

# **NEWS ALERT**

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**DECCAN HERALD**

**ECONOMIC TIMES**

**HINDU**

**HINDUSTAN TIMES**

**INDIAN EXPRESS**

**PIONEER**

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## **AGRICULTURE**

PIONEER, FEB 7, 2018

### **Pan-India survey to assess plight of farmers**

To assess the plight of farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture has decided to carry out a pan-India survey to ascertain their income and indebtedness among other issues for the current crop year (July-June). The last such survey was conducted for the reference year 2012-13 (crop year). Thereafter, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) has not conducted any such survey.

Besides, the Government plans to launch an index to rank states on the basis of ease of doing agri-business.

In a written reply to Lok Sabha, the Minister of State for Agriculture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that the ‘Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households’ will be conducted during the 77th round of the National Sample Survey in the current calendar year. The survey aims to provide a “comprehensive assessment of the situation of agricultural households in the country, including their income, expenditure and indebtedness,” he added.

“...As such, the comparable estimates for rise in income of agricultural households during 2014-2018 are not available,” the minister informed.

Shekhawat further said that the periodicity of such a survey is decided on the basis of requirements of the concerned ministry, adequacy of the

current data, availability of resources and manpower, emerging areas of concern and development priorities of the Government.

He also mentioned that given the vastness of the country's size and resources involved, the NSSO conducts other surveys on household consumer expenditure and employment-unemployment after every five years. The inter-ministerial committee on doubling farmers' income by 2022 has considered the estimates of agriculture households' income obtained from the 70th round of NSS survey data as the base level income, he added.

Besides, the government plans to launch an index to rank states on the basis of ease of doing agri-business. Under this, states may soon start receiving extra funding for the Agriculture Ministry's flagship schemes on the basis of their performance in encouraging agri-business, especially with regard to marketing, land and governance reforms. After India jumped 23 places in the Global Ease of Doing Business ranking of the World Bank last year, the Agriculture Ministry planning to come out with its own index to rank states on 'ease of doing agri-business'. The Ministry has sent a proposal to this effect on all States and Union Territories. As per the data available agriculture accounts for around 17 per cent of Gross Value Added while it employs 47 per cent of the work force in the country. The proposed index will help in fostering agriculture among states by promoting a competitive spirit.



## BACKWARD CLASSES

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 6, 2018

### **After five extensions, OBC panel to miss deadline again**

*The panel was set up in 2017 to look into an “equitable distribution” of OBC reservation benefits.*

A panel appointed by the government to detail the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC) is likely to miss the May 31 deadline for submitting its report because the process of collating caste-wise population data cannot be undertaken with general elections around the corner, people familiar with the matter said. The general elections, to be held in multiple phases, are likely to be announced in March.

The panel was set up in 2017 to look into an “equitable distribution” of OBC reservation benefits -- or to essentially make sure that no one OBC group is hogging a disproportionate share of benefits . It has so far been granted five extensions to finalise its report.

A delay in the submission of the report means that nearly 983 castes found to have missed out on benefits of OBC reservation will not get relief anytime soon. The commission has pointed out that about 150 castes are the top beneficiaries of quotas for OBCs, but nearly 983 castes are not able to avail these benefits at all.

In 2015, the now-scraped National Commission for Backward Classes recommended three categories for OBCs — extremely backward classes, more backward classes, and backward classes.

The 2017 panel, headed by Justice G Rohini suggested a fresh survey to get caste-wise population, since there is no data post-Independence on the employment and education status of OBC. In its consultation paper, the panel pointed out that data indicates a “high level of inequity in the distribution of benefits across different communities included in the central list”.

There is a 27% reservation for OBCs, except the so-called creamy layer, in educational institutions and government jobs. The central list has about 2,600 castes and the 2007 National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) data put the OBC population at 40.94% of the total population.

“Six or seven state OBC commissions, including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal, have responded to the consultation paper that was circulated, but a number of states are yet to respond. Another impediment is that a fresh round of survey cannot be conducted when the elections are so close,” said one of the people cited in the first instance.

The BJP-led NDA government in 2017, proposed sub-categorisation of OBCs, ostensibly to devise a “more equitable distribution” of quota benefits among various castes. Political analysts, however, saw this as an attempt to design a coalition of non-dominant castes among OBCs to upstage regional leaders from dominant caste groups -- such as the Yadavs in the Hindi heartland and the Jats in Rajasthan. Especially at a

time when the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party have announced an alliance in the electorally critical state of Uttar Pradesh, a sub-categorisation of OBCs could have helped the BJP woo the non-dominant backward classes.

The BJP last year announced a training scheduled for its OBC members with an aim to help them strategise on how to expand the party's base among OBCs. Such training sessions were held in states such as UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Vivek Kumar of Jawaharlal Nehru University said, "They wanted to mitigate this image that the BJP is anti-Dalits and OBCs. This [sub-categorisation] was a long-thought strategy to win over the most backward classes," he added.

# BUDGET

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 2, 2018

## Top 10 Budget headlines: Income tax rebate, fiscal deficit target, and more



*Finance Minister Piyush Goyal with MoS Finance ministers Shiv Pratap Shukla and P Radhakrishnan leaves the North Block to present the interim Budget 2019-20 at Parliament*

Interim Budget has sops for voters, slips on fiscal deficit target again

In his presentation of the interim Budget for 2019-20 in the Lok Sabha on Friday, Finance Minister Piyush Goyal made a strong pitch for the re-

election of the National Democratic Alliance government. Although the convention is that a government facing re-election does not make any major taxation or spending proposals that would tie the hand of the next government, which would present the full Budget subsequently, Goyal's speech laid out a series of appeals and promises to different sections of the electorate.

### **Tax benefits for above Rs 5 lakh income group may be considered next: Goyal**

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal expressed confidence that the Narendra Modi government would return to power in the upcoming general elections, and that it might look at tax relaxations for individuals earning more than Rs 5 lakh annually in the full Budget for 2019-20.

### **Controlled hand-outs: Fiscal discipline maintained in an election year**

As pre-election Budgets go, Piyush Goyal's isn't too bad. While vote-oriented announcements cost about Rs 1 trillion (or about half of 1 per cent of next year's GDP), the fiscal deficit will remain unchanged from this year's revised figure of 3.4 per cent of GDP.

### **Not an Interim Budget: Mr Goyal's first has all features of a full Budget**

This is not an Interim Budget. What Finance Minister Piyush Goyal presented on Friday has no resemblance with any of the previous three Interim Budgets presented by his predecessors, Jaswant Singh in

2004, Pranab Mukherjee in 2009 and Palaniappan Chidambaram in 2014.

### **Interim Budget 2019: Goodies from the poll vault**

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chose the Lok Sabha on Friday to launch its election campaign. And one single visual on our television screens summed it up: As Interim Finance Minister Piyush Goyal announced the tax benefits for over 30 million middle-class tax payers, the House was reverberating with “Modi-Modi” slogan, and the prime minister was thumping his desk vigorously. As the camera zoomed in on Rahul Gandhi, the contrast was striking. For once in many months now, the Congress president was squirming and slouching in his chair and was wearing a blank look.

### **Budget from visitors' gallery: 'Modi' chant & the handshake that mattered**

At 11:05 am, Congress MP Rajiv Satav sidled into the House. He whispered something to colleague Sushmita Deb and handed her a handful of laser-printed placards. One set said: ‘How’s the jobs!’ Another simply said: ‘15 lakh?’ These placards were raised every time Finance Minister Piyush Goel mentioned the word ‘jobs’ in his interim Budget speech.

### **Interim Budget 2019: Goyal puts extra cash in pockets of middle class**

Finance Minister Piyush Goel has chosen to put extra money in the pockets of the middle class in an election year. In addition, he has tried to make life more convenient for deposit holders.

## **Budget 2019 a trailer, will guide India to prosperity, says PM Modi**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the interim Budget is merely a “trailer” of what will guide India towards prosperity after the Lok Sabha polls, and described it as something that will benefit all sections of society.

## **Interim Budget 2019: Govt misses fiscal deficit goal second year in a row**

The government has revised the fiscal deficit target for 2018-19 or FY19 to 3.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) from the Budget Estimate (BE) of 3.3 per cent. For 2019-20 or FY20, Finance Minister (FM) Piyush Goyal has retained the fiscal deficit at 3.4 per cent of GDP, thus delaying the fiscal consolidation path to 3 per cent of GDP.

## **Interim Budget 2019: Income support scheme leaves farmers unhappy**

Having lost three key state elections in the Hindi heartland on account of farmers’ anger over falling prices, Finance Minister Piyush Goyal announced that the government would transfer Rs 6,000 a year into the bank accounts of all eligible small and marginal farmers to meet their investment needs.

## DEFENCE

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 5, 2018

### **Defence modernisation with meagre allocations**

*India needs realistic defence planning and war doctrines for the budget we have in real life, not the budget the planners have in their minds.*



The defence allocations in the interim budget 2019-20 have again been a disappointment. While the capital outlay has crossed Rs 1 trillion for the first time, it hardly represents any hike over the revised figures for 2018-19 once inflation and rupee depreciation — since roughly 70% of our weapons are imported — are accounted for. On the other hand, the bill on salaries and pensions has ballooned, thanks to the large size of the



Indian armed forces and the implementation of one rank one pension. A simple addition of pay and allowances of serving personnel and pension of retired veterans returns the sum of Rs 2.33 trillion.

Even if this is an election year, the story has been the same for a long time now. The reality is that India is a developing country with multiple competing demands over scarce capital. It is tough to make a case for higher defence allocations without hiving off resources from some other programmes, which, too, require urgent funds. But equally, it is also a reality that India lives in a precarious neighbourhood with two hostile nuclear powers, one of which aims to be a global hegemon and the other is a breeding ground for terrorists. So what can be done?

One, India needs to drastically prune the size of its armed forces. In any case, a large army like ours is more equipped to fight yesterday's wars and not tomorrow's, which will require less manpower but greater technological prowess, including in new age domains like cyber and space. Two, the armed forces needs to look at its own assets — land, property, etc. — to squeeze in extra resources. Three, the security establishment needs to take a hard look at our war doctrines and defence planning. While the Opposition sees political potential in raking up the Rafale deal, it has little appetite to question the government on its defence planning. One keeps hearing that the Indian Air Force needs 42 fighter squadrons to fight a two-front war. If India spends so much money on buying so many aircraft, what will be left for the army and the navy? We need realistic defence planning and war doctrines for the budget we have in real life, not the budget the planners have in their minds.

## E-COMMERCE

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 1, 2018

### **Amazon, Walmart hit by Modi govt's refusal to extend new e-commerce rules deadline**

*Amazon.com Inc. and Walmart Inc. suffered a blow in India, the next frontier of e-commerce, when the government rejected requests to defer a deadline requiring online retailers to comply with tighter new rules starting on Friday.*



Amazon.com Inc. and Walmart Inc. suffered a blow in India, the next frontier of e-commerce, when the government rejected requests to defer a deadline requiring online retailers to comply with tighter new rules starting on Friday.

That means Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart, India's two largest online retailers who dominate the market, won't be able to sell the products of companies in which they have business interests, drastically reducing the categories and goods offered to shoppers.

The regulations unveiled at the end of December also ban online retailers from allowing companies to sell products exclusively on either platform. This prevents them from cutting deals to tout items like new smartphones or affordable televisions that couldn't be sold offline or through competitors. The stringent rules also forbid online retailers from influencing prices, a step that could mean the end of heavy discounts offered to lure new buyers online.

Such strategies by global companies have been controversial in a country where organized retail accounts for only about 10 percent of a market dominated by small sellers and mom-and-pop stores. The government's decision on the e-commerce rules comes months ahead of a crucial general election. Small traders have traditionally been part of a support base for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

Amazon and Walmart have huge stakes in India. Amazon has already pledged to invest more than \$5.5 billion in the country, and Walmart spent \$16 billion last year to acquire homegrown startup, Flipkart Online Services Pvt.

The two online retailers have amassed vast inventories in companies in which they have business interests and had sought a four- to six-month extension to help offload those products. The decision to go forward

with the new rules on schedule was announced Thursday evening in a statement from India's Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion.

Now, the products will have to be taken off the e-commerce platforms overnight.

“While we remain committed to complying with all laws and regulations, we will continue to look to engage with the government to seek clarifications that help us decide out future course of action as well as minimize the impact on our customers and sellers,” Amazon said in a statement Thursday evening.

Morgan Stanley analysts estimate that Amazon will have \$6.5 billion in sales in India in 2019, representing 2.3 percent of the company's total revenue. Even if Amazon's India business stopped growing in 2019, which Morgan Stanley says would be an extreme result, it would only slow Amazon's overall revenue growth by about half a percent for the year.

Flipkart didn't respond to calls seeking comment. It had earlier warned in a letter of “significant customer disruption” and is also said to have told the government that such a move would stunt the growth of e-commerce in India.

## ELECTION

HINDU, FEB 1, 2018

### **Law Ministry gets additional 666.66 crore for conducting Lok Sabha elections**



The Law Ministry has been allocated an additional sum of over 666 crore for conduct of Lok Sabha elections due this summer.

According to Vote on Account 2019-2020, an additional provision has been made for the Law Ministry of 666.66 crore (voted) in revenue section for conduct of the polls.

The Law Ministry is the administrative ministry for the Election Commission. Certain funds are also allocated to the Home Ministry for

elections which is largely used for transportation and logistics related to security personnel.

Some of the amount spent by the Home Ministry is later reimbursed by the Law Ministry.

Separately, the Election Commission has been allocated an additional 12.14 crores (voted) in revenue section and 16.67 crores (voted) in capital section for voters' awareness campaign under and for acquisition of land from DDA for construction of office building.

The Lok Sabha elections are a mega exercise involving thousands of polling personnel and security forces.

The term of the present Lok Sabha ends on June 3 and the next House to be formed before that.

There is a possibility that the Election Commission (EC) may go by precedent and hold assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh along with the Lok Sabha polls.

Since the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly was prematurely dissolved, the EC is bound to hold fresh polls there within six months.

It was dissolved in November 2018 and the upper limit ends in May. The poll panel may hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir along with the Lok Sabha polls as well. But it can be held before that also as much depends on the security situation there.

While the term of the Sikkim Assembly ends on May 27, the terms of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Arunachal Pradesh assemblies end on June 18, June 11 and June 1 respectively.

In 2004, the Election Commission had announced four-phase Lok Sabha polls on February 29. While the first date of poll was April 20, the last date was May 10.

In 2009, the EC had announced Lok Sabha poll scheduled on March 2. The five-phase polls began on April 16 and ended on May 13.

In 2014, the EC had announced the election schedule on March 5 and the nine-phase electoral exercise was spread across April and May.

While the first phase polling was on April 7, the last phase was on May 12.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 4, 2018

### **More than half of India's working-age population out of labour force: NSSO**

Half of India's working-age population (15 years and above), for the first time, is not contributing to any economic activity, according to the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO's) latest jobs survey. The labour force participation rate (LFPR) — the share of the population who are either working or available for work — stood at 49.8 per cent in 2017-18, falling sharply from 55.9 per cent in 2011-12.

More than a decade ago, in 2004-05, 63.7 per cent of the population was part of the labour force. This was part of the findings of the NSSO's

TRIBUNE, FEB 6, 2018

### **Employment generation priority for govt: Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar**

Union Labor Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar on Wednesday informed Rajya Sabha that employment generation coupled with improving employability was a priority for the government.

In a written reply, Gangwar said that Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) has been initiated for facilitating self-employment under which



collateral free loans up to Rs 10 lakh are extending to small/micro business enterprises and to individuals to enable them to setup or expand their business activities.

Till January 25 this year, a total of more than 15 crore loans have been sanctioned under the scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojan (PMRPY) had been initiated in the year 2016-17 for incentivising employers for employment generation. Under it government pays the entire employer's contribution ( 12 per cent or as admissible) towards the EPS and EPF for all sectors with effect from April 1, 2018, to all eligible new employees for the next three years from the date of registration of the new employee.

Benefits have been given to more than one lakh establishments covering about one crore beneficiaries till January 1, 2019, under the scheme.

He further said that under Skill India Mission, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is implementing a flagship scheme known as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 2016-20 with an objective to provide skilling to one crore people under Short Training (STT), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Special Project (SP) across the country for four year (2016-2020) with an outlay of Rs 12,000 crore.

Under the scheme, short duration skill development training programme is being imparted to all prospective candidates including candidates belonging to BPL in the country.

Gangwar's remarks assume significance in the light on an ongoing debate on the rise of unemployment in the country. A recent media report quotes leaked employment data as saying that the estimated rate of unemployment in the country stood at 6.1 per cent in 2017-18. Indian government's think-tank Niti Aayog however disputed the data saying that exercise to collate unemployment data was still ongoing.

## HEALTH SERVICES

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 2, 2018

**8,000 health and wellness centres operational across 35 states, UTs**



Around 8,000 health and wellness centres have become operational in 35 states and union territories under the government's flagship Ayushman Bharat scheme, Union Minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey said Saturday.

Under the programme, the health ministry has set a target to transform nearly 1.5 lakh primary health centres and sub-centres as health and wellness centres by 2022 to provide comprehensive and quality primary care close to the community.

These centres will be equipped to provide treatment for diseases such as blood pressure, diabetes, cancer and old age-related ailments.

"The government is rapidly moving forward in providing comprehensive primary health care through health and wellness centres (HWCs). I am happy to inform that about 8,000 HWCs have become operational in 35 states and UTs," the Union Minister of State for Health said.

Chairing the 6th meeting of the National Health Mission Steering Group, Choubey said NHM was vital for supporting the states in improving their health systems.

"The prime minister's announcement for heightened focus on the aspirational districts also provides us with significant leverage point to address long persisting inequities and development lag in these districts. This will be strengthened through NHM," he said.

During the meeting, it was highlighted that under the NHM-Free Drug Service initiative, funds are being provided to states and union territories for provision of free drugs in public health facilities and setting up of IT-backed systems for drug procurement and quality assurance.

Under the NHM Free Diagnostics Service initiative, substantial funding is provided to states within their resource envelope to provide free essential diagnostic services at public health facilities.

The programme has been rolled out in states and union territories which are providing free diagnostic services either in-house or on PPP mode.

The issues discussed in the meeting also included prevention and control of viral hepatitis, immunisation, comprehensive primary health care, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and newer intervention under Revised National TB Control Programme among others.

Representatives from the ministries of AYUSH, Tribal Affairs, Women and Child Development, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, Urban Affairs and Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Department of Higher Education were present at the meeting, along with members from the civil society and experts in the field of healthcare.

PIONEER, FEB 7, 2018

## **Centre plans to provide Ayush services to health, wellness centres**

New Delhi: In a move that will go a long way in boosting the Indian alternate medicines, the Government has ambitious plans to provide the Ayush services in at least 12,500 health and wellness centres under the Ayushman Bharat--Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna across the country.

Shripad Yesso Naik, Minister of State for AYUSH after inauguration of the Conference of AYUSH/Health Ministers of States/UTs said here “at least 12,500 health and wellness centres need to be identified across the

country for rendering AYUSH services to the people at grass-root level with special reference to preventive health care.

While the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences is conducting NPCDCS programme in Surendra Nagar District in Gujarat; Bhilwara in Rajasthan and in Gaya, Bihar, the Central Council for Research in Homeopathy is implementing the programme in Darjeeling in West Bengal and Krishna District in Andhra Pradesh.

The results are encouraging and would be scaled up, the Minister said.

In view of greater acceptance of the ayurveda medicines, the Government's other premier research agencies like CSIR and DRDO too have come forward in developing herbal drugs respectively like BGR-34 to tackle diabetes and Leukoskin for treatment of white patches. Both ayurveda drugs are being sold by the AIMIL Pharmaceuticals from Delhi.

Rajiv Kumar Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog said that AYUSH deserves equal recognition and patronage as is enjoyed by the modern system of medicine. "Holistic nature of AYUSH systems need to be recognized nurtured and proliferated in the interest of the health of the mankind. He emphasized on role of regulatory bodies is critical in maintaining the quality and standards of AYUSH systems and we need to have a robust regulatory system for AYUSH drugs and education.

## HOUSING

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 2, 2018

### **Interim Budget 2019: Tax waiver on notional rent gives respite to realtors**

Sitting on 600,000-700,000 of unsold units due to poor demand, cash-starved real estate developers heaved a sigh of relief after the government extended the tax waiver on notional rent on such flats for two years from one year earlier.

Developers and consultants feel that this budget proposal would benefit developers of major 7-8 cities, particularly those from the national capital region (NCR) and Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) where unsold units are maximum.

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal proposed to extend the period of exemption from levy of tax on notional rent on unsold inventories from one year to two years. The period would be counted from the end of the year in which the project gets completed.

Commenting on this proposal, ANAROCK Chairman Anuj Puri said: "This is a welcome move and will benefit the housing sector, as currently there are more than 673,000 unsold units across the top 7 cities. "Delhi-NCR has 1,86,710 of unsold units while MMR has 2,19,490 units.

## JUDICIARY

HINDUNSTAN TIMES, FEB 4, 2018

### **Have to solve pendency, fill up empty posts: CJI Ranjan Gogoi**

*The CJI said the pendency figure of three crore cases in the country was alarming, but pointed out that 81 lakh cases were just about one year old and that they cannot be said to be pending.*



Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi on Sunday said the pendency of cases in courts was “worrisome and troublesome”.

Speaking at a function after inaugurating a temporary complex of Andhra Pradesh high court at Nelapadu in Amaravati, Gogoi said, “This is not a good sign. Both the bar and the bench need to take a serious view and work in close coordination to meet this challenge.”



Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu and a host of Supreme Court and high court judges also attended the inauguration.

Amaravati is getting its own high court after Andhra's bifurcation in June 2014.

The CJI said the pendency figure of three crore cases in the country was alarming, but pointed out that 81 lakh cases were just about one year old and that they cannot be said to be pending.

Gogoi said 50 lakh cases out of the three crore were petty cases like breach of the Motor Vehicles Act, Weights and Measures Act and small violations of the excise law, which call for the imposition of a token fine.

“I appeal to the Chief Justices of the high courts to give a thought on how best we can deal with these 50 lakh cases.”

Efforts are in progress to fill up 5,000 vacancy posts of district judge and subordinate judge all over the country, he said.

The chief justice said 400 high court judge posts are vacant, and recommendations for filling of those posts from the courts were awaited.

Filling of another 100 vacancies in the cadre of Supreme Court judge is in the pipeline, he said.

CM Naidu urged judges to bring down litigations for the progress of the bifurcated state, highlighting the need to harness technology to address pendency of cases.

“After all, Andhra Pradesh is an emerging state, struggling hard to heal its bifurcation wounds. It wants to grow and develop on a fast track for which a litigation-free situation is essential,” Naidu said.

TRIBUNE, FEB 7, 2018

## **20 judges per 10 lakh people in the country, LS told**

There are 20 judges per 10 lakh people in the country as compared to 17 in 2014, the Law Ministry said on Wednesday.

In a written reply in Lok Sabha, minister of state for Law P P Chaudhary said based on the population as per Census 2011 and sanctioned strength of judges in Supreme Court, the 24 high courts, and lower judiciary in 2018, the judge-population ratio in the country works out to be 19.78 judges per million population.

He said the ratio was 17.48 judges per million population in 2014.

The sanctioned strength of judges of high courts has increased from 906 judges in June 2014 to 1079 judges in December, 2018 and the sanctioned strength of Judges of district/subordinate courts has increased from 20,214 in 2014 to 22,833 in 2018.

However, the working strength of judges in high courts is 673 while for the Supreme Court it is 28 against the sanctioned strength of 31.

## **OMBUDSMAN**

PIONEER, FEB 7, 2018

### **Centre seeks applications for chief, members of Lokpal**

The Government has sought applications for chairman and members of anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal, nearly five years after the Lokpal Act came into force, officials said Wednesday.

An advertisement seeking applications from desired and eligible candidates has been issued by the Personnel Ministry.

For the appointment as the chairman, a person who is or has been Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge is eligible to apply.

Besides, individuals with “impeccable integrity and outstanding ability” having special knowledge and expertise of not less than 25 years in matters related to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, finance including insurance and banking, and law and management are eligible to apply.

Those with less than 45 years of age are not eligible to apply.

According to rules, there is a provision for a chairperson and a maximum of eight members in the Lokpal. Of these, four need to be judicial members.

“Not less than 50 per cent of the members of the Lokpal shall be from amongst the persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minorities and women,” the advertisement seeking the applications reads.

Upon selection, the chairperson and members shall hold office for a term of five years or till they attain 70 years of age.

The salary and allowances of the chairman of the Lokpal will be same as that of the Chief Justice of India. The members will be paid salary and allowances same as that of a judge of the Supreme Court.

# PARLIAMENT

TRIBUNE, FEB 7, 2018

## **Rajya Sabha disrupted**

The Rajya Sabha continued to remain paralysed for the third straight day, as Samajwadi Party, BSP and RJD members created ruckus raising issues relating to changes in the appointment procedure for the university teachers and the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

The House witnessed two adjournments before the proceedings were completely washed out. As soon as the House resumed at 2 pm, RJD, SP, BSP and TMC members trooped into the well protesting over various issues, including the introduction of roster system in higher educational institutions which they claim limits the scope of reservation for jobs.

The roster system provides that vacancies are considered according to department or wing in a college or university and not total number of posts available for recruitment in any institution. This results in limited seats available for recruitment by each department or wing under reserved categories.

Deputy Chairman Harivansh asked protesting members in the well to return to their seats. However, they did not relent. The Chair then requested SP leader Ramgopal Yadav to end the protest as he will be

given a chance to speak during the Zero Hour. He said the government had deviated from its promise made on the issue. Minister Vijay Goel tried to pacify Yadav, but the protest continued.

## POLICE

HINDU, FEB 4, 2018

### **Rishi Kumar Shukla takes charge as CBI Director**



*Mr. Shukla (58) is a former DGP of the Madhya Pradesh Police and an Intelligence Bureau veteran.*

Rishi Kumar Shukla took charge as CBI Director on Monday. Mr. Shukla, a 1983 batch IPS officer, is assuming office at a time the agency is busy in a turf war with the Kolkata Police that has spiralled into a political slugfest between the Centre and the West Bengal Government.

A perplexed interim CBI chief M. Nageswara Rao was seen scrambling resources to counter the West Bengal Police's action that not only detained a CBI team, which went to question Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar, but also cordoned off the agency's office at the CGO complex in Salt Lake City.

The arrival of 58-year old Mr. Shukla, a former DGP of the Madhya Pradesh Police and an Intelligence Bureau veteran, as a full-fledged director is likely to bring some sort of order in the CBI as it moves the Supreme Court to challenge the action of the West Bengal government in ponzi scam cases.

The issue was triggered when a team of CBI officials arrived at the doors of Mr. Kumar to question him in connection with Saradha and Rose Valley scams.

The investigation in these cases have been expedited in the run-up to the general election, with the CBI recently questioning a close aide of Ms. Banerjee at his residence.

On Sunday, the CBI team was stopped by police personnel, bundled into a police vehicle and taken to a police station.

The police took the action as the CBI officials failed to produce any warrant, State police officials said.



## **In CBI vs Kolkata Police face-off, Rajnath Singh delivers a sharp warning**

*The showdown began on Sunday when a CBI team reached Kolkata police commissioner Rajeev Kumar's house to question him over the Saradha scam.*



The tussle between the Mamata Banerjee government and the Centre has snowballed into an opposition versus BJP fight. Home minister Rajnath Singh told the Lok Sabha on Monday that the incident in Kolkata is a threat to federal political system.

Rajnath Singh said the Kolkata Police-CBI face-off was unfortunate. “The incident in Kolkata is threat to federal political system of country. There may be constitutional breakdown in West Bengal,” he said.

The showdown began on Sunday when a CBI team reached Kolkata police commissioner Rajeev Kumar's house to question him over the Saradha scam. In retaliation, Kolkata Police also sent its teams to the

CBI offices in the the city and the residence of CBI's West Bengal unit chief Pankaj Srivastava.

Rajnath, who was addressing the House amid slogans by opposition members, said the Centre has power to maintain normalcy in any part of the country. His reply came after the Trinamool Congress raised the issue in Parliament.

“The Kolkata police commissioner was not cooperating in the CBI probe into the ponzi scam cases. Several summons were issued to him,” the home minister said.

The CBI moved the Supreme Court on Monday seeking directions to Kolkata police commissioner Rajeev Kumar to cooperate with the investigation in Saradha chit fund case. The court will hear the matter on Tuesday.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 5, 2018

### **CBI can question Kolkata police chief Rajeev Kumar, can't arrest him, orders Supreme Court; Mamata says victory**

The Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered Kolkata police commissioner Rajeev Kumar to cooperate with the CBI in the Saradha chit fund case. The court though made it clear that no coercive steps, including arrest, can be taken against him.

“We direct the chief secretary of the state and the DGP to file their replies on or before February 18,” a bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi said on Tuesday.

The Supreme Court said Kumar should appear at a neutral place—Shillong. The court said it may seek personal presence of the police officers after it considers the response files by the chief secretary and DGP. If presence is required then they would be intimated by February 19.

Attorney General KK Venugopal, who appeared for the CBI, said the unprecedented events in West Bengal showed there was complete breakdown of the constitutional machinery.

The CBI moved the court seeking directions to Rajeev Kumar to cooperate with the investigation in the Saradha chit fund case. The CBI had raised suspicions that the Kolkata top cop was destroying evidence in the chit fund case.

On Sunday night, a CBI team was detained by Kolkata police in an unprecedented chain of events that also witnessed chief minister Mamata Banerjee rushing to Kumar's residence. The CBI officers were taken to Shakespeare Sarani police station and released later under instruction from Mamata Banerjee.

PIONEER, FEB 7, 2018

## **SC recognises Central Armed Police Forces as 'organised services'**

In a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court on Tuesday held that all Central Armed Police Forces — CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, RPF and SSB

— be recognised as “organised services”, saying it will remove stagnation, ensuring promotion and other service-related benefits to officers in the same post.

It also held that Group “A” officers of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) should be given all benefits including non-functional financial upgradation (NFFU) from 2006 in terms of the 6th Pay Commission.

The top court upheld the Delhi High Court’s two verdicts by which it had granted “organised service” status to Railway Protection Force (RPF), CRPF, BSF, ITBP and SSB.

NFFU is a concept introduced in the 6th pay commission and was granted to what the Government termed as Group “A” organised services.

Under NFFU, if all the officers of a particular batch cannot move up the ladder owing to lack of vacancies but only one does, the others will automatically get financial upgradation like the one promoted. However, it would involve only a financial upgrade but not rank or perks.

The top court’s order will benefit thousands of Group A officers of central paramilitary forces like Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF).

A bench of Justices R F Nariman and M R Shah upheld the orders of the Delhi High Court passed on December 4, 2012 with regard to grant of

“organised service” status to Railway Protection Force (RPF) and to CRPF, BSF, ITBP and SSB in its September 3, 2015 verdict.

The bench, while dismissing the appeals of Centre against the order, said that in the monographs published by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) right from 1986 till date, CAPFs have been shown to be a part of the Central Group “A” Services.

“CAPFs have been shown as a part of the Central Group A Services after conducting the exercise of Cadre Review etc. By the DoPT. Therefore, all throughout from 1986 till date, in the Monographs published by the DoPT, CAPFs have been shown to be a part of Central Group A Services. Therefore, thereafter it would not be open for the DoPT not to consider and/or treat the CAPFs as an Organised Group A Services,” the bench said.

## RESERVATION

TRIBUNE, FEB 7, 2018

### **SC reserves its verdict on Sabarimala review pleas**

*Kerala says exclusion of women not essential to Hinduism*

The Supreme Court today reserved its verdict on petitions seeking review of its September 2018 judgment allowing entry of women, irrespective of their age, into the Lord Ayyappa's hilltop temple at Sabarimala in Kerala.

Senior advocate K Parasaran, representing Nair Service Society, submitted before a five-judge Constitution Bench headed by CJI Ranjan Gogoi that the exclusionary practice in Sabarimala temple was based on the character of the deity who was an eternal celibate.

Parasaran was supported by senior counsel V Giri, who represented the temple's priest. "Untouchability has nothing to do here. Entry is sought to be prohibited only due to nature of the deity. It is not an exclusionary practice," Giri told the Bench, which also included Justices Rohinton Nariman, AM Khanwilkar, DY Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra.

The Bench can either reverse its verdict or dismiss the review petitions or refer the issue to a larger Bench.

On behalf of Prayar Gopalakrishnan, former chairman of the Travancore Devaswom Board, senior counsel Abhishek Manu Singhvi submitted that in Hinduism God was not worshipped in abstract. Defending the

verdict, the Kerala Government contended that exclusion of women was not essential to Hinduism.

## **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

PIONEER, FEB 7, 2018

### **Latest communication satellite GSAT-31 launched successfully**

India's latest communication satellite GSAT-31 was successfully put into orbit in the early hours on Wednesday by an European rocket from French Guiana, in a mission that is expected to enhance connectivity for ATMs and provide for uninterrupted DTH services.

Blasting off from Ariane Launch Complex at Kourou, a French territory located in northeastern coast of South America at at 2.31 am (IST), the Ariane-5 vehicle of the European launch services provider Arianespace injected the "high power" satellite into the orbit in a flawless flight that lasted about 42 minutes.

With a mission life of 15 years and weighing about 2,536 kg, GSAT-31 is the country's 40th communication satellite to be built by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and will provide continuity to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites.

"It gives me great pleasure on the successful launch of GSAT-31 spacecraft on board Ariane-5," ISRO's Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) Director S Pandian said at Kourou soon after the launch.



“Congratulation to Arianespace on the successful launch and precise injection of satellite into the orbit,” he added. The GSAT-31 is a “high power” communication satellite with Ku-band, and it is going to serve and replace some of the satellites that are going to expire soon, he said.

Arianespace CEO Stéphane Israël tweeted: “2019 is off to a roaring start for #Arianespace! Flight #VA247, carrying Saudi Geostationary Satellite 1/Hellas Sat 4 and GSAT-31, is a confirmed success that underscores our leadership position in the geostationary launch market. @KACST #HellasSat @ISRO @LockheedMartin.”

# TAXATION

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 1, 2018

## **GST collections cross 1 trn in Jan, 2nd highest monthly mop-up since April**



GST collections in January rose to Rs 1.02 lakh crore -- the second highest monthly mop-up after April, the finance ministry said Saturday.

This is a significant increase from the collection of Rs 94,725 crore in December 2018, and 14 per cent higher than January 2018 collection of Rs 89,825 crore.

The total number of sales return or GSTR-3B filed for the month of December up to January 31, 2019 is 73.3 lakh.

"The total gross GST revenue collected in January 2019 is Rs 1,02,503 crore of which Central GST is Rs 17,763 crore, State GST (SGST) is Rs 24,826 crore, Integrated GST (IGST) is Rs 51,225 crore and Cess is Rs 8,690 crore," the ministry said in a statement.

This is the third time in current fiscal that revenues from Goods and Services Tax (GST) have crossed Rs 1 lakh crore mark. In April and October too, the collections surpassed this milestone.

The government has settled Rs 18,344 crore to CGST and Rs 14,677 crore to SGST from IGST as regular settlement.

The total revenue earned by the central government and state governments after regular settlement in December 2018 is Rs 36,107 crore for CGST and Rs 39,503 crore for SGST.

GST collection stood at Rs 1.03 lakh crore in April, Rs 94,016 crore in May, Rs 95,610 crore in June, Rs 96,483 crore in July, Rs 93,960 crore in August, Rs 94,442 crore in September, Rs 1,00,710 crore in October, Rs 97,637 crore in November and Rs 94,725 crore in December 2018.

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