The government has allowed 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in many segments of the sector, including natural gas, petroleum products, and refineries, among others. , it attracts both domestic and foreign investment, as attested by the presence of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and Cairn India.

India had 4.5 thousand million barrels of proven oil reserves at the end of 2018 and produced 39.5 million tonnes in 2018. As of Apr 01, 2019, India had a network of 10,419 km of crude pipeline having a capacity of 145.6 mmtpa.

Market Size

India is expected to be one of the largest contributors to non-OECD petroleum consumption growth globally. Oil imports rose sharply to US$ 87.37 billion in 2017-18 from US$ 70.72 billion in 2016-17. India retained its spot as the third largest consumer of oil in the world in 2017 with consumption of 4.69 mbpd of oil in 2017, compared to 4.56 mbpd in 2016.
As of December 1, 2019, the oil refining capacity of India stood at 238.60 million tonnes, making it the second largest refiner in Asia. Private companies own about 35.36 per cent of the total refining capacity.
India was the fourth-largest Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) importer in 2017 after Japan, South Korea and China. LNG imports increased to 26.11 bcm in 2017-18 from 24.48 bcm in 2016-17. India's LNG imports stood at 27.43 billion cubic meters (bcm) during April 2019-January 2020. Gas pipeline infrastructure in the country stood at 16,226 km at the beginning of February 2019.
India's domestic crude oil production in July 2019 is 2,769 thousand tonne (TMT). As of 2017, the country had 600 million metric tonnes (MMT) of proven oil reserves.
In FY19, total crude oil imports were valued at US$ 111.96 billion as compared to US$ 87.70 billion in FY18. In FY19, crude oil imports increased to 4.53 mbpd from 4.41 mbpd in FY18.

Production of petroleum products by fractionators grew to 4,931.22 tmt in FY19 from 4,808.00 tmt in FY18 and reached 3,179 TMT in FY20 (till November 2019).
What should be and What happening in fuel Market:-

In theory, retail prices of petrol and diesel in India are linked to the global crude prices. There is supposed to be complete decontrol of consumer-end prices of auto fuels and others such as the aviation turbine fuel or ATF.
Which means that if crude prices fall, as has largely been the trend since February, retails prices should come down too, and vice versa.
No. Auto fuel prices were hiked since oil companies restarted revising prices starting Sunday, after an 82-day hiatus. In the last six days, the petrol price has gone up by Rs 3.31 per litre and diesel by Rs 3.42. This coincided with oil benchmarks heading for their first weekly declines, with Brent and US crude index (WTI) dropping about 10 per cent, breaking a rally that pushed oil off its April low as the market reconciled with the reality that Covid-19 may be far from over.
So, why the divergence in the trends?

One main reason: Oil price decontrol is a one-way street in India — when global prices go up, this is passed on to the consumer, who has to cough up more for every litre of fuel consumed. But when the reverse happens and prices go down, the government — almost by default — slaps fresh taxes and levies to ensure that it rakes in extra revenues, even as the consumer, who should have ideally benefited by way of lower pump prices, is short changed and forced to either pay what she's already paying, or even more. The key beneficiary in this subversion of price decontrol is the government. The consumer is a clear loser, alongside fuel retailing companies as well.

Why haven't consumers benefited by sharp fall in crude prices :-

Crude prices nosedived from an average of about $55 per barrel in February to $35 in early March, and then falling to $20 by end March as demand slumped because of the pandemic. From that point, the prices have recovered to around $37 now. On the other hand, in India, retail prices of fuel were frozen for a record 82-days that covered much of this period, even as the excise duty on fuels was hiked by the Centre twice. While the government claimed that the impact of the hike was not passed on to consumers, the latter, however, did not benefit from this fall in crude oil prices to record low levels. Apart from the Centre, a number of states too hiked the levies on auto fuels during this period.
The decision to raise the duties, Finance Ministry officials said, was taken in view of the tight fiscal situation and that retail prices were unchanged. So, effectively, the excise duty hikes by the centre was to be adjusted by the OMCs against the fall in oil prices. But now, the retail prices are being progressively hiked.

India's Tax over oil : Is It High

On May 5, the Centre announced one of the steepest ever hikes in excise duty by Rs 13 per litre on diesel and Rs 10 per litre on petrol, following up on another round of sharp hikes in the first week of March. All of this effectively cements India's position as the country with among the highest taxes on fuel. Prior to the increase in excise duty (in February 2020), the government, centre plus states was collecting around 107 per cent taxes, (Excise Duty and VAT) on the base price of petrol and 69 per cent in the case of diesel. Post the first revision the government was able to collect around 134 per cent taxes, (Excise Duty and VAT) on the base price of petrol and 88 per cent in the case of diesel (as on March 16, 2020). With the second revision in excise duty in May, the government is collecting around 260 per cent taxes, (Excise Duty and VAT) on the base price of petrol and 256 per cent in the case of diesel (as on 6th May 2020), according to estimates by CARE Ratings.

In comparison, taxes on fuels as a percentage of pump prices was around 65 per cent of the retail price in Germany and Italy, 62 per cent in the UK, 45 per cent in Japan and under 20 per cent in the US.

Now, as countries get their economies back on track, oil prices have been moving upwards from the lows seen in April. So, as OMCs pass these hikes on, consumers are forced to bear the increase in global crude prices and face up to the harsh reality — that every time the crude price drops sharply, the government uses the opportunity to fill up its coffers while pump prices for the consumer barely change. But when the reverse happens, consumers are forced to pay up more. So the government gets to encash the upside while the consumers have to make good the downside.

Chinese pangolin
Nepal cricket frog
Bengal monitor lizard
Assamese cat snake
Eurasian moorhen
Asian elephant
Terai cricket frog
Ganges river dolphin
are the fauna found in the urban jungles of Guwahati in Hengerabari Reserve Forest referred to as the city's lungs.