

NEWS ALERT

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LIST OF NEWSPAPERS COVERED

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ECONOMIC TIMES

HINDU

HINDUSTAN TIMES

INDIAN EXPRESS

PIONEER

STATESMAN

TELEGRAPH

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BOOKS

PIONEER, MAR 17, 2019

Top bureaucrat pens his 4th book

KK Srivastava, Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General of India, has brought out his fourth book, "Sililoquy of a Small Town Uncivil Servant", published by Rupa Publications.

Srivastava — who has very humble beginnings, passing out from ordinary colleges in Gorakhpur, ultimately obtaining his Masters in Economics from Gorakhpur University in 1980 --- is a poet writing in English with three poetry collections. His third book "Shadows of the Real" has been translated into Hindi and Russian.

His latest book is a literary non-fiction where the narrator melds facts with fantasies to highlight the conditions under which he grew up in late twentieth century Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh. His further ruminations appear to be work of conscious reality merged with thoughtful imagination covering varied themes like his rendezvous with newer world as he left Gorakhpur, analysis of dreams, suicide, literary books, social niceties, sex, sensuality, social media etc.

Written in artistically crisp and veering prose, his introspective vignettes on varied themes reflect on his intellectual honesty, wide reading and deep philosophical bent of mind. The pun in the title will be vaguely clear after one finishes the book.

With this work, this Gorakhpur author has firmed up his position as the first literary figure writing in English from eastern Uttar Pradesh.

DEFENCE

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 19, 2019

President awards gallantry awards to armed forces personnel

PTI | Mar 19, 2019, 06.13 PM IST Printed from NEW DELHI: President Ram Nath Kovind Tuesday awarded two Kirti Chakras and an equal number of Shaurya Chakras posthumously to soldiers who laid down their lives in Army operations in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast. In a rare occurrence, he also awarded a Shaurya Chakra to 16-year-old Irfan Ramzan Sheikh who thwarted a militant attack on his home in 2017. The Kirti Chakras were awarded to Sowar Vijay Kumar of the Armoured Corps and constable Pradip Kumar Panda of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The two died in two separate operations in Jammu and Kashmir. Rifleman Jaiprakash Oraon and sepoy Ajay Kumar were awarded Shaurya Chakras for their role in counter terror operations in Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir respectively. Shaurya Chakras were also awarded to CRPF deputy commandant Kuldeep Singh Chahar, Major Pawan Kumar, rifleman Rathva 3/25/2019 President awards gallantry awards to armed forces personnel - Times of personnel/articleshowprint/68483657.cms 2/2 Lilesh Bhai, naib subedhar Anil Kumar Dahiya, CRPF assistant commandant Zile Singh, havildar Jaweed Ahmad Bhat, havildar Kul Bahadur Thapa, Lieutenant Colonel Arjun Sharma, Captain Abhay Sharma, Major Imliakum Keitzar, Major Rohit Lingwal and Lieutenant Colonel Vikrant Prasher

for displaying gallantry during Army operations in the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir. Kirti Chakra is awarded for "conspicuous gallantry otherwise than in the face of the enemy" while Shaurya Chakra is awarded for "gallantry otherwise in the face of the enemy". Kovind also awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM) to 13 senior officers of the three armed forces. He presented the Uttam Yuddh Seva Medal (UYSM) to two Army officers, including Lieutenant General Anil Kumar Bhatt, currently the military secretary at the Army Headquarters. Bhatt is also the general officer commanding (GoC) of Srinagar-based 15 corps, that takes care of anti-militancy operations in the Valley. Twenty-six officers of the three armed forces were also awarded Ati Vishisht Seva Medal. The PVSM is awarded to officers for "distinguished service of the most exceptional order". The UYSM is awarded to officers for "distinguished service of an exceptional order during war/ conflict/ hostilities" while AVSM is conferred to armed forces personnel for "distinguished service of an exceptional order".

ELECTION

PIONEER, MAR 20, 2019

EC appoints 2 retired IRS officers as special expenditure observers

The Election Commission Tuesday appointed two retired IRS officers of the Income Tax Department as special expenditure observers for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls. The poll body said it has appointed Shailendra Handa and Madhu Mahajan to "supervise and monitor work done by election machinery and ensure stringent and effective enforcement action" in cases where instances of usage of black money and illegal inducements to lure voters is detected.

The two officers will monitor intelligence inputs and also supervise complaints received through the C-Vigil app, brought by the EC for the people to send to it video-based complaints of bribery of voters, and check instances that vitiate the election process.

It said the officers have supervised many successful search and seizure actions leading to detection of tax evasion in "complicated" cases during their stint with the tax department.

While Handa, a 1980-batch IRS officer, has worked as the director of IT investigation in Delhi and as the additional director general of the National Academy of Direct Taxes in Nagpur, Mahajan (1982 batch) has served as the DG investigations in Jaipur and also worked in Tamil Nadu.

In a separate development related to curbing black money in the polls, CBDT chairman P C Mody will hold a nation-wide video conference meeting with all his I-T investigation units chiefs on Wednesday.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) is the policy-making body for the I-T department and the EC has brought on board about 700 election expenditure observers to monitor flow of cash and other items during the seven phase polls that begin on April 11.

The maximum number of election expenditure observers from this pool are drawn from the Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax) while others belong to the IRS, Customs and Indirect Taxes Service.

The EC, similarly, has appointed a team of three retired civil servants as special observers to assess the situation on the ground in Jammu and Kashmir before it takes a decision about holding the Assembly elections in the terrorism hit state.

ENVIRONMENT

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 18, 2019

Global environmental problems have no national solutions

Global cooperation is the first and necessary step to successfully face these challenges. With many world leaders such as US President Donald Trump showing a lack of interest in combating climate change, the road ahead will not be easy. Unfortunately, the brunt of such irresponsible behaviour will be borne by developing countries such as India.



Last week, the United Nations released a landmark report, The Global Environment Outlook (GEO), which made two important points that all national governments need to take seriously: One, environment damage (deadly emissions, chemicals polluting drinking water, and the accelerating destruction of ecosystems) is responsible for a quarter of premature deaths and diseases across the world. Second, there is a growing chasm between rich and poor countries as rampant overconsumption, pollution and food waste in the developed world is leading to hunger, poverty and disease elsewhere.

While the report, which was six years in the making, and has been compiled by 250 scientists from 70 countries, does not paint a positive picture of the world, the heartening news is that scientists feel that, despite the challenges, the situation can be rectified. This is true. Food waste, for instance, which accounts for 9% of global greenhouse gas emissions, can be reduced. The world currently throws away a third of all food produced. In richer nations, 56% goes to waste. Then the report says 1.4 million people die each year from preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and parasites linked to pathogen-riddled water and poor sanitation. This can also be tackled by providing clean water and also investing in processes that can lead to a behavioural change in people.

In the past one year, there have been several reports that have warned national governments about the perils of ignoring such mounting environmental challenges. While each of these reports have appraised the scope and nature of different challenges — from air pollution to biodiversity — the most important takeaway from all these reports is that many of these are global problems. Many of these environmental

problems (climate change being the big one), as Israeli academic and author of the bestseller, *Sapiens*, Yuval Noah Harari, says, have no national solutions. Global cooperation is the first and necessary step to successfully face these challenges. With many world leaders such as US President Donald Trump showing a lack of interest in combating climate change, the road ahead will not be easy. Unfortunately, the brunt of such irresponsible behaviour will be borne by developing countries such as India.

HEALTH SERVICE

STATESMAN, MAR 23, 2019

‘A scheme to empower the poorest’

The CEO of the Ayushman Bharat Mission told Ajita Singh in an interview that it is a demand-driven and fund-driven scheme that focuses on empowering the poorest of the poor.



At the helm of affairs of the Pradhan Mantri Arogya Yojna, Dr Indu Bhushan, a bureaucrat-turned- economist, worked as senior economist with the World Bank Group and as Director General, East Asia

Department of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in his career spanning 35 years to provide oversight to a multitude of sectors like energy, environment, natural resources and agriculture, transport, public management, financial sector and regional cooperation, urban and social development.

The CEO of the Ayushman Bharat Mission told AJITA SINGH in an interview that it is a demand-driven and fund-driven scheme that focuses on empowering the poorest of the poor. Excerpts:

Q: What is Ayushman Bharat?

A: Ayushman Bharat Yojna, or Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna is a centrally sponsored National Health Protection Scheme launched in 2018 under Ayushman Bharat Mission of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It aims to provide health benefits to over 10 crore families from urban and rural areas.

Q: What are the benefits of Ayushman Bharat?

A: It entails increased health benefit cover to nearly 40 per cent of the poor and vulnerable population covering almost all secondary and tertiary hospitalisation. The scheme includes an insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh to almost 50 crore citizens.

Q: Isn't it like other any previous health scheme started by the government?

A: No. It involves a totally different approach. It is largely a demand-driven supply scheme of creating facilities and services to be used by people. It involves services to be provided by hospitals, doctors, nurses,

paramedical staff, healthcare systems. Earlier, the assumption was that once you create an infrastructure everyone, including poor people, will directly benefit. But that assumption was not entirely correct. Because the poor people are usually less empowered and socially they face problems in seeking solutions to address their health problems. Also, the incentive to the healthcare givers in the system to provide services to the poor was not there. There was a question of inequity too. When we compare the healthcare seeking behaviour of poor people vs rich people, the poor use much less services.

Q: What is so special about the scheme this time?

A: So far, the major focus has been on government services. In private sector, there was not much support. Quality of services both in public as well as private sector was another important issue. There was no enforcement of quality, both in public and private sectors. Lots of efforts were made to improve the quality but still there was much left to be desired. This scheme, however, is very different. It is based on demand, i.e. it is demand-driven. It is about demand-side financing. Money will flow, that is funds will be provided only when a person (40 per cent of the poorest) will use the services, not otherwise contrary to the earlier situation where money was provided one time. Here what we mean is that the scheme is not merely for providing infrastructure and services but for the use of services ~ both in public as well as private services.

Q: According to you the poorest would get empowered. How?

A: This scheme is about empowering the poorest. As money is being given in the hands of these people, it is they who become the sought-

after patients like the rich ones. Because now, they too would be paying for the services as the former.

Q: What would it mean for the healthcare providers?

A: Earlier, the services were to be provided free-of charge which was not sufficient motivation for the healthcare providers. The poorest people were a sort of a burden to the healthcare agents who used to treat these poor patients as if they were doing charity. But now, these healthcare seekers become much more ‘sought after’ patients in the system as they too come with money behind them. As the scheme is open to both public as well as private sector, the poor can also avail the facilities of private hospitals. Private sector can get empanelled for services.

Q: Doesn’t this scheme promote private sector?

A: We are not merely promoting the private sector, but are hoping that they would also shoulder the government’s responsibility. As we are engaging with private sector through money, we have a leverage. None of the earlier schemes had that kind of leverage. They were based on the article of faith that once we define the system, the private sector will follow suit. But now, we can ensure that they follow what we set as standards or define the system or lay the guidelines because now the private sector will get the money only if they provide what we have asked them to do. If they do not, then with audits we can enforce quality standards. Hence, this scheme is totally different in terms of targeting, in terms of participation of private sector and in terms of ensuring quality.

Q: What end-result do you expect?

A: Through the scheme, we will reduce the out-of-pocket catastrophic expenditure that poor people often face. It will also ensure quality services in poor areas, in rural areas near Tier II and Tier III cities. This is one of the mini schemes. We are hoping that it will be a catalyst in making the desired changes. Other efforts, however, to improve infrastructure will continue as much more infrastructure is needed. At present only 0.7 beds are available per 1000 population. Four times more are needed. So is the medical and nursing staff short on the supply side.

Q: What does a targeted beneficiary have to do to avail the facilities?

A: Firstly, they have to be part of the scheme. A list has been made using a database of 50 crore people on the basis of Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011. There are 6 to 7 deprivation categories for rural areas. It includes people living in one-room dwellings, landless labourers, etc. For urban areas, the list is made based on 17 to 18 occupational categories; like ragpickers, beggars, autorickshaw drivers, sanitation workers, cleaners, electricians, construction workers, etc. One has to see if one's name is on the list. If it is there, then through Aadhaar we confirm the name and issue an E-card. Here SECC decides the eligibility and Aadhar authenticates the identity. With this E-card, these targeted beneficiaries can go to any of the 15,000 empanelled hospitals across the country for paperless, cashless treatment of any ailments of 1,400 identified health conditions. The support includes preadmission up to three days and post discharge up to 15 days.

Q: Has the scheme come into operation?

A: Yes. Over 13 lakh patients have already benefited. The government has so far spent about Rs 1,700 crore on the healthcare facilities under the scheme.

Q: Is this fund exclusive of the budget allocation for health?

A: It is a separate allocation, though part of the total health budget for the financial year 2019-20. By 2025, the government intends to double the health budget.

Q: What if the dispensation changes at the Centre?

A: Ayushman scheme is good on socioeconomic parameters and so good for people. What is good for people, is good for politics. Thus, hopefully it will continue to serve people irrespective of governments.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PIONEER, MAR 19, 2019

Will remain sensitive towards India's security, strategic concerns: Maldives

The Maldives on Monday reaffirmed its "India-First Policy", saying it looks forward to working closely with India on all issues and will remain sensitive towards its security and strategic concerns as External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj held talks with the country's top leadership.

The Maldivian leaders also expressed commitment to support India's efforts to combat terrorism, particularly cross-border terrorism, and crimes such as piracy, organised crime, narcotic drugs and human trafficking.

Swaraj arrived here on Sunday on a two-day visit, the first full-fledged bilateral trip from India to the strategically located Indian Ocean island nation after the government of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih came to power in November last year.

She held talks with President Solih, Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid, former President Mohamed Nasheed and other top leaders.

The External Affairs Minister and Solih took stock of the progress made in bilateral relations since his visit to India in December 2018.

Swaraj and her Maldivian counterpart Shahid during their meeting on Sunday discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and also noted the number of high level exchanges, between the two countries over the past three months.

They recalled the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Solih in November as well as his visit to India in December.

The bilateral talks between the Foreign Ministers was followed by a joint ministerial meeting in which Swaraj held discussions with Shahid, Defence Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi, Finance Minister Ibrahim Ameer and other ministers.

She also met Maldivian Home Minister Imran Abdulla on Monday and discussed steps to continue the upward trajectory in bilateral relationship.

“Foreign Minister Shahid reiterated his government’s “India-First Policy” and said that his Government looks forward to working closely with the Government of India on all issues. He also reiterated that the Government of Maldives would remain sensitive towards India’s security and strategic concerns, “ according to a joint statement.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

HINDU (BUSINESS LINE), MAR 18, 2019

India proposes pact with Africa to enhance bilateral trade

India has proposed to Africa that both sides should work towards entering into a free trade agreement (FTA) or a preferential trade agreement (PTA) to enhance and strengthen their economic relationship in a new global trading order.

This suggestion came from Suresh Prabhu, Minister for Commerce and Industry and Aviation, during his address at the 14th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India Africa Project Partnership in the Capital.

Prabhu said the proposed FTA should look to first benefit Africa and help increase its share in the global market place.

“We have a common future. We don’t want to do anything at the expense of Africa. We want you to get into an FTA (with India) that will benefit Africa first,” he said.

Prabhu said that both India and Africa have to work together to take advantage of the new global trading order. He also said both the countries need to become economically self-reliant and work for economic freedom. Economic freedom can be realised through industrialisation and creation of jobs, he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan said the Commerce Ministry was working on a “comprehensive strategy” to boost India-Africa trade. In 2017-18, India-Africa bilateral trade was about \$63 billion, higher than \$52 billion in the previous fiscal. The potential for trade and investment ties is much more and there is also need to diversify the bilateral trade basket, Wadhawan added.

JUDICIARY

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 22, 2019

The judicial impact needs an urgent assessment

In the realm of judicial impact assessment, we have five core issues to examine



How much justice do the people in India get through courts? Despite a gigantic set up of judiciary, with nearly 2000 crore annual budget, justice remains elusive for the people. Even in cases in which justice seems to have been done, the parties in questions hold a contrary view. People's understanding and official understanding of justice remain quite distinct. We do not know justice in measurable terms.

There is hardly any consensus over the performance indicators of a court. The number of cases decided by courts in India does not necessarily reflect the quantum of justice people tend to get. Nor does it convincingly suggest the efficacy of a court.

The number of people with unmet justice needs in this country is growing significantly. The World Justice Project in 2018 put the number at three billion. And the Rule of Law Index places India at 63 out of 113 countries. On the components of human rights, security and order and criminal justice, the score is dismally low. Roughly speaking, there are about 3 crore pending cases in the country, affecting some thirty crore people. Accounting for the unreported and unrecorded cases, this number may add up to another 20 crores. Besides, a declining trend in civil litigation in India is cause of worry as this suggests that the people are not turning to courts for their justice needs in civil matters.

The dissatisfaction of people is visible from the rising rates of crime and the instances of mob lynching and mob violence. Daksh's study on access to justice in India observed that 70% of those who faced disputes in the past five years approached the courts for justice, but the formal judicial system is still not the most preferred form of conflict redressal for most Indians.

As justice in this country remains largely unmeasured, it's non-existent for many. Measurement of justice is emerging as a powerful tool to ensure quality of justice. Fraught with structural and functional issues of fundamental nature, the Indian judiciary largely has failed to create an effective research and development approach to its performance.

We have five core issues to examine.

First, how does a law impact its stakeholders? The judicial decisions are made on the basis of the larger consequences and effects they intend to create. The judicial decision with regard to conflicting values is to anticipate possible social and behavioural consequences of the alternative course of action. Though the objectives of a law are prescribed in its structure but there is no way to know if these objectives are being achieved. The Supreme Court of India directed the central government to examine the matter of judicial impact and a committee was appointed to study the resources needed when a new legislation is introduced or amendments are introduced.

Second, what is the impact of Supreme Court's decisions? The SC decisions intend to cause a specific as well as general impact on the concerned persons, institutions and society at large. And it certainly happens. However, there is no way to know about its exact consequences. There is a general impression that the compliance of SC decisions is not fully followed. This requires judicial impact assessment.

Third, how does an amendment in a law impact its stakeholders? The section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code and section 138 in Negotiable Instrument Act triggered almost a 'docket explosion' as thousands of cases added to the case list. Again, the lawmakers are clueless about the likely impact of an amendment in terms of manpower and finance that a State might require to effectively implement the above.

Fourth, whether a law fulfils public expectations or not. For instance, enforcement of social legislation in India, by and large, has been

unsuccessful. The laws related to juvenile, women, welfare, domestic violence, dowry, etc could not meet the public expectations.

Fifth, we also do not know much about litigation behaviour and change in this country. Millions of litigants approach various courts in the country and no official information about their needs, experience, and trends are known to us as no data is maintained in this regard.

To overcome this situation the ministry of justice in the United Kingdom has developed judicial impact test, which takes care of these issues. It is time India launches a judicial impact assessment system.

GS Bajpai is chairperson, Centre for Criminology & Victimology, National Law University, Delhi

LAWYERS

PIONEER, MAR 23, 2019

Over 5,000 advocates suspended from practice

The Bar Council of India has suspended 5,970 advocates from practising law till they pay pending subscription of the Advocates Welfare Fund (AWF).

The Advocates Welfare Fund (BCI) Committee resorted to the action after giving several notices and warning to lawyers.

The Supreme Court has made it clear that lawyers who do not subscribe to the fund cannot be permitted to practice before any court in the country.

As per Rule 40, Chapter-II, Part VI of the Bar Council of India Rules, every person who enrolls as an advocate is mandated to subscribe for the AWF. The same must be renewed every three years.

From 1993, the subscription was converted for life time and it was collected mandatorily during enrolment.

MASS MEDIA

PIONEER, MAR 21, 2019

Free media is a cornerstone of democracy: V-P

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday said free media is the cornerstone of democracy and it can actually be a force multiplier to sustain democracy. Delivering the first Atal Behari Vajpayee Memorial Lecture at Indian Institute of Mass Communication in New Delhi, Naidu said media should play a pivotal role in spreading correct and credible information and the news and views should not be mixed. The Vice President said, an unbiased media ensures that people are well informed and media should take care of facts and the opinion must be expressed without any fear.

Naidu expressed concern over the menace of paid news saying the people should come and vote in large number in the Lok Sabha elections as voting is not just a right, it is about duty and people must perform their duty by casting their vote. He said during elections, political parties tend to make “popularistic promises” and the media should play the role of questioning the basis of these promises. Terming voting a “national call of duty”, he said voting in every election needs to be made a habit. “The media has an important role in promoting participatory democracy through enhanced voter turnout which in turn broad bases the foundation of democratic governance,” Naidu said.

The vice president asked media organisations to devote space and time to report on the antecedents of politicians, their past work, participation in debates in state legislatures and Parliament. “These facts should be reminded to the people so that they can make an informed choice,” he said in his lecture on the ‘Role of Media in Moulding an Enlightened Electorate’.

Expressing concern over the “unhealthy” trend of politicians switching from one party to another after being elected, Naidu opined that defections were making a mockery of democracy. Defectors must resign from the post and seek reelection, he said.

Naidu stressed on the need for speedy disposal of election cases pending before various courts and time-bound disposal of cases by presiding officers of legislative bodies. The vice president asked people to elect leaders based on their character, caliber, capacity and conduct, but warned that some people were trying to replace these qualities with cash, community, caste and criminality (4Cs).

Referring to the efforts of the Election Commission to combat fake news, Naidu said the media’s role is extremely important during elections as the chances of people propagating fake news increases.

“It is the responsibility of the media to act like myth-busters in such sensitive times, and report the absolute, undiluted truth,” he said.

OMBUDSMAN

PIONEER, MAR 18, 2019

Justice Ghose is India's first Lokpal'

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose was on Tuesday appointed as the country's first Lokpal, the anti-corruption ombudsman, according to an official communique.

Former Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) chief Archana Ramasundaram, ex-Maharashtra Chief Secretary Dinesh Kumar Jain, Mahender Singh and Indrajeet Prasad Gautam have been appointed as non-judicial members of Lokpal, it said.

Justices Dilip B Bhosale, Pradip Kumar Mohanty, Abhilasha Kumari and Ajay Kumar Tripathi have been appointed as judicial members in the anti-corruption ombudsman, the communique issued by Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

These appointments were recommended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led selection committee and approved by President Ram Nath Kovind.

"The above appointments will take effect from the dates they assume charge of their respective offices," it said.

Justice Ghose, 66, retired as Supreme Court judge in May 2017. He is a member of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) since June 29, 2017.

These appointments are likely to trigger a political controversy as Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge, who is member of the Lokpal selection panel, had boycotted its latest meet on Friday.

The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, which envisages appointment of a Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in states to look into cases of corruption against certain categories of public servants, was passed on 2013.

The Appointments comes a fortnight after the Supreme Court asked Attorney General K K Venugopal to inform it within 10 days about a possible date for meeting of the selection committee.

A bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices S A Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna was on March 7 informed by Venugopal that the Lokpal search committee headed by former apex court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai recommended three panels of names to the selection committee for appointment of chairperson, judicial and non-judicial members in the anti-graft body.

The attorney general had told the bench that he will ask the secretary of the Department of Personnel and Training to ensure that the meeting of the selection committee is convened as early as possible.

Following the court's proceedings, a meeting of selection panel was held on March 15.

The Supreme Court had on January 17 set up a February-end deadline for the Lokpal search committee to send a panel of names who could be considered for the appointment as its chairman and members.

According to rules, there is provision for a chairperson and a maximum of eight members in the Lokpal panel. 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 rules say.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT – GOA

PIONEER, MAR 18, 2019

Govt announces national mourning on Monday as Goa CM Parrkiar dies

The Government announced national mourning on Monday as Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar died this evening, officials said.

A Home Ministry spokesperson said the national flag will fly at half-mast in the national Capital, the union territories and the State Capitals.

A meeting of the Union Cabinet will be held on Monday at 10 am. State funeral will be accorded to Parrikar.

The Goa Chief Minister died at his private residence in Panaji. He was 63.

PIONEER, MAR 19, 2019

Parrikar cremated with state honours

The last rites of Goa Chief Minister and former Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, who died on Sunday after suffering from pancreatic cancer for over a year, were held with full military and state honours at the Miramar beach here on Monday evening.

Thousands of supporters and BJP workers accompanied the funeral cortege from the Kala Academy Arts and Cultural Centre, where the remains had been kept throughout the day for the public to pay last respects to the nearby Miramar beach.

The mortal remains of Parrikar, wrapped in the national tri-colour, were placed on a pyre amid a 21 gun salute at the beach and his elder son Utpal Parrikar consigned it to flames.

Parrikar, 63, is survived by two sons, two daughter in-laws and a grandson.

Top BJP leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP President Amit Shah, Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Nitin Gadkari, Smriti Irani, Suresh Prabhu and Ramdas Athawale offered floral tributes to Parrikar.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis also paid his last respects.

Parrikar was Chief Minister of Goa on four separate occasions, but could not complete a single term in office. He served as Defence Minister in the Narendra Modi cabinet from 2014-17 before returning to state politics.

His death has triggered a political crisis in Goa, with the BJP being unable to come up with a alternative Chief Ministerial candidate, who is acceptable to coalition allies.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT – JAMMU & KASHMIR

PIONEER, MAR 18, 2019

Shah Faesal launches party

With the advent of spring season in Kashmir, a former IAS officer, Shah Faesal on Sunday launched his political party 'Jammu & Kashmir People's Movement' at a simple ceremony in Rajbagh area of Srinagar.

Though the attendance at the launching ceremony was not on the expected lines but as Shah Faesal, accompanied by large number of young supporters arrived at the venue, slogans 'kab hawa badlegi, ab hawa badlegi' rent the air.

Several supporters were seen holding 'white' flags with images of Shah Faesal and the tag line, "a salute to the brave son of the soil".

The 2010 IAS batch topper had earlier resigned from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in January this year to chalk out a new course for himself and empower the youth in Kashmir valley.

Before putting in his papers Shah had cited 'unabated' killings in Kashmir and marginalisation of Indian Muslims as main reasons which motivated him to take the electoral plunge.

Shehla Rashid, the JNU research scholar, who came into prominence as a student leader also joined hands with Shah Faesal along with battery of professionals from different streams. On the occasion Shah also introduced Feroz Pirzada, a billionaire of the state; Baldev Singh, a major car dealer in Kashmir; Dr Musatafa Hafiz, a Hafiz-e-Quran and an Assistant Professor; Uzair Rounqa, a London read lawyer; another lawyer Iqbal Tahir and Raja Mehmood.

While addressing the gathering, Shah Faesal said, "Our party will work for the peaceful resolution of Kashmir as per the wishes of the people living here". We will finish corruption from the State, he added.

Sharing his own experience ahead of launching the new party Shah Faesal said, "in the beginning i decided to join a political party and held discussions with three parties one by one. They all treated me respectfully and i acknowledge their gesture". He said, "as people became aware they reacted angrily and showered choicest abuses cautioning me against joining them". Their strong sentiments opened my eyes and helped me take this decision of launching a new platform. He said, "now when i am launching my own platform, all those who were ready to accommodate me in their political parties are now saying, I am an agent of RSS and BJP."

Shah Faesal said, "Our intention to launch this party is to provide a platform for people from all religions and castes."

Shah Faesal insisted that his party is neither region specific nor a religious one. It belongs to Muslims the same way it belongs to Dogras

and Buddhists. He said he believes in actual 'Ghar Wapsi' of Kashmiri Pandits because their return is crucial to Kashmir culture and politics.

Shehla Rashid also addressed the rally and said, "We need basic living facilities and we need development. We will work for the peaceful resolution of Kashmir issue." Shehla also requested the women to come forward and join the newly formed political party.

On the occasion Shah Faesal also released a vision document of his new party. The document said the new party will pursue a "peaceful resolution of the Kashmir problem as per the will and aspirations of the people of Jammu & Kashmir" and will attempt to bring about "sustainable peace" by "making the people politically empowered, economically prosperous, socially emancipated, ethically evolved, culturally enlightened and environmentally conscious".

TAXATION

HINDU (BUSINESS LINE), MAR 18, 2019

Jaitley for GST Council-like structure for farm, rural development, healthcare

The working of the GST Council is a role model in other areas where federal institutions are needed in India. It displays the maturity of India's democracy and politics, Jaitley said.

The experience of the GST Council can be replicated in sectors such as agriculture, rural development and healthcare, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on Wednesday.

GST (Goods and Services Tax) Council is the first of its kind where both the Centre and States have pooled their sovereignty in terms of tax policies.

In his last of the 10-series blog, the Finance Minister said the agricultural sector needs a major support and both Centre and States spend a large part of their budget on this sector. Similarly, the process of developing rural infrastructure and improving the quality of life in villages has now started. A lot more needs to be done in both agriculture and rural development.

“Should the Centre and the States be only competing and not supplementing efforts of each other?” he asked. According to Jaitley should they (Centre and States) not be pooling their resources and ensure

that no overlap or duplication takes place and that the interest of the largest number is protected and enhanced?

According to Jaitley, the same is equally true for healthcare. Primary Health Centres, hospitals, health schemes for treatment of poor patients, supply of medicines at an affordable cost are all intended by both Central and the State Governments to ensure that affordable healthcare is available to the people. “For those who cannot afford healthcare, it is available at the cost of the Central and some State Governments. Is overlap of expenditure necessary or should it be pooled and spent in an optimum manner?”, he said.

Emphasising the principle of ‘*Bahujan Hitay Bahujan Sukhay*’, Jaitley slammed the Opposition-ruled States in the implementation of two flagship schemes — Aysuhman Bharat and PM Kisan. West Bengal, Delhi, Odisha are amongst the States which have refused to implement Ayushman Bharat where every poor family gets up to 5 lakh of hospitalisation support annually. Similarly, he alleged that, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka and West Bengal are non-cooperative in the PM KISAN scheme where small and marginal farmers get 6,000 income support annually.

He said the working of the GST Council is a role model in other areas where federal institutions are needed in India. It displays the maturity of India’s democracy and politics. When larger national interest requires, decision makers can rise to the occasion. It negates the popular impression that politicians of different shades of opinions will always be divided on party lines. “It has worked to the benefit of industry, trade,

consumers and has become the single most important tax reform in independent India,” he said.

WATER RESOURCES

TRIBUNE, MAR 21, 2019

How to make our water use sustainable



Amarjit Singh

(Former Union Secretary, Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation)

On the eve of World Water Day, let us address why critical ground water resources are being depleted at an unsustainable pace in our country; three-fourths of the households do not have drinking water at their premises; 70 per cent of the water is contaminated; and poor water quality causes around two lakh deaths every year.

According to a report by the NITI Aayog (CWMI, 2018), 600 million people in India face high-to-extreme water stress. Critical Ground Water (GW) resources, accounting for 40 per cent of the total water supply, are being depleted at an unsustainable pace. Three-fourths of the households in the country do not have drinking water at their premises. As much as 70 per cent of our water is contaminated; India is ranked 120th amongst 122 countries in the water quality index. The poor water quality causes around two lakh deaths every year. The added morbidity, due to contaminated water, takes a huge toll on the earning capacity of the population as well as their quality of life.

The food security that our country has enjoyed thus far appears to have been at the cost of water insecurity. By 2030, our water demand is projected to be twice the available supply. This would mean severe water scarcity for 40 per cent of the population. The metropolitan areas of New Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad are likely to be severely affected. The water crunch is likely to cost India 6 per cent of the GDP. There is, therefore, a need to deepen our understanding of our water resources and usage and to put in place interventions that make our water use efficient and sustainable.

More ‘crop per drop’ needed

Agricultural productivity appears to be a fundamental part of the solution. Agriculture today consumes around 80 per cent of the water resources of the country. Our consumption for domestic use and industry is abysmally low. In the days to come, 400 million additional people are likely to live in the urban areas. This would mean an added requirement

of water for domestic and industrial use. As a result, there would be lesser and lesser water for agriculture in the face of spiraling demand for water for food, feed and fiber.

India, would therefore, have to focus on enhanced agricultural productivity, where there are huge variations within the country. Punjab produces 48.48 quintals of wheat per hectare, vis-à-vis 24.05 quintals in MP. Similar is the case with rice; MP produces only 14.38 quintals per hectare of rice as against 39.52 quintals in Punjab. These gaps will have to be plugged. More "crop per drop" could come through a mix of improved efficiency of water application and the net water gains through crop yield enhancement. These include drip and sprinkler irrigation; no-till farming and improved drainage, utilisation of the best available seeds, optimising fertiliser use, and innovative crop protection technologies.

MP shows way forward

The Madhya Pradesh irrigation reform model of accelerated irrigation expansion (PMKSY), through effective canal management by restoring irrigation management protocols; last mile investments; reducing deferred maintenance; constant monitoring and benchmarking of the districts; animating irrigation bureaucracy to ensure accountability to farmers and revitalisation of the Water Users Associations shows the way forward. More so, for the states like Maharashtra, which have the largest number of major dams in the country but the least percentage of area irrigated!

In addition, there is a real possibility of shifting India's rice and wheat cultivation eastwards. Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh today export 56 BCM of virtual water; water-rich states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha ironically import 29 BCM of virtual water! There is a real possibility of a second green revolution if the wheat and rice economy can be shifted to the east through apposite procurement policies, solarisation, and appropriate support to the farmers. This would be a game changer in the 95 irrigation deprived districts, where fortunately ground water is available. A well thought-out policy on solarisation could generate 10,000 MW of power, energise 2.7 million pumps, and irrigate 18 to 20 MHA, in the irrigation deprived districts.

Gujarat's reforms

In the GW sector, the way Gujarat has tackled the water-energy nexus through its Jyotir Gram Yojna is illustrative. It has ensured rationing of energy for agricultural use through separate feeders, metered supply and time of use charge. This has been complemented by greater vigilance to prevent power thefts. Though highly political and challenging to implement, the benefits of these reforms have far outweighed the effort in addressing feeder-level chaos, reducing power thefts, as well as subsidy on free and unmetered energy supply.

This, along with other initiatives of the Government of Gujarat such as rain water harvesting, check dams (bori bandhs) and micro-irrigation have helped Gujarat arrest the decline in ground water.

Ground water development, which was 75.3 per cent in 2002 and in the semi-critical category, came down to 67.92 per cent in the safe category in 2013. The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) assessment shows that the number of safe blocks increased from 105 to 177 and over-exploited blocks came down from 30 to 23 during the same period.

Fix leakages

The other possible interventions to supplement these efforts are fixing leakages in the municipal areas, and optimising the use of water in industries and thermal power plants, as per international norms.

Our country generates 42 billion litres of waste water per day. Currently, it pollutes our rivers. There is a real possibility of recycling this for conjoint use in agriculture and industry. Above all, we have to ensure that there is an economic return on water. The low-priced water for various sectors is actually wasteful and expensive.

Audit water use

The effective operationalisation of the above agenda would only be possible if we have the ability to audit our water on quality, area and sector-wise use, over-exploited and underserved sectors, consumption trends, and tradeoffs between economic and social benefits.

We also need greater research to assess the impact of water policies on our consumption trends to optimise the use of water. This would require appropriate governance reforms in the Water Resources Ministry as well

as the key professional bodies in the sector: the Central Water Commission and the CGWB.

The experience of Israel shows the key role of public awareness and advocacy in ensuring sustainable use of water. Amongst other things, one way of doing it would be to present a water budget in our Parliament and the state legislatures, especially during the lean period. May be, this would force our elected representatives to think deeply about this issue and come out with well thought out plans for sustainable use of water.

For Limited Circulation
