

NEWS ALERT

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LIST OF NEWSPAPERS COVERED

BUSINESS LINE

DECCAN HERALD

ECONOMIC TIMES

HINDU

HINDUSTAN TIMES

INDIAN EXPRESS

PIONEER

STATESMAN

TELEGRAPH

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AGRICULTURE

HINDU (BUSINESS LINE), MAR 1, 2018

2.18 cr farmers covered under PM-Kisan scheme

A total of 2.18 crore small and marginal farmers have so far benefitted from the newly-launched PM-Kisan scheme and they have been distributed a sum of Rs 4,366 crore as the first instalment, an official statement has said.

According to the details available till Thursday evening, Uttar Pradesh, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, led among the states that have implemented the scheme. While UP, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the scheme on February 24, has so far disbursed the first instalment of Rs 2,000 to 74.7 lakh farmers, AP has distributed to 32.2 lakh farmers and Gujarat has covered 25.6 lakh farmers so far.

Under the scheme, farmers with holdings smaller than 2 hectares, were to be given Rs 6,000 annually to take care of their agriculture and allied activities. The sum would be released in three equal instalments over the year, effective from December last year. The government expects that 12.5 crore farmers would be eligible for the scheme.

PM-Kisan Disbursal so far (till 7.3.19)

States	No. of beneficiaries (in lakh)	Total disbursal (in Rs crore)
Uttar Pradesh	74.71	1,494.38
Andhra Pradesh	32.15	643.0
Gujarat	25.58	511.62
Telangana	14.41	288.22
Tamil Nadu	14.01	280.27
Maharashtra	11.56	231.12
All India	218.32	4366.41

PIONEER, MAR 1, 2018

Foodgrains production may fall by 1% due to erratic rainfall: Min

Due to erratic rainfall and drought in around 250 districts across the country, the overall food grain production may fall by 3.46 million tonnes (MT) in 2018-19 crop year (July-June) despite record rice output. As per the Ministry of Agriculture, overall food grain production is pegged of 281.37 million tonnes this year as compared to 284.83 million tonnes in 2017-18. As per the data, rice production is estimated to touch record 115.60 MT in 2018-19 from 112.91 MT in the previous year. In other words, food grain production may fall by one per cent in the current crop year. The second advance estimates of Ministry of Agriculture shows, wheat production is expected to touch 99.12 million tonnes, lower than the target of 102.20 million tonnes.

“Rice production is at an all-time high. We had set a target of 114 million tonnes. But we expect the output to reach 115.6 million tonnes. There will be no shortage of foodgrains in the country. We will be able to export more if international markets are competitive,” said a senior agriculture department official, who did not wish to be identified. Wheat output is pegged slightly lower at 99.12 MT from 99.70 MT in the previous year.

According to the estimate, pulses production is likely to be 24.02 million tonnes, lower than the target of 25.95 million tonnes. However, the

estimated output is more than last year's second advance estimate of 23.95 million tonnes.

The cumulative rainfall in the country during the monsoon season (June to September 2018) was 9 per cent lower than long period average (LPA). The cumulative rainfall in north west India, central India and south peninsula during that period has been normal on the whole. As per IMD, 250 of the 681 districts across the country have faced deficient rainfall this year.

“The production figures are subject to revision on account of more precise information flowing over time, it added.

The total oilseeds production in the country during 2018-19 is estimated at 31.50 million tonnes, 1.62 million tonnes higher than the 29.88 million tonnes output in second advance estimates of 2017-18. The production of oilseeds during 2018-19 is 1.85 million tonnes higher than the average oilseeds production.

With an increase of 27.61 million tonnes over 2017-18, total production of sugarcane in the country during 2018-19 is estimated at 380.83 million tonnes. Further, sugarcane production during 2018-19 is 31.05 million tonnes higher than the average sugarcane production of 349.78 million tonnes.

Production of cotton has been pegged lower at 30.09 million bales (of 170 kg each) from 34.88 million bales, while jute & mesta output is seen at 10.07 million bales (of 180 kg each) against 10.13 million bales.

India has been witnessing bumper foodgrains, oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables over the last few years, which has resulted in lower prices for farmers.

As per data, as many as 100 districts of the country have witnessed a drought like-situation, triggered by failure of south-west monsoon. This frequency is now increasing in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, among a few other States.

BANKING AND FINANCE

STATESMAN, MAR 2, 2018

Banks need to lend Rs 1 lakh crore to meet MUDRA target for FY19

With less than one month left in the current fiscal, banks will have to work overtime to meet the MUDRA loan lending target of Rs 3 lakh crore, as only about Rs 2 lakh crore have been disbursed till February 22.

As on February 22, the total loan disbursed under the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency Ltd (MUDRA) scheme stood at Rs 2,02,668.9 crore as against sanctioned amount of Rs 2,10,759.51 crore, said a government data.

The latest data of the finance ministry said over 3.89 crore MUDRA loans have been sanctioned this fiscal so far.

As per the Budget 2018-19, the government intends to disburse loans of up to Rs 3 lakh crore in the current financial year ending March 31.

In 2017-18, the lending at Rs 2,46,437.40 crore had exceeded the target. In fact, lending under the scheme has exceeded the targets in all previous fiscal.

The scheme was launched on April 8, 2015 for providing loans up to 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises.

While presenting the Union Budget 2019-20, the Finance Minister said the government has sanctioned 15.56 crore loans amounting Rs 7.23 lakh crore under the MUDRA scheme, of which an overwhelming majority were woman beneficiaries.

MUDRA loans are for non-agricultural activities up to Rs 10 lakh and activities allied to agriculture such as dairy, poultry, bee-keeping are also covered under it.

Loans under MUDRA have given categories – Shishu, Kishore and Tarun.

Shishu covers loans up to Rs 50,000, while Kishore covers above Rs 50,000 and up to Rs 5 lakh. Tarun category provides loans of above Rs 5 lakh and up to Rs 10 lakh.

DEFENCE

PIONEER, MAR 2, 2018

Good to be back in my country: Abhinandan

"It is good to be back in my country," was the first reaction of IAF pilot Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman as he set his foot back on Indian soil. This was stated by an official quoting Varthaman after he received the pilot at the Attari-Wagah border soon after his release by Pakistan.

Varthaman was captured by Pakistani authorities on February 27 after an air combat between the air forces of the two countries, a day after New Delhi had conducted counter-terror operations in Pakistan's Balakot.

"We are happy to have him back," said a top IAF officer shortly after Varthaman was handed over to Indian authorities. Reading out a brief statement, Air Vice Marshal RG K Kapoor, assistant chief of Air Staff, told a posse of reporters that the pilot will be taken for a detailed medical examination as he was subjected to lot of stress during his nearly three-day captivity.

"He will be taken for a detailed medical checkup. The officer has had to eject from a plane which would have put his body under immense strain," said Kapoor.

PIONEER, MAR 2, 2018

NTRO surveillance of JeM camp in Balakot before strikes confirmed 300 mobile targets

Before Indian Air Force (IAF) jets struck the Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) terror camp in Balakot on February 26, technical surveillance by Indian Intelligence agencies had found 300 mobile phones active at the facility, giving a clear indication of the total number of inmates housed there, sources said on Monday.

The National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) had started surveillance of the facility after the IAF was given clearance to target the camp in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, sources said.

On February 26, 12 Mirage 2000 IAF jets penetrated deep inside the Pakistani air space and launched 1,000 kg Spice 2000 bombs at the camp in Balakot, which housed terrorists, including commanders and an ammunition dump.

“During technical surveillance, it emerged that there was presence of around 300 mobile phones with active signal strength inside the facility in the days leading up to the strike. The facility was destroyed by the IAF fighters,” the sources, who wished to remain anonymous due to first hand involvement in operational matters, said.

The sources added other Indian Intelligence agencies had also corroborated NTRO's assessment of active targets with inputs of similar

number of Jaish operatives at the Balkot facility. The Government is yet to announce the exact number of terrorists killed in the strike.

However, IAF chief BS Dhanoa, at a Press conference in Coimbatore on Monday, confirmed that the target had been destroyed by Indian fighter jets and that exact casualty numbers was something that the government would release.

The Government gave approval for the airstrikes on the Jaish training camp after the Pakistan-based terror outfit carried out the deadly suicide bombing in Pulwama, killing 44 CRPF personnel.

Hours after the air raid, foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale told the media that the IAF fighters hit the largest training camp of JeM in Balakot and eliminated “a large number” of JeM terrorists, trainers, senior commanders.

ELECTION

PIONEER, MAR 1, 2018

Photo voter slip shall no longer be used as standalone ID document: EC

A photo voter slip would no longer be used as a standalone identification document during elections, and a voter will have to carry any of the twelve approved identity cards to the polling station.

The Election Commission on Thursday came out with an order in this regard after representations were made to it against the use of these slips as they do not have any security feature. They are printed after the finalisation of the roll and distributed just close to the poll through booth level officers (BLOs).

“The design of the photo voter slip does not incorporate any security feature. In fact, it was started as an alternative document as the coverage of EPIC (Electoral Photo Identity Card) was not complete,” it said.

The 12 documents accepted for identification include — EPIC, passport, Aadhar card, driving licence, service identity cards with photographs issued to employees by central/state government, PSUs, public limited companies, passbooks issued by bank or post office, PAN card and smart card issued by the Registrar General of India under National Populations Register.

As per available information, at present, over 99 per cent electors possess EPIC, and more than 99 per cents adults have been issued Aadhar Cards, the order said.

“Taking all these facts in view, the Commission has now decided that a photo voter slip shall henceforth not be accepted as a standalone identification document for voting,” the EC said.

However, such slips will continue to be prepared and issued to electors as part of the awareness building exercise, it said.

The slip will also carry a disclaimer in bold letters that it won't be accepted for the purpose of identification. “In order to ensure that no voter is left behind, henceforth EC directs that anybody with the photo voter slip, shall bring any of the twelve approved identity cards to the polling station for his/her identification,” a senior official said.

Other approved documents are MNREGA job card; health insurance smart card issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour; pension document with photograph and official identity cards issued to MPs, MLAs, MLCs, the statement said.

“In the case of EPIC, minor discrepancies in the entries therein should be ignored provided the identity of the elector can be established by the EPIC,” the statement said.

EMPLOYMENT

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 7, 2018

PM housing scheme itself created 6 million jobs, says government

The Centre on Wednesday claimed that only PM Awas Yojna in urban areas created about 61.49 lakh jobs between 2015 and 2019 amid the debate over whether the Narendra Modi government has generated the employment, which it had promised in the election manifesto. According to a study carried out for housing ministry, the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy has estimated that while 18.92 lakh direct jobs would have been created due to massive push for building houses under the government's flagship scheme, another 42.57 lakh jobs would have been created through indirect effects. Releasing the report, Union housing minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the findings show how the increased economic activities has created more employment opportunities. He added this will increase further as more and more houses are built across the country. The Centre has approved about 79 lakh houses since the PMAY was launched and work has started in nearly 40 lakh houses. 3/7/2019 PM housing scheme itself created 6 million jobs, says government - Times of India

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/pm-housing-scheme-itself-created-6-million-jobs-says-government/articleshowprint/68295686.cms> 2/2 The report also said that the increased pace of house construction has multiplier effect on the

allied industries such as cement, steel and other construction materials. Last year, the government had released a report estimating that the rural housing scheme has generated over 52 crore person days of employment in two years, emerging a key source of subsistence for unskilled and skilled labourers in the countryside. This study was also done by the same institute for rural development ministry

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 7, 2018

At 30%, India's youth inactivity highest among emerging mkts: IMF economist

Data compiled by CMIE claimed that the unemployment rate in India rose to 7.2 per cent in February 2019 Press Trust of India March 07, 2019 Last Updated at 08:12 IST Youth inactivity is the highest in India among emerging and developing economies, IMF senior economist John Bluedorn said on Wednesday. Bluedorn was speaking on labour market in emerging and developing economies at an event organised by Brookings India. "Youth inactivity is the highest in India compare to emerging and developing economies and it is about in 30 per cent," he said, defining the term as young people being neither in school or employed. Bluedorn noted that the key challenges facing youth in emerging economies labour markets include gender gaps, technological change, poor job quality in employment. He also pointed out that emerging and developing economies are less vulnerable than advanced

economies from technological changes and automation challenges. A recent data compiled by Mumbai-based CMIE reportedly claimed that the unemployment rate in India rose to 7.2 per cent in February 2019. Earlier, an NSSO's draft report showed that India's unemployment rate hit a 45-year high of 6.1 per cent in 2017.

ENVIRONMENT

HINDU, MAR 6, 2018

Environment Ministry plugs loophole that allowed plastic waste import



PET bottles imported for processing in SEZs had increased substantially.

The government has plugged a loophole that allowed the import of plastic waste into India for processing.

“...Solid plastic waste has been prohibited from import into the country including in Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and by Export Oriented Units (EOU),” the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) said in an order made public on Wednesday. The change in law was part of the Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management & Transboundary Movement) Amendment Rules, 2019.

The Hindu had reported on January 21 that India, in spite of having a significant plastic pollution load of its own, and a ban on plastic waste imports, imported PET bottles from abroad for processing in Special Economic Zones (SEZ).

The influx of PET bottles has quadrupled from 2017 to 2018, the Delhi-based environmentalist organisation, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Smriti Manch (PDUSM) had pointed out in January.

“Indian firms are importing plastic scraps from China, Italy, Japan and Malawi for recycling and the imports of PET bottle scrap & flakes has increased from 12,000 tonnes in FY 16-17 to 48,000 tonnes in FY 17-18 growing @ 290%. India has already imported 25,000 MT in the first 3 months of FY 18-19,” a note by the organisation revealed.

India consumes about 13 million tonnes of plastic and recycles only about 4 million tonnes. To incentivise domestic plastic recycling units, the government had banned the import of plastic waste, particularly PET bottles, in 2015. In 2016, an amendment allowed such imports as long as they were carried out by agencies situated in SEZs.

A senior MoEFCC official, who declined to be identified, had then told The Hindu that while the Ministry couldn't vouch for whether such

plastic imports had quadrupled, it was true that the imports had “substantially increased” and action was being contemplated.

The lack of an efficient waste collection and segregation system is the root cause for much of the plastic not making its way to recycling centres.

FORESTS

PIONEER, MAR 1, 2018

Apex court stays its order directing eviction of 11.8L forest dwellers

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed its February 13 order directing 21 states to evict 11.8 lakh illegal forest dwellers whose claims over the land have been rejected by the authorities.

A Bench comprising Justices Arun Mishra and Naveen Sinha directed the state governments to file affidavit giving details about process adopted in rejecting the claims.

The apex court posted the matter for further hearing on July 10.

The top court had on Wednesday agreed to hear the Centre's plea seeking withholding of its February 13 order asking 21 states to evict nearly 11.8 lakh forest dwellers whose claims were rejected.

After briefly hearing the matter, the bench said: "We stay and hold our February 13 order."

The bench also directed that the affidavit has to be filed by the chief secretaries of the states giving details of various steps covered for carrying out the eviction of the forest dwellers.

The Centre had rushed to the top court for modification of the order saying the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers

(Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 was a “beneficial” legislation and should be construed liberally to help “extremely poor and illiterate people” who are not well informed of their rights and procedure under the law.

MIGRATION

HINDU, MAR 6, 2018

Supreme Court seeks Centre's response on immigrants

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought a response from the Centre on a fresh plea seeking to quash a series of subordinate laws which allows the naturalisation of illegal immigrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians fleeing religious persecution from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The petitioners have urged the court to declare the amendments made through the Passport (Entry into India) Amendment Rules, 2015; the Foreigners (Amendment) Order, 2015 and the order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on December 26, 2016 under the Citizenship Act, allowing the naturalisation of illegal immigrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, as “illegal and invalid”.

They have contended that the leeway offered by the subordinate laws would further multiply the “uncontrolled influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam”. The illegal immigration has caused huge demographic changes in the northeastern State, the petitioners claimed.

A Bench, comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Sanjiv Khanna, issued notice on the plea filed by Assam State Jamiat Ulama E Hind and ordered its tagging with a similar pending petition of

‘Nagarikatwa Aain Songsudhan Birodhi Mancha’ (Forum Against Citizenship Act Amendment Bill).

Earlier, the court had decided to wait till Parliament took a call on the new Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. The Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on January 8.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill proposed to amend the original Citizenship Act of 1955 vintage. It mandated that those who crossed the border to India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan and belong to “minority communities”, namely, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians would not be treated as illegal immigrants despite having entered India without valid travel documents. If the Bill is implemented, the immigrants from the minority communities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan would not face deportation.

OMBUDSMAN

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 7, 2018

Decide on meeting to select first Lokpal in 10 days, says Supreme Court

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed Attorney General KK Venugopal to submit with 10 days the date of meeting of the prime minister-led panel on the appointment of Lokpal and at the same time it turned down advocate Prashant Bhushan's plea to make public the names proposed by the search committee.

Turning down Bhushan's plea to put the proposed names in the public domain, the court said that the matter should be left to the search committee.

"We have considered the provisions of the act and it's our considered view that no directions are required by this court and matter should be left to the search committee," it said.

Bhushan submitted that further steps were required to be taken for the constitution of the Lokpal and at this stage the names of the panel should be put in public domain. Bhushan said it was the government's duty to provide the names to the court today.

The Chief Justice of India, however, said that the court cannot perform the job of the selection committee.

“Transparency is a subjective term. You have done good work but there has to be a limit somewhere. You have to stop. We don’t think names require to be put in public domain,” the Chief Justice of India told Bhushan.

“As and when we have the names we will give them to you,” the Supreme Court told Bhushan orally.

The Supreme Court directed the attorney general to inform the court within 10 days the possible date for the search committee led by the prime minister to meet and take a decision on the names for Lokpal.

Attorney general KK Venugopal told the court that he was informed by the chairman of the search committee that three names had been forwarded on February 28 to the selection committee that comprises the chairperson, a judicial member and a non-judicial member.

The attorney general told the court that the search committees’ deliberations had been completed and that the matter now rested with the selection committee. The attorney general also said that the search committee needed another 10 days’ time to finalise the names.

Earlier, at the onset of the hearing, Prashant Bhushan had asked Justice Arun Mishra to recuse from hearing the contempt case against him. The judge asked Bhushan and those who have filed applications in his support to move a proper application. The contempt case was initiated on complaints by the attorney general and the Union of India over Bhushan’s tweets.

MASS MEDIA

HINDU, MAR 4, 2018

The difference between journalism and propaganda



A edit: [S.Subramaniam](#)

Journalists should report events rather than become cheerleaders for hate politics and intolerance

Since the terrorist attack in Pulwama that killed 40 CRPF personnel and the subsequent military response, there have been two distinct narratives in the media. On the one hand is an uncritical group of people who

constantly whip up patriotism and construct nationalism in a narrow sense. They are keen to reduce journalism to propaganda. On the other is a set of professionals who continue to retain their commitment to the core values of journalism and opt to report events instead of becoming a tool of war.

Reporting war and conflict

The reportage and headlines of The Hindu exhibit a commitment to facts as well as a desire to minimise tension between two neighbours. Here journalism is a public good and refuses to become an instrument of deceit. The headline of Feb. 28, “IAF plane shot down, pilot taken captive by Pak. army”, was both appreciated and vilified by readers. The people who felt that the headline was not patriotic enough drew their inspiration from many broadcast journalists. I would urge them to watch senior journalist Sashi Kumar’s video, “Parasites of prime time”, in which he clearly establishes how dominant TV channels have become cheerleaders for hate politics and intolerance.

My friend and the founder of the Ethical Journalism Network, Aidan White, never tires of pointing out a simple fact: that journalists who work in or near a conflict zone see first-hand the brutal and inhumane consequences of war. The act of bearing witness helps them refrain from promoting propaganda based on what he calls “skewed notions of romantic patriotism or tribal allegiance”. There is a huge corpus of literature on war and conflict journalism. One fact emerges from such literature and from war reporters — from the time of the World Wars to

my colleagues who have covered more recent wars in the neighbourhood: those who buy for blood are far removed from the sites of violence and do not have a sense of the loss and pain experienced by families. In his insightful book, *The First Casualty*, Phillip Knightley gives us an important warning: “The sad truth is that today government propaganda prepares its citizens for war so skilfully that it is quite likely that they do not want the truthful, objective and balanced reporting that hero war correspondents once did their best to provide.”

Fact and fiction

Soon after India’s air strikes in Balakot, Pakistan, many TV channels citing anonymous sources claimed that the attack across the LoC killed 300 terrorists. However, when the official version was put out, the government spokesperson refused to speculate on the number. Meanwhile, international mediapersons, who have access to Balakot, visited the site. Their findings made a mockery of many of the tall claims that were being made from India’s TV studios. In this newspaper, a sober and responsible analysis was made much before Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman’s capture. For instance, in his comment piece, “India’s options after Pulwama” (Feb. 19), Happymon Jacob examined the option of using strike aircraft to carry out precision strikes in locations across the LoC. He presciently warned: “But such air incursions are likely to be detected and intercepted by Pakistani radars and air defence systems. If an aircraft is shot down or pilots are

captured, it could become a bigger headache for the government. Pakistani retaliatory strikes cannot be ruled out either.”

Writer Namita Gokhale made an important observation recently: “One of the greatest life learnings of the ever contemporary Mahabharata is the lesson of the Chakravyuh and the consequences of entering it without full foreknowledge.” Her tweet doesn’t apply only to governance and military affairs, but to journalism too. The very act of verification that differentiates this profession from all other forms of communication tells us not be an Abhimanyu, one who knew the entry strategy but not the exit one.

Indian journalists have made some of the most incisive arguments against the pernicious idea of embedded journalism (the practice of placing journalists under the control of one side’s military during an armed conflict). The difference between journalism and propaganda lies in the language that is used in reports. Ethical journalism will report the killing of a soldier as the killing of a soldier and refrain from using loaded propagandist words like martyr.

POLITICS & GOVT. – ARUNACHAL PRADESH

HINDU, MAR 1, 2018

Calming Arunachal

The polity must foster a civic consciousness to allow equality of opportunity for all residents

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led government in Itanagar has decided not to act on the recommendations of a Joint High Power Committee granting permanent resident certificates (PRCs) to non-Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribes of Namsai and Changlang districts. This decision follows violence in Itanagar, which included arson attacks on the residence of the Deputy Chief Minister. The government took this step to de-escalate tensions despite the fact that both mainstream parties, the Congress and the BJP, were on the same page on the demand to grant the PRCs. The non-APSTs include the Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Morans, Mishings, Adivasis and ex-servicemen belonging to the Gorkha community. Successive governments and members of these communities have said PRCs are needed to avail of job and educational opportunities elsewhere in the country, and currently the 26 tribes and numerous sub-tribes who claim to be native to Arunachal Pradesh enjoy this privilege. Members of some of the non-APST communities have been long-time residents of the reconstituted State, and to term them as “outsiders” reflects a chauvinistic mindset that denies a just demand. Previous governments, including one led by the Congress in 2010, had

also buckled under pressure on the issue. The indigenous tribes opposing the move say this is one step away from providing Scheduled Tribe status for the non-APSTs, which they vociferously oppose. While this fear is overblown, the award of PRCs could ensure land rights that are otherwise denied to the non-APSTs.

The fact that the opposition to the demand took such a violent turn could be linked to a retaliation to attempts by the members of the non-APSTs to enforce an “economic blockade” of the State from the neighbouring parts of Assam last month. But these incidents suggest that barely any northeastern State is today free of the pattern of ethnic discord marked by some communities being branded “outsiders” and sought to be denied resident privileges. These include the Chakma issue in Mizoram, the hill versus valley disturbances in Manipur, the longstanding “migration” issue in Assam, the attacks on Sikh residents in Meghalaya, and even the Chakma/Hajong citizenship issue in Arunachal Pradesh itself. The pattern through all these is eerily similar, with ethnic identities trumping civic consciousness in bringing about discord that has even escalated into violence in some cases. Arunachal Pradesh has otherwise remained a peaceful State, and it is incumbent on the government and the polity to foster a civic consciousness that allows equality of opportunity for all residents in the State. This is a difficult task as identity issues persist and fester when there is inadequate economic development – which is the real bane of the Northeast today.

POVERTY

TRIBUNE, MAR 7, 2018

'Poverty reduced in India but divisive policies undermining growth'



United Nations, March 7

While admitting that poverty has fallen in India, UN Human Rights High Commissioner Michele Bachelet cautioned that divisive policies will undermine the country's economic growth.

Addressing the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Wednesday, she said that there had been “significant poverty reduction in overall terms”, but added that “inequality remains a serious issue”.

She alleged that “it appears that narrow political agendas are driving the further marginalisation of vulnerable people”.

“I fear that these divisive policies will not only harm many individuals, but also undermine the success of India’s economic growth story.

“We are receiving reports that indicate increasing harassment and targeting of minorities - in particular Muslims and people from historically disadvantaged and marginalised groups, such as Dalits and Adivasis,” Bachelet added.

Turning to recent developments on the sub-continent, Bachelet said that India and Pakistan should invite her “office to monitor the situation on the ground in Kashmir”, but did not bring up her predecessor Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein’s demand for an international commission to investigate alleged human rights violations in the state.

Bachelet said that she remained concerned about the continuing tension in Jammu and Kashmir where shelling across the Line of Control (LoC) is causing loss of life and displacement.

“I encourage both India and Pakistan to invite my office to monitor the situation on the ground, and to assist both states to address the human rights issues that must be part of any solution to the conflict.” Bachelet, a former Chilean President, was appointed High Commissioner for Human Rights last September by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Her speech, which surveyed the global situation, stressed the impact of inequality around the world, including in developed countries.

“Inequalities affect all countries... Even in prosperous states, people feel excluded from the benefits of development and deprived of economic and social rights—leading to alienation, unrest, and sometimes violence. In recent months, we have seen people across the world take to the streets to protest inequalities and deteriorating economic and social conditions.” Although she singled out India and China for the inequalities affecting minorities, she remained silent on Western countries like the US or Britain where inequalities hit minorities hardest.
— IANS

PUBLIC SECTORS

ECONOMIC TIMES, MAR 7, 2018

Few takers for many PSUs put up for sale NEW DELHI: The government has entered the final stages for “strategic sale” of at least two public sector companies — Pawan Hans and Scooters India — but is finding it difficult to find buyers for several other ailing companies that it had put on the block. With the government deciding against selling land and other assets as part of its disinvestment exercise, even state-run companies are shy of buying several PSUs that are on offer. In fact, in case of EPIL, the government failed to convince construction company NBCC to “acquire” the PSU and is now going to open the field to private players as well, something that was not allowed when the company was put up for sale. To avoid any controversy, the government has decided to either transfer land to a surplus pool that will be used for development later or end the lease that state governments had offered. “This has resulted in lower interest,” admitted an official. At the same time, the government was not banking on large fund-raising from the sale of these companies as the idea was to reduce the burden on the exchequer as PSUs were seen to be unviable.

NITI Aayog had identified over three dozen loss-making PSUs for sale but the government has been slow in implementing the plan as the bureaucracy wanted to devise a strategy that did not expose them to investigation later. With the strategy now in place, government is hoping to speed up the exercise. Sources said Pawan Hans and Scooters India

could be ready for sell-off over next few weeks. But with elections due to be announced any day, it is unclear if the government, which revived the strategic sale programme after coming to power five years ago, will actually execute the transactions.

RELIGION

DECCAN HERALD, MAR 7, 2018

SC on Ayodhya: Not concerned about what Babur did

The Supreme Court on Wednesday reserved its order on the issue of going for negotiation and appointment of negotiators to resolve the vexed Ayodhya dispute involving Ram temple and Babri Masjid. A five-judge Constitution bench presided over by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi sought to brush aside the reservations expressed by Uttar Pradesh and Hindu sides, barring 'Nirmohi Akhara', on carrying out negotiation to bring an end to the dispute.

"We understand this is a dispute about sentiments and faith. It is not a dispute upon a piece of land. We are conscious of the gravity of the dispute and its impact on the body politic. It is about heart and mind and healing of relation," the bench said as it heard arguments opposing any negotiation.

SOCIAL MEDIA

HINDU, MAR 6, 2018

Guard against misuse, social media platforms told



Ensure there is no meddling in polls, says House panel

The Parliamentary Panel on Information and Technology has directed Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram to ensure that their platforms are not used to incite violence or meddle in the Lok Sabha election.

This is the third meeting of the panel with social media platforms. The last meeting was with Twitter officials.

Fake news

“We had a constructive meeting. These platforms are used by millions of users in India. They should not be misused by hatemongers or fake news peddlers. Importantly, we told them to ensure that there should not be any foreign interference in our election,” Anurag Thakur, Chairman of Parliamentary committee on IT, told The Hindu. Mr. Thakur added that Facebook had agreed to regular meetings with the Election Commission.

According to sources, the panel members grilled the officials of Facebook.

“The question is, is Facebook a technology company advertising firm, a media firm or marketing firm? They were not able to give us any clear answer to this fundamental question,” a member told The Hindu. Facebook, according to sources, said that they are a “hybrid company”.

Cloned accounts

The members raised the issue of cloned and fake accounts. A member claimed that there were so many accounts under his name that he no longer knew which one was his own.

They also questioned Facebook on its regulatory frame work on content, advertising and marketing operations in India.

Joel Kaplan, vice-president, global public policy, and Ajit Mohan, vice-president and managing director, Facebook India, and Ankhi Das, director, public policy and programs, India, attended the meeting.

TAXATION

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 7, 2018

Government doubles income tax exemption for gratuity

The government on Wednesday said that it has doubled the income tax exemption limit for gratuity to Rs 20 lakh, a move that will benefit lakhs of salaried employees, who are now retiring as well as those who retired over the last 12 months. "Income tax exemption for gratuity under section 10(10)(iii) of the Income Tax Act has been enhanced to Rs 20 lakh. Would benefit all PSU employees and other employees not covered by Payment of Gratuity Act," finance minister Arun Jaitley tweeted. The government was, however, silent on the date from which the exemption would be applicable. Arun Jaitley @arunjaitley Income Tax Exemption for Gratuity under Section 10(10)(iii) of the Income Tax Act has been enhanced to Rs. 20 lakh. Would benefit all PSU employees and other employees not covered by Payment of Gratuity Act. 9,176 2:54 PM - Mar 5, 2019 2,774 people are talking about this 3/7/2019 Government doubles income tax exemption for gratuity - Times of India <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/govt-doubles-income-tax-exemption-for-gratuity/articleshowprint/68295937.cms> 2/2 Gratuity Act applies to all employees working in an organisation that employs 10 or more employees during a year. The higher exemption follows an amendment to the law that allowed for doubling the ceiling for all employees, which

the labour ministry said was effective March 29, 2018. The announcement on tax exemption, which has come 11 months after the notification, may increase the paperwork for those who retired till March 31,2018

WOMEN

HINDU, MAR 6, 2018

Poorest of poor and uneducated women left behind in ICDS



Anganwadi services have a poor reach among key beneficiaries – the poorest of the poor and uneducated mothers – according to a paper published in a WHO bulletin recently.

The government's Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) provides a package of six services at anganwadi or child-care centres to young **children** and pregnant women and lactating mothers. These services include supplementary nutrition, referral services, immunisation, health check-up, pre-school non-formal education and health and nutrition education.

The study analyses the findings of the National Family Health Survey 2005-2006 and 2015-2016 to compare the coverage of ICDS over a 10-year period.

During this time, the average respondents benefiting from these services increased from 9.6% to 37.9% for supplementary food, 3.2% to 21% for health and nutrition education, 4.5% to 28% for health check-ups and 10.4% to 24.2% for child-specific services over a period of 10 years.

At the same time, the poorest of the poor or quintile 1, who were the largest beneficiaries in 2006, got left behind quintile 2 and quintile 3 by 2016 for all four indicators such as supplementary food, counselling on nutrition, health check-ups and early childhood services, shows the study authored by Suman Chakrabarti, Kalyani Raghunathan, Harold Alderman, Purnima Menon and Phuong Nguyen.

For example, supply of food supplements in 2006 was the highest for the poorest quintile (11.7%). However, by 2016, they accounted for 34.8% of the respondents, behind quintile 2 (41.7%), 3 (45.5%) and 4 (39.7%).

The study also said that mothers without any schooling were the lowest beneficiaries as compared to those with primary and secondary schooling in 2006, and they continued to be so in 2016.

For Limited Circulation
