

NEWS ALERT

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LIST OF NEWSPAPERS COVERED

BUSINESS LINE

DECCAN HERALD

ECONOMIC TIMES

HINDU

HINDUSTAN TIMES

INDIAN EXPRESS

PIONEER

STATESMAN

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TIMES OF INDIA

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AGRICULTURE

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 28, 2019

PM Kisan scheme: 10 million more farmers may get Rs 2,000 this week

New Delhi: The government is likely to transfer Rs 2,000 each to at least 10 million more farmers by Friday, carrying forward the PM-KISAN scheme that Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched on Sunday, officials said. The government has so far registered 37.1 million farmers from across the country. Though BJP-ruled states are still ahead, data from Congress-ruled states has also started trickling in. “We have transferred Rs 2,000 each to 1.01 crore farmers on last Sunday. Now, the next transfer to another one crore is likely to happen by March 1. We will be deciding the date soon,” said a senior agriculture department official, who is part of this exercise. After the second round of fund transfer later this week, the government will make payments on a regular basis as and when data is validated by Public Financial Management System (PFMS). The official said many states were sending data about small and marginal farmers. “Uttar Pradesh is still leading the pack. But we have started getting data from states like Rajasthan (1.25 lakh), Chhattisgarh (4 lakh), Odisha (9 lakh) and Karnataka (2 lakh), which were non-starters before Prime Minister Modi handed over money to the beneficiaries last week,” the official said. He said after the first transfer, the Centre is receiving response from almost all states and Union Territories except Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Delhi, which are
Yet to up load data.

BACKWARD CLASSES

PIONEER, FEB 28, 2019

Govt OK's Art 370 tweak for SC/ST quota in J&K

The Union Government on Thursday decided to amend a clause of the contentious Article 370, which gives special status to Jammu & Kashmir, by approving promulgation of an Ordinance for giving reservation benefits to the SCs and STs in the State. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said.

"It will serve the purpose of application of relevant provisions of the Constitution of India, as amended through the Constitution (Seventy Seventh Amendment) Act, 1995 and Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, 2019 for Jammu and Kashmir, by issuing the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Amendment Order, 2019 by the President under clause (1) of Article 370," Jaitley said.

After the President notifies the Ordinance, the Scheduled Castes, Schedule Tribes, will get the benefit of quota in educational institutions and public employment in addition to the existing reservation in Jammu & Kashmir. The Ordinance also extends the 10 per cent reservation to the economically weaker section among the general category.

The amendment also brings persons residing in the areas adjoining International Border within the ambit of the reservation.

Meanwhile, the Government has decided to ban separatist group Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for alleged anti-national and subversive activities.

A notification on the ban was issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) after a high-level meeting on security, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Union Cabinet also approved the promulgation of an Ordinance to allow voluntary use of Aadhaar as identity proof for opening bank account and procuring mobile phone connection.

The Ordinance was necessitated as a Bill, passed by the Lok Sabha on January 4 but pending in the Rajya Sabha, would have lapsed with the dissolution of the current Lok Sabha. The Ordinance will now give the effect to the changes in the Aadhaar Act such as giving a child an option to exit from the biometric ID programme on attaining 18 years of age.

CORRUPTION

STATESMAN, FEB 26, 2019

National Herald case: Delhi HC orders Associated Journals Ltd to vacate premises

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed Associated Journals Ltd (AJL), publisher of National Herald newspaper, to vacate its Herald House premises here.

The AJL had challenged the Centre's decision asking it to vacate, but a Division Bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice V Kameswar Rao rejected that plea, directing it to evict the building on the Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg at ITO.

The AJL had challenged the December 21 order of a single judge bench that dismissed its plea against the Urban Development Ministry, which on October 30, 2018, had said that AJL's 56-year-old lease on Herald House has ended and it must vacate.

The Centre had requested the court to dismiss the appeal saying that Young Indian Company, in which Congress President Rahul Gandhi and his mother Sonia Gandhi are shareholders, was formed with an intention to take over Herald House.

The single judge in its order on December 21 had noted that by transfer of AJL's 99 per cent shares to Young Indian Company, the beneficial

interest of AJL's property worth Rs 413.40 crore stands clandestinely transferred to Young Indian Company.

However, Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi defended AJL and denied the allegations.

He also told the court that the digital version of the newspaper was started on November 14, 2016, while the publication of weekly "National Herald on Sunday" was resumed on September 24, 2017.

The government has said that National Herald was revived only after the Centre sent a notice for inspection of the property in September 2016.

DEFENCE

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 26, 2019

Indian Air Force's strike on Jaish terror camp: The strategy and the risks

The strike took place between 3:45 a.m. and 4:04 a.m. Indian time on Tuesday, a time when the alertness of radar system operators is more likely to be lower, an air force veteran said.



India used 12 Mirage 2000 fighter jets, an airborne early warning and control (AWAC) aircraft system, a mid-air refueller and drones.

Indian Air Force's fighter jets struck a training camp of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror group across the Line of Control on Tuesday, raising the risk of conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

The JeM had claimed responsibility for the suicide bomb attack that killed 40 CRPF jawans in Kashmir's Pulwama on February 14.

WHERE DID THE ATTACK TAKE PLACE?

The IAF attacked the hillside camp of JeM in Balakot in Pakistan more than 50 km (30 miles) from the border. Balakot is about 60 km north of Abbottabad, the hideout of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who was killed there by US forces in May 2011. The terrain in the region is mountainous, which would have helped Indian planes take cover and hide from radar.

WHAT TIME DID THE STRIKE TAKE PLACE?

The strike took place between 3:45 a.m. and 4:04 a.m. Indian time on Tuesday, a time when the alertness of radar system operators is more likely to be lower, an air force veteran said.

WHAT EQUIPMENT DID INDIA USE FOR THE STRIKE?

India used 12 Mirage 2000 fighter jets, an airborne early warning and control (AWAC) aircraft system, a mid-air refueller and drones.

The AWAC is typically used to jam an enemy's radar. This can be done for a very short time until the enemy's anti-radar technology kicks in, said a former Indian airforce pilot.

The drones would help with surveillance. The attack on Balakot used 1,000 kg bombs which can devastate a large target.

WHAT WAS THE STRATEGY EMPLOYED?

Indian air force veterans said the mission would have taken meticulous planning to take advantage of the terrain.

“For such an operation, decoy and surveillance missions are conducted to figure out when the radars are on and off. No equipment works around the clock, 24/7,” a former air force pilot said.

The jets may have flown low, hugging the terrain as much as possible to avoid the radar, which face limitations due to the mountainous nature of the region.

“In general terms, for a radar located in the valley to look up, will have severe restrictions of view because of the mountains, however optimally you place them,” said a former Indian air force marshal.

WHAT RISKS DID THE INDIAN FORCES FACE?

If Tuesday’s mission had been discovered earlier by the Pakistan military it could easily have run into trouble.

Pakistan’s army and air force have a combined arsenal of more than 400 surface-to-air missiles, according to estimates from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).

Typically once they are alerted, it only takes about three minutes for fighter jets to respond on an incursion and get airborne, the former air marshal said.

In this case, it was likely the Pakistani security forces were only alerted after the strike, allowing Indian jets enough time to cross back into their own airspace.

EMPLOYMENT

DECCAN HERALD, FEB 25, 2019

Jobs: govt data confirms Modi's failure



figures from different sectors of the economy in the past few months have again and again confirmed the fact of poor job creation and the consequent increase in unemployment levels in the country. Jobs in the government sector, those provided by government schemes and employment in the private sector, both organised and unorganised, have seen declines, and there have not been any significant signs of any improvement in the situation. According to data tabled in the Rajya Sabha, the flagship job schemes of the Modi government, which also included some from the 'Make in India' project, created only 27.5 lakh

jobs in the past four and a half years. These schemes included the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP... This was against the promise of generating 10 crore jobs under the 'Make in India' programme alone, though this was to be achieved by 2022. At such a pace, there is no chance of the target being achieved even long past2022.

ENERGY RESOURCES

HINDU, FEB 26, 2019

Second body pulled out of Meghalaya coal mine

Rescuers on Wednesday pulled out a second body from a flooded rat-hole coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills 77 days after at least 15 miners had been trapped.

A spokesperson for the district administration said the Indian Navy's Underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle pulled the highly decomposed body from a depth of 230 ft to the water surface. A five-member team comprising Navy and National Disaster Response Force personnel then went down the pit on an inflatable boat and pulled the body up. The body was handed over to the police in the presence of the district administration officials.

FORESTS

HINDU, FEB 28, 2019

SC stays Feb 13 order for eviction of tribals, forest dwellers



Directs States to file affidavits to show process of verification of claims, rejections was fair

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed its controversial February 13 order directing the eviction of lakhs of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers whose claims for forest land rights have been rejected under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006.

The Bench, led by Justice Arun Mishra, however, said "the mighty and the undeserving" who have encroached on forest lands would be shown no mercy.

The Bench acknowledged the need to further delve into whether due process was followed by gram sabhas and States' authorities under the FRA before the claims for forest rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFD) were finally rejected.

Over 11 lakh ST and OTFDs across 16 States faced the brunt of the apex court's order of eviction on February 13.

The apex court has now given the States four months' time to file affidavits responding to allegations that there was a high rate of rejection of claims, non-communication of rejection orders, unrealistic timelines in deciding claims, irregular holding of State Level Monitoring Committee meetings, lack of support from the district administrations concerned in providing revenue or forest maps, rejection of claims despite incomplete or insufficient evidence, etc. In fact, the court wants to know whether tribals and OTFDs were ousted from forest lands on the basis of sketchy, incomplete information and data.

The order was passed by the Bench, also comprising Justices Navin Sinha and M.R. Shah, on the basis of an application by the Centre to modify the February 13 order.

The government, represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, submitted the order has affected a "large number of families". The Centre said the States should first file proper affidavits on the procedure

followed in the verification of forest rights claims before any such eviction.

"The eviction of the tribals may be withheld... the eviction of tribals, without such information, would cause serious prejudice to them who have been residing in forests for generations... Many are poor and illiterate," Mr. Mehta submitted.

To this, initially, Justice Mishra asked whether the Centre was in a "slumber for the past three years". Justice Mishra observed that the February 13 order was only a follow-up of the court's order on January 29, 2016, which had also directed the eviction of encroachers into forest lands. The court asked why there were no mechanism in place in the States or in the Centre to review the rejection orders.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, for petitioner NGO Wildlife First, countered that lakhs of genuine claims were honoured under the FRA. He showed the MoTA's data up to November 2018 that 42,24,951 claims from individuals and communities were received till November 30 last year. Of this, 18,94,225 titles were distributed while 19,39,231 claims were rejected. The ministry data, collated from inputs supplied by the States, show that titles were distributed to 44.83% of the number of claims received.

To this, Justice Mishra said "are they (rejected claimants) really tribals or normal people encroaching on forest lands?"

Justice Sinha said the Rules under the 2006 Act comprehensively cover every stage of the process of verification of claims and the provisions were self-explanatory.

"This is a human problem more than a legal problem," Mr. Mehta responded.

"Encroaching forest lands is a serious problem," Justice Shah addressed Mr. Mehta.

"But forests and tribals are to co-exist," the Solicitor-General responded.

The Centre argued that the 2006 Act is a beneficial legislation which should be liberally construed in favour of the poor.

HEALTH SERVICES

THE TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 28, 2019

Union cabinet approves setting up of AIIMS Manethi

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved setting up of a new AIIMS at Manethi in Rewari District, Haryana at a cost of Rs 1,299 crore. It also approved creation of one post of director in the AIIMS, an official statement said. The new AIIMS will add 100 UG (MBBS) seats and 60 BSc (nursing) seats. It will have 15 to 20 super speciality departments and 750 hospital beds, including emergency/ trauma beds, Ayush beds, private and ICU speciality and superspeciality beds. In addition, there will be a medical college, Ayush block, night shelter, hostel and residential facilities among other facilities. Setting up of the new AIIMS would address the shortfall of healthcare professionals in the region, the statement said, adding that the medical institute will generate number of faculty and non-faculty jobs.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TRIBUNE, FEB 27, 2019

Sushma raises Pulwama terror attack with Chinese Foreign Minister



Wuzhen (China), February 27

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Wednesday raised the recent Pulwama suicide attack in her crucial bilateral meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi here, a day after India destroyed a major Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM) terror training camp in Pakistan.

"I am visiting China at a time when there is grief and anger in India. It is the worst terrorist attack directed against our security forces in Jammu and Kashmir," she said in her opening remarks during the meeting held on the side-lines of Russia, India, China Foreign Ministers meeting.

"The attack was carried out by Jaish-e-Muhammed, the Pakistan-based and supported terrorist organisation," she said.

Forty Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in a suicide attack by Pakistan-based JeM in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district on February 14, sparking outrage in the country.

Following the incident, India bombed and destroyed JeM's biggest training camp in Balakot in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, about 80-km from the Line of Control (LoC) early Tuesday, killing a "very large number" of terrorists, trainers and senior commanders.

Stating that the JeM is banned by the UN and other countries, Swaraj told Wang that "this terrorist attack is the direct result of the impunity and cover provided to the JeM and its leaders by the Pakistani side".

"After the Pulwama attack the entire UN has spoken with full voice to condemn it," she said.

Swaraj who arrived here early this morning told Wang that this is their first meeting this year and therefore an opportune time for the two sides to take stock of the bilateral relations and look ahead for cooperation.

"This is our first meeting this year. Therefore, an opportune time for us to take stock of our bilateral relations and look ahead for cooperation.

The India-China relationship is an important relationship for both of our countries," she said.

Referring to the Wuhan summit between Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping, Swaraj said "we have made substantial progress in relations".

"It is important for both sides to make sure the through and effective implementation of the guidance given by the two leaders," she told Wang, adding that both side made efforts and "we should sustain this".

“Particularly the decision taken by our leaders to maintain strategic communication between them provided an important foundation for the development of our bilateral relations. This channel of strategic communication between the two of us and between senior officials should always remain open," she said.

The meeting between Swaraj and Wang also took place in the immediate backdrop of India's airstrikes on terrorist targets in Pakistan.

Reacting to India's airstrikes, China on Tuesday called for restraint between India and Pakistan following India's airstrikes against terrorist targets in Pakistan and urged New Delhi to carry out its fight against terrorism through international cooperation.

Asked for China's response to India's airstrikes on terrorist camps in Pakistan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told media briefing in Beijing on Tuesday that "we have taken note of relevant reports."

"I want to say that India and Pakistan are both important countries in South Asia. A sound relationship and cooperation between the two serves the interests of both the countries and peace and stability in South Asia," he said.

"We hope that the parties remain restrained and do more to improve their bilateral relations," he said.

On India's assertion that it was a non-military attack directed against camps of the terrorist groups who are carrying out violent acts in India, Lu said "as for India's claim on taking action against terrorism, well fighting terrorism is a global practice".

"It needs necessary international cooperation. And India needs to create favourable condition internationally for the same," he said.

Lu also said that Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Shah Muhammad Qureshi also spoke to Wang on Monday over the tensions related to the Pulwama attack.

"During the phone call Wang Yi listened carefully to Pakistan Foreign Minister's notification and proposals on the issues and reaffirmed his opinions that the two sides need to advance their cooperation in the counter terrorism for peace and stability in the region," Lu said.

The Pulwama attack and its aftermath as well Tuesday's airstrikes were expected to figure in Swaraj's talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Levrov later in the day. PTI

HINDU, FEB 24, 2019

Sushma Swaraj invited to address Organisation of Islamic Cooperation meet

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will address the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Foreign Ministers meet on March 1, the first time the Islamic body has invited an Indian dignitary to attend, the government announced on Saturday.

Coming on the heels of statements of solidarity from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) over the Pulwama attack, the speech at the OIC inaugural plenary is also expected to take forward India's case for action against the Jaish-e-Mohammad and strictures on Pakistan.

Thanking the host United Arab Emirates, the Ministry of External Affairs said it saw the invite "as a milestone in [India's] comprehensive strategic partnership with the UAE."

"We also see this invitation as a welcome recognition of the presence of 185 million Muslims in India and of their contribution to its pluralistic ethos, and of India's contribution to the Islamic world," the MEA statement said.

Officials told The Hindu that the UAE had sounded out India about the event in January 2019, and that it was a "major diplomatic success", which reflected the overall improvement in ties with countries in the Muslim world, and in UAE in particular in the areas of security, energy and investment.

According to the UAE's State-owned Emirates News Agency, "the friendly country of India" has been named as the guest of honour "in view of its great global political stature as well as its time-honoured and deeply rooted cultural and historical legacy, and its important Islamic component."

The invitation, that came from UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, marks a major turnaround between India and the group of Islamic countries, that have often clashed over the issue of Kashmir.

The OIC has a specially designated "Kashmir contact group" that meets every year and coordinates positions at the United Nations, often led by Pakistan, to protest alleged human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir and invoke UN resolutions. In 2018 alone, the OIC had issued no less than five statements specifically dealing with the situation in J&K, and calling for the international community to intervene.

Just two months ago, the OIC had issued a statement after an encounter between security forces and militants in Pulwama, referring to the firing by Indian security forces as a "wicked terrorist act".

Owaisi criticises move

Criticising the government for accepting the invitation from the OIC, given its previous stand, AIMIM leader and MP Asaduddin Owaisi said it was "a shame and regretful that India is sending Sushma Swaraj to an

organisation which calls Jammu and Kashmir as Indian-occupied Kashmir”.

India has often protested these statements, saying the OIC has “no locus standi” to comment on India’s internal affairs. The upcoming OIC Foreign Minister’s meeting will be watched closely, as a result, for both India’s maiden speech at the organisation, as well as for whether the Islamic body is now prepared to tone down criticism of India.

“It is easier to be there and have an impact on the messaging than staying out. This is our way of ensuring that India’s voice is heard at a platform for the first time” a source said, when asked about the reasons for the turnaround in including India.

Although India was part of the initial negotiations for the OIC in the 1960s, it was never included in the 50-year-old, 56-member group, mainly due to Pakistan’s opposition. In 2018, Bangladesh and Turkey called for reform in the OIC and granting India observer status, but have yet to make progress on that. The OIC Observer states, or states with large Muslim populations at present are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central African Republic (CAR), Thailand, Russia and ‘Northern Cyprus’.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT-J&K

HINDU, FEB 28, 2019

Separatist-sponsored strike disrupts normal life in Kashmir



Normal life remained affected in Kashmir for the second consecutive day on Thursday due to a two-day strike called by separatists to protest the NIA raids at residences of several leaders in connection with investigation into terror funding through hawala channels in the valley.

Most of the shops and other business establishments were shut in Srinagar — the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

However, most petrol pumps were open and witnessed huge rush of customers as the fuel supply to the valley was restored on Wednesday night, they said.

The officials said public transport was off the roads, but private cars and auto-rickshaws were seen plying in many areas of the city.

Similar reports of shutdown were received from other district headquarters of the valley, they said.

Joint Resistance Leadership (JRL), an umbrella coalition of separatist outfits, called for complete two-day shutdown from Wednesday against Tuesday's NIA raids on separatists and threats to tinker with Article 35-A which is facing a legal challenge in the Supreme Court.

RELIGION

TRIBUNE, FEB 27, 2019

Mediate to resolve Ayodhya: SC



With hearing on the Ayodhya land dispute delayed owing to the demand by Muslim parties for an “official” translation of documents, the Supreme Court on Tuesday suggested mediation to solve the dispute.

A five-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi said it would pass an order on formally sending the matter for mediation and appointing mediators next Tuesday, even as the parties to the Ramjanmbhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute were divided on the court's move.

“After all these years and all that happened, do you think it is about property? Even if there is one per cent chance for mediation, we should give it a chance”, said Justice SA Bobde. “We are aware that at no point of time has the court directed meditation and that is something which we are considering seriously. It does not involve anybody's private property and yet has become so contentious. It's about the public right to worship. We would like to give one chance,” he said.

The Bench made it clear that mediation proceedings shall be confidential. “We do not want any party making comments to jeopardise it,” said the Bench, which also included Justice DY Chandrachud, Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice S Abdul Nazeer. The Bench said the attempt at mediation was “only to effectively utilise the time of eight weeks that would be taken to make the cases ready for hearing.”

Senior counsel for Ram Lalla CS Vaidyanathan and Ranjit Kumar opposed it, saying it had been tried several times before but had failed. “Mediation is not possible, not agreeable”, Kumar said.

However, senior counsel Rajeev Dhavan and Dushyant Dave, representing the Muslim parties, supported the proposal. “It has been tried and failed but mediation should be tried once again in larger public

Interest,” said Dhavan. “Even if there is one per cent chance of success, we will attempt it,” the Bench said, making its intention clear.

As the proceedings began, the Bench asked the parties if they had any objection on translation of documents by the Uttar Pradesh Government. “Once we have an agreement on the correctness of translated documents, we can proceed. Once we start the hearing, we don’t want the parties disputing the correctness of translation of documents and delaying the hearing”, the CJI said.

Vaidyanathan said all parties had accepted the translation of documents submitted by UP Government and it was a settled issue. As Muslim parties said they would not accept the translation of documents submitted by the Uttar Pradesh Government, the Bench said they should verify the translation and point out mistakes, if any.

Giving eight weeks to complete the exercise, the top court said it would attempt mediation in the meantime to find an amicable solution.

‘Not a mere Property Dispute’

CJI-led Constitution Bench says it's not a mere property dispute

Even if there is 1 per cent chance of success, 'we will attempt it'

On the SC order, the UP Govt gets all documents translated

Muslim parties want 'official' translation before hearing starts

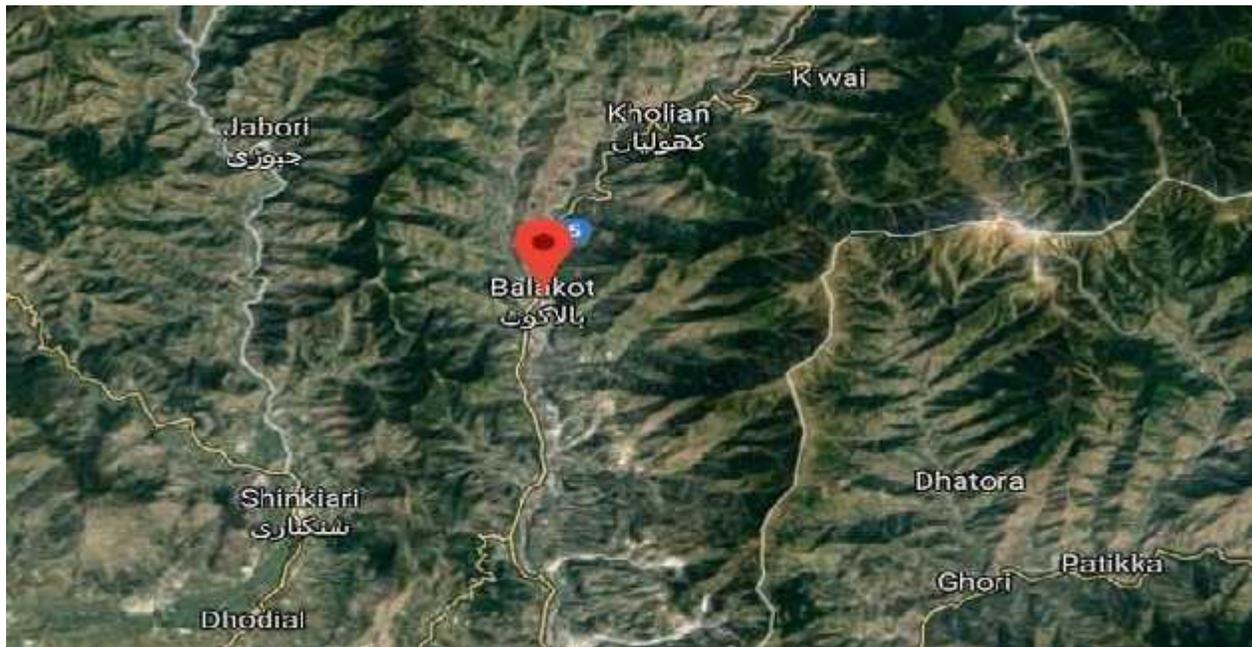
Registrar's report says all 8 official translators will take 120 days

SC gives 8 weeks to the Muslim parties to verify translation

TERRORISM

HINDU, FEB 26, 2019

Balakot camp had over 200 terrorists, says official



The facility was headed by JeM chief Masood Azhar’s brother-in-law Yusuf Azhar, says Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale

The Balakot camp run by the terrorist outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) that was hit by the Indian Air Force in the early hours of Tuesday “housed more than 200 terrorists”, a senior government official said.

The camp was headed by Jaish chief Masood Azhar’s brother-in-law Yusuf Azhar, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale said. It is located around

200 km from Islamabad on a hilltop in a forest far from the civilian area in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

On the banks of the Kunhar river, the camp offered the possibility of aquatic training to terrorists. Trainers at the camp were “ex-Army personnel”, the official said.

The camp was initially used as a training camp by the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), another terrorist outfit active in Jammu and Kashmir and supported by Pakistan.

A former Intelligence official told The Hindu that Yusuf Azhar, alias Mohammad Salim, alias Ustad Ghouri, was a Hindu who converted to Islam and married Azhar’s sister.

He was one of the main conspirators involved in the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight IC 814 to Kandahar in 1999. The JeM chief was released by India in exchange for the hijacked passengers. His name was on a list of 20 fugitives handed over by India to Pakistan in 2002.

In 2000, the Interpol on the basis of a request by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) opened a red corner notice against Yusuf Azhar. The notice said that his place of birth was in Karachi, Pakistan and he was fluent in “Urdu and Hindi”, He is wanted in India for “hijacking, murder and kidnapping”.

The ex-official said the JeM was run like a “family enterprise”. “After Azhar, his brothers, Rauf and Ibrahim, are the most important functionaries. The next in line is Yusuf. While the main recruiter continues to be Masood Azhar, Yusuf’s job is to mainly train recruits.

Masood likes to remain in the background post-2001 Parliament attack,” he said.

“The precision hit was conducted on a vast, advanced training camp. It was an important training centre for the JeM and other terror organisations. It had several structures to accommodate terrorist trainees and facilities to train them and was used for battle inoculation,” he said.

Masood Azhar and other terrorist leaders had delivered “inspirational” lectures on several occasions. “The terrorists were imparted the advanced *Daura e Khaa* training in weapons, explosives and field tactics, tactics for attacking the convoys of security forces, planting and making IEDs, preparations for suicide bombing, rigging vehicles for suicide attacks and survival tactics in high altitudes and extreme-stress situations. The JeM specialises in *fidayeen* actions and gives immense importance to religious indoctrination and ideological brainwashing,” the ex-official said.

Masood Azhar’s relatives and cadres were trained at Balakot in advanced weapons and tactics, he said.

According to him, the first camp handed over to JeM was between Mansera and Balakot in 2001. “These camps were located in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) earlier but after pressure built on Pakistan post-2001 Parliament attack, they were shifted to deep inside Pakistan,” he said.

WOMEN

HINDU (BUSINESS LINE), FEB 26, 2019

How to reduce the gender gap in States

Raising the presence of women in education, employment and the political process must be accorded priority

In NITI Aayog's first report on Sustainable Development Goals, all States, barring Kerala and Sikkim, are in the red on gender equality (SDG-5). There are several reasons why freeing women from all forms of discrimination seems like a lofty goal.

First, as highlighted in 'Economic Survey 2018', India's continued obsession with boy child and selective abortion have resulted in over 63 million "missing" women while also creating a category of 21 million "unwanted" girls. Second, the drop-out rate for girls continues to be higher, especially at the secondary and higher education levels. Third, despite education and employment, Indian women spend ten times more hours on unpaid household chores than men.

And, fourth, an improvement in the income of male workers, coupled with the shortage of flexible work opportunities and inadequate infrastructure, have discouraged the participation of women in productive economic activities.

The government is implementing several initiatives to address these challenges, including 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao', 'Pradhan Mantri

Matritva Vandana Yojana’ and the Maternity Benefit Act. So what needs to be done to make SDG-5 achievable for all States by 2030?

Given the multi-dimensional nature of issues facing women, it is critical that we develop a set of indicators on which progress is measured on a regular basis. As suggested by NITI Aayog in its ‘Strategy for New India @ 75’ document, a dedicated unit should be established within the Women and Child Development Ministry and its State-level counterparts for monitoring progress on gender-related targets across ministries.

Sex ratio at birth

States need to strengthen the monitoring of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 for ensuring its stringent implementation. Investments in locally customised information, education and communication campaigns also need to be enhanced, including offering rewards for districts that achieve the desired sex ratio. Of course, such campaigns should not focus on families ‘Below the Poverty Line’ alone but also engage families from higher wealth quintiles.

Identifying girls who are at risk of dropping out of school and those who have already dropped out is crucial. An electronic national educational registry for tracking every child could be a possible avenue for doing this. Relatively higher financial incentives also need to be provided for delaying child marriage.

Conditional cash transfer schemes like the ‘Kanyashree Prakalpa’, which has been successful in promoting girls’ education in West Bengal, need to be replicated. The Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child scheme could also be extended to families with two girl children. Of course, investments in safe transport options such as Bihar’s bicycle distribution scheme and school infrastructure, especially provision of separate toilets and sanitary napkins, need to be stepped up considerably.

Employment

Defining time-bound targets for reversing the decline in the female labour force participation is a must. The implementation of legal frameworks like the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act needs to be monitored and incentivised if necessary, especially to catalyse the initial adoption of such progressive legislation by the private sector.

NITI’s ‘Strategy for New India @ 75’ suggests providing tax benefits to sectors or companies that employ over 30 per cent of women workers. Skill training programmes also need to be reoriented to focus on training women in non-traditional areas like construction and taxi-driving. Further, the progressive integration of women who work in the informal sector with the formal economy needs to be achieved through effective implementation of legal and social protection measures. The private sector, too, must play its part. Barely 5 per cent of companies on the Bombay Stock Exchange currently have women CEOs. Bringing about transparency in recruitment and promotion policies and correcting any

gender biases that creep into wages are vital as is ensuring strict implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act.

While increasing women's participation in politics has been one of the most intractable challenges, it remains absolutely critical for achieving gender equity. The 33.3 per cent reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (now 50 per cent in some States) has enabled over one million women to participate in local governance every five years. This needs to be replicated at all levels of the governance system.

Thus, while there is no magic bullet for bridging the gender gap, concerted policy actions along with the efforts of the private sector and citizens can make the achievement of SDG-5 by 2030 a reality.

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