

NEWS ALERT

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HINDU

HINDUSTAN TIMES

INDIAN EXPRESS

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AGRICULTURE

HINDU, NOV 26, 2018

Farmers' march to demand fixed MSP, freedom from debts



Kisan Mukti March hopes to draw attention to farm distress ahead of elections

Thousands of farmers plan to march to the capital this week, chanting the slogan “Dilli chalo,” in a Kisan Mukti March to demand that government bring in legislation providing a guaranteed minimum support price for their crops and freedom from debts.

The march, on November 29 and 30, is being organised under the banner of the All-India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), a platform of 200 farmers’ groups.

“The next election will be fought on the agrarian crisis,” said Hannan Mollah, general secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha, a member of the AIKSCC. Over 4 lakh farmers had committed suicide and 79 cattle traders had been lynched in the last four-and-a-half years of this government, he claimed.

Launching his book titled, “Farmers Under Modi Raj: Double Income or Double Jeopardy,” Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav — who is also an AIKSCC leader — claimed the current administration was the most anti-farmer in the country’s history. “Note-bandhi [demonetisation] and drought-handling policies show that the Modi government is not just displaying a lack of political will, but active hostility,” he said.

Organisers of this week’s march say over one lakh farmers will take part, in a bid to create electoral clout. All political parties except the BJP have been invited. “The farmers will ensure that a government that brought in notebandi will face vote-bandi (No-Votes),” joint secretary of the All-India Kisan Sabha Vijoo Krishnan said.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, NOV 30, 2018

Farmers’ march to Parliament disrupts traffic in central Delhi

Central Delhi witnessed traffic disruptions on Friday as thousands of farmers from all over the country marched to Parliament after camping overnight at Ramlila Maidan to press for their demands of debt relief, better MSP for crops, among others.

The protesters will gather at Jantar Mantar as processions are not allowed beyond that point.

The Delhi traffic Police gave real time updates on twitter and Facebook advising people to avoid places the procession was passing through.

[Click here for Live updates on farmers' march to Parliament.](#)

“Around 1,000 traffic personnel have been deployed in all these routes to plan diversions and to keep traffic smooth,” said joint commissioner Traffic.

Among the places affected were Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, Deshbandhu Gupta Road, Panchkuian Road, Barakhamba Road, Kasturba Gandhi Marg in Central Delhi. However, after the procession reached Parliament street police station, the traffic got cleared at these places.



CIVIL SERVICE

HINDU, NOV 25, 2018

To resign is a right of the employee: SC

Can't be compelled to serve, says court in case of Air India employee

To resign is a right of an employee and he cannot be forced to continue, the Supreme Court has said in a recent order.

An employee cannot be compelled to serve in case he is not willing “until and unless there is some stipulation in the rules or in the terms of appointment or disciplinary proceedings is pending or contemplated which is sought to be avoided by resigning from the services.”

A Bench of Justices Arun Mishra and Viet Saran made the observations while allowing the appeal of a former Air India engineer, who was refused his dues by the Central government carrier.

Past arrears

Sanjay Jain served in Air India for the stipulated minimum five-year period before he resigned and served his 30-day notice.

He joined a private airline and later approached his former employer to pay his dues, Provident Fund, gratuity and unpaid wages.

Air India said it had refused to accept his resignation and asked him to re-join duty.

The Bombay High Court dismissed his petition in September 2010. Subsequently, Mr. Jain moved the Supreme Court.

In support

Setting aside the High Court's decision, the Supreme Court ruled that Mr. Jain had "rightly terminated the relationship by serving the requisite notice for his resignation."

CORRUPTION

HINDU, NOV 26, 2018

SC seeks got reply on petition challenging amendments to Prevention of Corruption Act

Petitioner challenges two changes in the Prevention of Corruption Act

The Supreme Court on Monday ordered the government to respond to a petition challenging two amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The amendments were the introduction of S. 17 A (1) by which prior permission for investigation of corruption offences was required from the government and the removal of S. 13 (1) (d) (ii) (criminal misconduct) from the Act. The latter provision had earlier made it an offence for a public servant to abuse his position to give pecuniary or other advantage to a third party.

A Bench led by Chief Justice (CJI) Raman Gogol asked the government to file a response in six weeks.

“We think you are entitled to a hearing,” Chief Justice Gogol addressed advocate Peasant Bhutan, who appeared for the petitioner NGO, Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL).

‘Gives time for lobbying’

Mr. Bhushan said the removed provision of ‘criminal misconduct’ was used in most prosecutions of public servants under the Act in cases where there might not be a charge of directly accepting bribes. In this context, he referred to the prosecution of officials in the coal scam where officials gave leases to companies who they knew were not eligible. As for the new provision of Section 17(A), CPIL said that seeking sanction before commencement of investigation in a corruption case “not only takes away the element of secrecy and surprise but introduces a period of delay during which vital evidences can be manipulated or destroyed”.

“It gives time to the accused to lobby by employing various means for denial of permission. The seeking of permission in itself becomes a cause for corruption as it introduces yet another discretion, at the crucial stage of commencement of investigation,” the petition said.

PIONEER, NOV 29, 2018

Coal Scam: Delhi court holds ex-secretary H C Gupta and others guilty of corruption

A Delhi court Friday held ex-coal secretary H C Gupta guilty of corruption and criminal conspiracy in a coal scam case relating to allotment of coal blocks in West Bengal.

Besides Gupta, Special CBI Judge Bharat Parashar also convicted private firm Vikash Metals and Power Limited, one serving and one

retired public servant — ex-joint secretary in Ministry of Coal (MoC) KS Kropha and the then director (CA-I) in MoC, KC Samria — in the case.

The court also convicted the firm's managing director Vikash Patni and its authorised signatory Anand Mallick in the case.

The case pertains to alleged irregularities in allocation of Moira and Madhujore (North and South) coal blocks in West Bengal to VMPL. In September 2012, the CBI had registered an FIR in the case.

All the five convicted persons were taken into custody by the court which fixed December 3 for arguments on quantum of punishment.

The convicts may get a maximum seven-year jail term



DEFENCE

HINDU, NOV 25, 2018

Fresh rift in civil-military relations in Defence Ministry



South Block, which houses the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministries of External Affairs and Defence. File | Photo Credit: V.V. Krishnan

Strain over rejection of hotel-stay claims by junior officers.

Civil-military relations in the Defence Ministry are strained once again, this time over the issue of junior officers staying in hotels and not Army guest rooms when on temporary official travel.

Expressing concern at the Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (PCDA) asking for a Non-Availability Certificate (NAC) and rejecting

refund claims by junior officers, the Army's Southern Command shot off a letter to the Director-General Land Works and Environment in the Army Headquarters seeking clarification.

“A number of temporary duty claims of officers, wherein they stayed in hotels, are being returned back by PCDA for not attaching NAC from station HQs... The PCDA maintains that they are only ensuring that Army officers follow instructions,” a Major General rank of officer said in the letter dated November 16, written on behalf of the Southern Army Commander.

The letter contested the PCDA's reference to the instruction in a letter dated April 13 which only states that “availing hotel accommodation by the officer should be the last resort” and observed that the para needs to be read as an in-house advisory and “does not take away the authorisation of officers to stay in hotels.” “Therefore, it is felt that allowing PCDA becoming a superior auditor on officers temporary duty claims is not justified,” the letter stated.

Earlier this year, in an effort to cut daily expenditure of the force, Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat had asked officers going on temporary duties to stay in service guest rooms where available and use hotels as a last resort.

The letter observed that issue was having a “negative impact” on the morale of junior officers due to the feeling that “junior officers have been left out by senior officers to fend for themselves.”

In this regard, the letter requested that a clear cut policy regarding processing of temporary duty claim of the officers be issued. “The

policy should aim to avoid undesired interference of PCDA in management of our guest rooms, causing unnecessary harassment to the officers,” the letter added.

In a suggestion to the Army HQ on these instructions, the letter observed that it is difficult for officers travelling on duty to large cities to check every availability guest rooms and also compiling the list of vacancies in all guest houses will cause “inconvenience”.

ELECTION

HINDU, NOV 27, 2018

Sunil Arora next CEC, formal notification soon: sources



Mr. Arora succeeds Om Prakash Rawat who retired on Saturday.

Sunil Arora is learnt to have been appointed as the next Chief **Election** Commissioner (CEC), highly-placed sources in the Law Ministry said on Monday.

Though a formal notification announcing his appointment is yet to be issued, his name has been cleared by the Centre and sent to Rashtrapati Bhawan, the sources said.

“Yes. His name has been cleared. He is the next CEC. A notification will follow,” a senior functionary said. He will take over on December 2.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) will hold the 2019 general election under him.

Besides the Lok Sabha polls, Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha, Maharashtra, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim are scheduled to be held next year.

A CEC of the Election Commission can have a tenure of six years or hold office till the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. The convention is to appoint the senior-most election commissioner as chief election commissioner. A former bureaucrat, Mr. Arora was appointed as Election Commissioner on August 31, 2017. He succeeds Om Prakash Rawat who retired on Saturday.

Mr. Arora (62) had been the Information and Broadcasting Secretary, and the Secretary in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. A 1980-batch IAS officer of the Rajasthan cadre, Mr. Arora has worked in ministries such as finance, textiles and the Planning Commission.

He also served as joint secretary in the Ministry of Civil Aviation during 1999-2002 and the CMD, Indian Airlines, for five years — two years as additional charge and three years as full charge.

In Rajasthan, besides district postings in Dholpur, Alwar, Nagaur and Jodhpur, he was secretary to the chief minister during 1993-1998 and principal secretary to CM (2005-2008), besides handling information and public relations (IPR), Industries and Investment Departments.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, NOV 28, 2018

Mizoram assembly elections 2018 Highlights: 80% turnout in Mizoram, slight dip from 83.41 % in 2013

Mizoram assembly elections 2018 highlights: While the direct contest is between the Congress and Mizo National Front, BJP, National People's Party and Zoram People's Movement could play crucial roles in the formation of the next government.



Mizoram went to polls on Wednesday with 209 candidates in the fray for the 40-member legislative assembly. Voting began at 7 am and ended at 4 pm.

The state recorded 80% voter turnout in a peaceful poll.

Congress, which has been in power in Mizoram since 2008, is eyeing a third consecutive term in the state. While the direct contest is between the Congress and Mizo National Front, BJP, National People's Party and Zoram People's Movement could play crucial roles in the formation of the next government.

Chief minister Lal Thanhawla is contesting from two seats — Serchhip and Champhai South.

Mizoram recorded 80% voter turnout

In a peaceful poll, Mizoram recorded 80% voter turnout.

“Serchhip with 81% recorded the highest turnout among all eight districts, while Aizawl with 65% was the lowest,” said chief electoral officer Ashish Kundra.

The coter turnout was 83.41 per cent in 2013. In the 2008 assembly polls, it was 82.35 per cent, the poll panel said.

EMPLOYMENT

PIONEER, NOV 29, 2018

Of jobs and employment

A great deal of discussion in the country is about growth and development but little attention is paid to the specifics of employment



Jobs, jobs and more jobs is the topic of the talk circuit with hardly anyone passing up the opportunity to hold forth, whether in television discussions or in print. Missing in this cacophony of ‘jobs, jobs and more jobs...’ is the issue of income generation and, therefore,

occupations that can generate real income. This, the writer believes, is a likely hangover of the middle class perception of what constitutes a good job: Still a white-collar employee going to office from 9 am to 5 pm with a salary, an annual increment and privileged leave, with one's place of work preferably located not too far from where one's family resides. Governments, municipalities and panchayats still offer such jobs when their appointment register happens to be open. But even for these state bodies, this traditional concept of employment is outdated, if not altogether on its way out.

An increasing portion of the present business activity is intellect-inspired as distinct from enterprise and finance-based endeavours. The primary machine to aid the intellect in today's time is the computer. This is not to discount the role of the machine in the manufacturing sector but the truth, though unpopular, is that modern manufacturing units are more employers of machines and less provider of jobs to men and women. One also cannot ignore the factor of depreciation, allowance of which every year makes machinery cheaper whereas employees need to be given increments year after year. Further, with advances in technology, the worker's requirement is reducing. There is also an increasing apprehension of the robot. Such alternatives may eventually replace the human worker. When during elections, politicians promise jobs, it is doubtful whether they go into the details of such factors. Their audience and, especially, job seekers, think of such electoral promises as accommodation in the premises of offices and factories. Obviously, disappointment awaits many of them from the day after the promise. Neither politicians nor the people think in terms of employment as a whole, whether as shopkeepers, taxi drivers, or even vendors who move

from place to place to sell. In the world context, 50 per cent of work would soon be self-employment.

Traditional agriculture, once the mainstay of our country's economy and the provider of employment to the largest portion of its population, is no longer able to satisfy an increasing number of people's need for livelihood. Employment is, therefore, the gravest and most urgent challenge to today's Governments. The term 'demographic dividend' sounds like music to the ear but will actually be so only if economists are able to find new ways and means of absorbing the new entrants. Thus, a great deal of discussion in the country is over growth and development. Little attention is given to the specifics of employment. One possible reason for this oversight is residual effects of the inspiration India's policy-makers drew from the Soviet era. Gosplan emphasises on the building of heavy industry in the former Soviet Union. India's plans of the Nehruvian era were direct lift-offs from the Soviet example. However, the Soviet Union was a country with vast land spaces, enormous untapped resources and limited population. Employment per se was not a Soviet problem. We in India overlooked this, although it should have been our greatest priority.

What the imitation of the Soviet model did bring about in India was the creation of a huge bureaucracy to administer plans and other sarkari programmes, ostensibly with noble intentions. It did provide jobs to a comparatively large number of people. But in today's times, the Government or bureaucratic sector has grown to be too large and ripe for reduction. The private sector grew remarkably after the 1991 economic reforms but employment in this sector demands qualifications, which not

every aspirant has. Moreover, in many areas of the country, commerce and industry are yet to become a habit with local populations.

It is time India stops depending too much on Western economics. We must instead innovate Indonomics. Our horse before the cart would be development in order to provide fruitful employment to many people and not the other way round. It should be remembered that this is a globalised world. Almost every manufacturer has to face competition on a world scale. Why not, therefore, also consider promoting institutions that do not have to compete so much, yet at the same time serve the needs of the country?

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen placed health and education as one great key to development. Instead of the traditional approach of pursuing prosperity for the economy and resultant enhancement of its citizens' health and education. Now adopt employment as our first objective, which in turn would lead to development ,even if slowly.

Take, for instance, tourism. It engages large numbers without the constant tension of automation and job reduction. These numbers do not all require advanced education or high qualifications. Moreover, tourism does not require high investments. One can concentrate on the country's ready assets like the Ajanta and Ellora caves, magnificent forts like Chittorgarh, the Himalayas and much else.

The next area to tackle should be agriculture where many farms have turned marginal and even unviable. The one immediate answer is upgrading of the type of crop to a higher value from the current cereals and millets. Farming can potentially provide for an unlimited number of

cultivators, but agro-industry cannot solve the problem of rural employment. Sadly, this remains a neglected area in India, one that has also been the cause of much socio-economic distress.

Health and education, which are urgent necessities for the people of the country, are also ready avenues of employment. An area of beneficial investment would be building new and expanding existing hospitals which are in any case desperately needed in most towns and districts. The outlay is not great and the employment potential is considerable. Hospitals are quite worker-intensive and several thousand of them are needed immediately.

PricewaterhouseCoopers in a professional survey had recommended that by 2034 India would require 36 lakh beds. Today, not even a fraction of that number exist. Each hospital would need several hundred non-medical personnel and all the hospitals when ready would absorb millions indirectly and help to generate jobs without number. The medical and para-medical staff would be extra. At present, there are only 0.65 doctors, 1.3 nurses and 1.3 hospital beds per 1,000 people in the country. The desired requirement by 2034 for every 1,000 people is 2.5 doctors, five nurses and 3.5 beds. The initial investment in this sector, particularly in semi-rural areas, would be in the range of Rs 10-15 crore for a 100-bed hospital.

Education, the key to furthering India's rise as a knowledge economy superpower, offers vast possibilities for employment as well. Thousand upon thousand schools would have to be created; their capacity to provide employment should be enormous. India needs two lakh more

schools and 1,500 universities and colleges. A whopping 220 million children are enrolled in schools but 140 million continue to be left out.

What is, therefore, necessary is to inculcate the idea of an economic citizen, a self-engineered way of earning a living. Be it as a doctor, lawyer, para-medico, shopkeeper or even a pheriwala or peddler, no one should be dependent on anyone for survival. The Government's responsibility is to create and sustain the economic environment for the willing self-reliant citizens to have ready opportunities. The Government's function is to govern and not provide jobs. The size of the bureaucracy need not exceed the demands of administering the country. The price of a heavy or a top-heavy Government would be either high taxes or printing currency leading to inflation. France should serve as an example not to be emulated. Something like 40 per cent of the jobs in that country are provided by its Government directly or otherwise.

In today's milieu and the times to come, no country can survive long as a prosperous modern state with such a skewed model.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author)

ENERGY RESOURCES

HINDUSTAN TIMES, NOV 30, 2018

15 states have 100% household electrification now, says govt

The announcement was made by union minister of state (independent charge) for power and renewable energy RK Singh after the Review, Planning & Monitoring (RPM) Meeting with states and state power utilities.

Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram, Sikkim, Telangana and West Bengal have achieved 100% household electrification under the Centre's Saubhagya scheme and a total of 15 states in the country have now 100% household electrification, the Centre declared on Thursday.

The other states, which have already achieved 100% household electrification are: Punjab, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Goa.

The announcement was made by union minister of state (independent charge) for power and renewable energy RK Singh after the Review, Planning & Monitoring (RPM) Meeting with states and state power utilities . The minister added that as many as 21 million connections have been made under the scheme so far.

Saubhagya – ‘Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana’ was launched in September, 2017 with the aim to provide access to electricity to all remaining households in the country. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA government is likely to emphasise this achievement to burnish its development credentials ahead of next year’s Lok Sabha elections.

“Many more states such as Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh etc. are left with small number of un-electrified households and expected to achieve saturation any time.” Singh said adding that with the present pace of electrification, the country is expected to achieve 100% coverage by December.

“It’s been a great initiative of the government but the next challenge would be to ensure that affordable power is provided 24x7 to these households. Most of these connections are off-grid connections...,” said Debashish Mishra, partner, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP.

Singh said that states have been requested to publicise the achievement, so that anyone left out may avail electricity connection under Saubhagya.

“The achievement of 100% household electrification in the country will be a major milestone in the direction to achieve 24x7 power for all. The Government is committed to ensure 24x7 access to electricity for all by March, 2019,” Singh said.

The centre, in October also announced an award scheme under Saubhagya aimed at creating healthy competition amongst various DISCOMs/Power Departments of States.

Under the award scheme the first DISCOM/Power Departments to complete 100% household electrification will be felicitated with a cash award of ₹ 50 lakh, to be shared between employees and a ₹ 100 crore grant to be spent for distribution infrastructure, the centre announced. “The states completing 100% household electrification by 31st Dec. 2018 will also receive additional grant of 15% of the project cost (5% for special category states) sanctioned under Saubhagya,” he added.

The government previously took up the task for electrification of remaining un-electrified census villages, duly identifiable as per census code under the ‘Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana’ (DDUGJY). 18,452 census villages in the country (out of total inhabited villages of 5,97,644 as per census 2011) were reported un-electrified by states till April, 2015. The centre, in April, announced that these villages have been electrified.

HIGHER EDUCATION

HINDUSTAN TIMES, NOV 30, 2018

UGC sets up body to prepare list of academic journals

The step was taken after reports highlighted that the high number of papers being published in poor quality journals in India, adversely affecting the country's image, UGC said in a note.

To curb the practice of academics getting papers included in so-called predatory journals (as dubious or sub-standard publications are called) instead of focusing on quality research, higher education regulator University Grants Commission (UGC) has formed a consortium of academic bodies to prepare and maintain a list of credible journals.

The step was taken after reports highlighted that the high number of papers being published in poor quality journals in India, adversely affecting the country's image, UGC said in a note.

Named Consortium for Academic Research Ethics (CARE), the body, headed by UGC Vice Chairman Bhushan Patwardhan will prepare a list of journals in the field of social sciences, humanities, languages, arts, culture and Indian knowledge systems etc.

According to a communiqué by UGC Secretary Rajnish Jain, the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Indian Council of

Philosophical Research (ICPR), Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), Sahitya Academy, Lalit Kala Academy, Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) etc will be among the several bodies which will be members of the consortium.

Members of the consortium will prepare the list of quality journals in their respective disciplines within a defined time-frame, it said. Once the CARE reference list of quality journals is released, it will replace the existing UGC list of approved journals, the regulator said.

The decision was taken at the UGC meeting earlier this month, the communiqué said.

“Publications in dubious sub-standard journals leads to long term academic damage and tarnishing of image. research articles published in poor quality journals is reported to be high in India, which has adversely affected its image,” Jain said in the note.

The number of research articles is an important factor in both institutional rankings as well as individual promotions.

The UGC has decided that since science, engineering, technology, agriculture and bio medical sciences are well covered in globally accepted scientific databases such as SCOPUS and Web of Science, journals indexed in these will be considered kosher.

There have been reports about research in India being hollowed out by predatory publishing.

The results of a global sting operation by Polish researchers published in March revealed that 48 so-called scientific journals were happy to have a

fictitious scientist – Anna O Szust – on their editorial board. Interestingly, Oszust is Polish for fraud.

The frenzy of publishing low-quality journals received a boost because of the UGC's method of calculating academic performance indicators (APIs). The API system was introduced in 2010 to decide recruitments and promotions. Under the API system, points were granted for papers published in any journal with an ISSN, an eight digit code used to identify publications. Unfortunately, many predatory journals also have ISSNs.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HINDU, NOV 26, 2018

Maldives President Ibrahim Solih to visit India on December 17



The newly-elected President of the [Maldives](#), Ibrahim Solih, will arrive in India on an official visit on December 17, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement on Monday.

The declaration came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the swearing-in ceremony of the new President in Male on November 17.

Both sides firmed up the visit of Mr. Solih during the just-concluded visit by Maldives Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid to India. An MEA

statement said Mr. Shahid highlighted the “India First” policy of the new Maldivian administration.

Mr. Shahid held multiple meetings during the visit and was assured of India’s support for readmission of the Maldives into the Commonwealth. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj welcomed the country as the newest member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

JUDICIARY

HINDU, NOV 26, 2018

106 judicial postings cleared in a month

Flurry of orders CJI Gogoi's initial days as top judge

The government has singularly honoured the recommendations of the Supreme Court Collegium since October 3, the day Justice Ranjan Gogoi took office as 46th Chief Justice of India.

The Ministry of Law and Justice website shows that 106 judicial appointments to the High Courts and the Supreme Court were issued by the government from October 3 till date. These orders include the appointment of four new judges to the Supreme Court on November 1, less than a month since Chief Justice Gogoi took over as top judge.

The government also approved 16 transfers of judges to the various High Courts.

In fact, the total 122 appointments and transfers (106+16) come within 26 days of Chief Justice Gogoi taking over. That is, the number of orders of appointments issued by the government is 4.8 times more than the number of days the Supreme Court worked since October 3.

Chief Justice Gogoi had himself recently expressed surprise at the speed — in 48 hours — with which the government cleared the Collegium's recommendation of the four new Supreme Court judges.

Compare this trend to the first two months of CJI Gogoi's immediate predecessor, Justice Dipak Misra.

Justice Misra assumed office as the 45th CJI on August 27 last year. The first order of appointment issued by the government was that of six judges to the Hyderabad High Court on September 18, 2017.

On the other hand, the first order of judicial appointment was issued by the government on the very day, October 3, Chief Justice Gogoi took oath as CJI. This was the appointment of Justice Surya Kant as the Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh High Court.

The government made 50 judicial appointments in various High Courts and approved merely five transfers from August 27 to December 31 of 2017 when the Collegium was led by Justice Misra.

The rush of clearances from the government comes even as the Supreme Court is seized with three politically-charged cases — Ayodhya dispute, Rafale deal and the CBI Director's plea.

LABOUR

HINDU, NOV 26, 2018

PIL urges Minimum Wages Act for domestic workers



A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking its intervention to bring dignity to “India’s invisible workforce in the informal sector” — the domestic workers.

The petition filed by NGO Common Cause along with social activist Aruna Roy and the National Platform for Domestic Workers, said: “Latent classism and lack of education make domestic workers prone to violence and abuse at the hands of their employers and placement agencies”.

The petition asked the Supreme Court to lay down guidelines to protect the workers' rights.

“Worsening their vulnerabilities are the absence of proper documentation, which also increases their reliance on employers to access social security benefits. As employment is largely through word of mouth or personal referrals, employment contracts are rarely negotiated, leaving the terms of employment to the whims of the employer,” Common Cause submitted.

The petition said Indian homes have witnessed a 120% increase in domestic workers in the decade post liberalisation. “While the figure was 7,40,000 in 1991, it has increased to 16.6 lakh in 2001,” the NGO said.

The petition sought the recognition of domestic work under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. Their work hours should be reduced to eight a day and they should be given a mandatory weekly off as a basic right under Article 21.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT - ASSAM

HINDU, NOV 26, 2018

Citizenship Bill rocks BJP-AGP ties in Assam

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) on Monday decided to let Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah take a call on where the alliance between the two parties is headed.

The decision, taken in a meeting at the AGP headquarters here, followed Assam minister and BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma's advice to the regional party to sever its ties with the saffron party if it wanted to.

The BJP, AGP and Bodoland People's Front had in May 2016 formed the alliance government. But the AGP has been threatening to pull out because of the BJP's bid to pass the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 that seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who migrated to India till December 31, 2014.

Opposition to the Citizenship Bill was the primary reason why the AGP sought to contest the panchayat polls in Assam – scheduled in two phases on December 5 and 9 – on its own.

On Sunday, Mr. Sarma said the BJP was ready to face any consequences of the AGP pulling out of the alliance. He also reminded the AGP leaders that they were responsible for an amendment in the Citizenship

Act in the 1980s that legitimised the stay of “lakhs of immigrants who came to India between 1951 and 1971”.

The opposition Congress and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) latched on to Mr. Sarma’s taunt. “If the AGP leaders have any self-respect, they should immediately stop hanging on to power shamelessly,” Congress leader and former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said.

AIUDF chief and Lok Sabha member Maulana Badruddin Ajmal said the AGP leaders “should show they have some skin”.

An AGP leader, declining to be quoted, said the party will make its stand clear at the right time. “For now, we will write to Amit Shah to know if the official stand of the BJP’s central leadership is the same as Himanta Biswa Sarma’s. This is because our leadership had consulted with Shah to forge an alliance with the BJP for the 2014 Lok Sabha polls,” he said.

AGP president Atul Bora, one of three AGP ministers in the Sarbananda Sonowal government, later asserted that his party would not compromise on the Citizenship Bill. “We believe in the Assam Accord that has a cut-off date (March 24, 1971) for accepting immigrants irrespective of whether they are Muslims or Hindus,” he said.

The Assamese and other ethnic groups believe the Citizenship Bill, if passed by Parliament, would open the floodgates for “Hindu Bangladeshi” refugees who would eventually make the indigenous communities minorities in their own land. The Bill, they say, was against the spirit of the Assam Accord that ended a historic six-year agitation against illegal immigrants.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT – JAMMU & KASHMIR

HINDU, NOV 26, 2018

SC rejects fresh plea against Article 370

‘Several petitions pending on the issue’

The Supreme Court on Monday declined to entertain a fresh petition challenging Article 370, which gives special autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi said there are already several petitions pending on the same issue and the petitioners’ advocate Vijay Mishra and Sandeep Lamba could get themselves impleaded later on.

One of the main writ petitions pending is by NGO ‘We the Citizens’, which challenges the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370.

It argues that four representatives from Kashmir were part of the Constituent Assembly involved in the drafting of the Constitution and the State of Jammu and Kashmir was never accorded any special status in the Constitution. Article 370 was only a ‘temporary provision’ to help bring normalcy. The Constitution makers did not intend Article 370 to be a tool to bring permanent amendments, like Article 35A, in the Constitution.

The petition said Article 35A is against the “very spirit of oneness of India”. Restricting citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property in J&K is a violation of their fundamental rights, it said.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, NOV 30, 2018

71% voting in phase 5 of Jammu-Kashmir panchayat elections

In the fifth phase of the nine-phased panchayat polls held across 15 districts of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, an overall poll percentage of 71.1% was witnessed across the state.

According to chief electoral officer Shaleen Kabra, 85.2% polling was witnessed in Jammu division and 33.7% in [Kashmir division](#) in the fifth phase, which passed off peacefully.

While the turnout was high in the first three phases in Kashmir despite the militant threats and boycott by the main regional parties - the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party, the voting percentage in the region has ebbed since then.

The polling began at 8 am and ended at 2 pm in 2,512 polling stations, including 1,743 stations in Jammu division and 769 in Kashmir division, Kabra said.

Kabra said that Kupwara witnessed 42.5% polling, Bandipora 34.6%, Baramulla 32.9%, Ganderbal 20.3%, Budgam 34.8%, Pulwama 0.5 %, Anantnag 10.1 %, Doda 83.3%, Ramban 85.2%, Udhampur 82%, Reasi 89.1%, Jammu 88.9 %, Rajouri 82.8% and Poonch 84.5% polling.

Reasi district in Jammu region recorded the highest polling of 89.1%, while Pulwama district in central Kashmir recorded the lowest at 0.5%, the official said.

Kabra said in the first phase of panchayat polls held on November 17, 74.1% polling was recorded across J&K including 64.5% in Kashmir division and 79.4% in Jammu division. In the second phase of the elections on November 20, overall 71.1% polling was witnessed across the state with 80.4% polling in Jammu division and 52.2% in Kashmir division.

In third phase, 75.2% polling was witnessed including 55.7% in Kashmir division and 83.0% in Jammu division and in the fourth phase the state witnessed 71.3% polling with 82.4% in Jammu division and 32.3% in Kashmir division.

Meanwhile, chief secretary BVR Subrahmanyam conveyed compliments from governor Satya Pal Malik to the civil and police administration for smooth, fair and peaceful conduct of panchayat polls amid challenging situations.

He said the process is half way through and credit goes to the divisional, district and police administration and other concerned departments for ensuring smooth polls.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

HINDU, NOV 25, 2018

RTI request to see RTI Amendment Bill denied



The Centre has denied a [Right to Information](#) Request for a copy of the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill 2018, which had been notified for introduction in the monsoon session of Parliament.

The Bill sought to give the Centre power to set the tenure and salaries of State and Central Information Commissioners. Critics worry this could threaten the independence of Commissioners. An RTI request for details on the applicants and search committee set up to fill the vacancies on the

Central Information Commission (CIC) has also been denied. The CIC is the final appellate authority for all Central public authorities. By December 1, there will be eight vacancies in the 11-member Commission.

In an affidavit filed in an ongoing Supreme Court case regarding the appointment of Information Commissioners, the Centre admitted that it has held up appointments due to its effort to first amend the law.

In its rejoinder, to be filed on Monday, the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI), plans to argue that this rationale does not provide "a legal ground for not filling vacancies in the Central Information Commission" as the existing Act already provides sufficient details on salaries and tenure.

In May 2018, NCPRI co-convener Anjali Bhardwaj filed an RTI request for a copy of the Bill and was denied on the grounds that the matter was still under consideration and had not reached finality. "We put in another request, it was denied on October 24. The same reason was offered for denial." "We are seeing a complete lack of transparency in the appointment process for the top transparency watchdog," Ms. Bhardwaj said.

WATER RESOURCES

HINDU, NOV 24, 2018

Ganga rejuvenation: Water flow in Ganga ‘woefully inadequate’



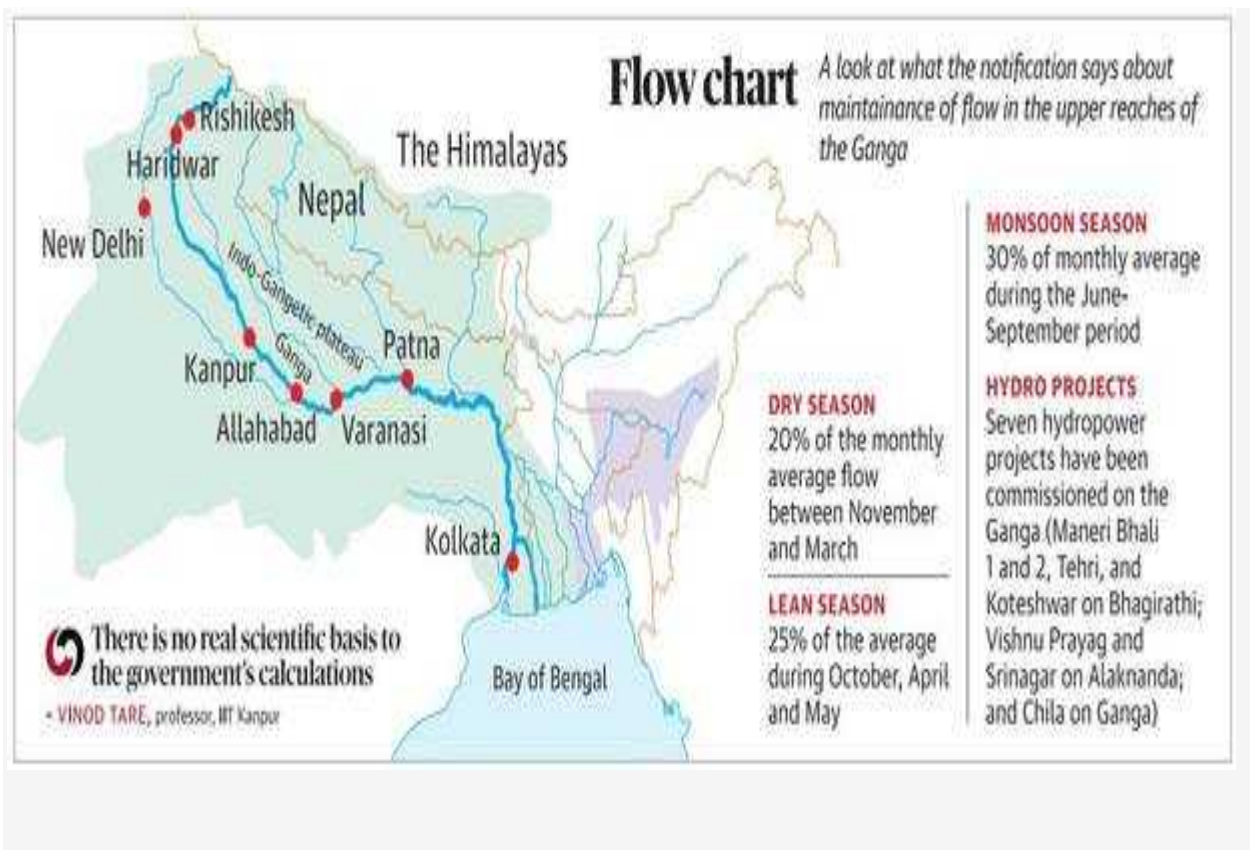
Credit: The Hindu

Experts say that the quantum fixed by government is not enough

Former Union Water Resources Secretary Shashi Shekhar has said that the government’s October 9 notification requiring a “minimum flow” in the Gangais “woefully inadequate.” Additionally, an analysis by Professor Vinod Tare of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur of the actual water flow at barrages downstream of Haridwar and using data provided by the Central Water Commission, suggests that actual flow today already exceeds the government’s prescriptions. These findings emerged at the India Rivers Week conference on Saturday.

While the government has promised to reduce pollution in the Ganga by 70% by March 2019, environmentalists say that this relies on setting up sewage plants rather than ensuring that the natural flow of the river isn't blocked and thereby hobbling its propensity to clean itself.

Among the sharpest critics of the government's approach — led by the National Mission for Clean Ganga — was the late G.D. Agrawal, a seer and formerly a scientist, who'd undertaken a fast since June. His key demands were to stop all under-construction dams in the upper reaches of the Ganga, and modify the design of existing ones to ensure that flow in the lower reaches of the river was at least 50% of the monthly average flow. He died on October 11.



However, the government's notification said that the upper stretches of the Ganga — from its origins in the glaciers and until Haridwar — would have to maintain 20% of the monthly average flow between November and March, which is the dry season; 25% of the average during the 'lean season' of October, April and May; and 30% of monthly average during the monsoon months of June-September.

For the main stem of the Ganga — from Haridwar in Uttarakhand to Unnao, Uttar Pradesh — the notification specifies minimum flow at various barrages: Bhimgoda (Haridwar) must ensure a minimum of 36 cubic metres per second (cumecs) between October-May, and 57 cumecs in the monsoon; and the barrages at Bijnor, Narora and Kanpur must maintain a minimum of 24 cumecs in the non-monsoon months of October-May, and 48 cumecs during the monsoon months of June-September.

“These flows are already achieved and this is the state of the river...there's no real scientific basis to the government's calculations,” said Mr. Tare.

WOMEN

HINDUSTAN TIMES, NOV 30, 2018

Four Indian-origin women among Forbes list of top female US tech moguls

Padmasree Warrior, former chief technology officer (CTO) of Cisco; Komal Mangtani, senior director at app-based cab aggregator Uber; Neha Narkhede, chief technology officer and co-founder of streaming platform Confluent; and Kamakshi Sivaramakrishnan, CEO and founder of identity-management company Drawbrige; are in the list.



Four Indian-origin women have been named by Forbes among America's top 50 female technology moguls, a list that includes tech heavyweights IBM CEO Ginni Rometty and Netflix executive Anne Aaron.

Padmasree Warrior, former chief technology officer (CTO) of Cisco; Komal Mangtani, senior director at app-based cab aggregator Uber; Neha Narkhede, chief technology officer and co-founder of streaming platform Confluent; and Kamakshi Sivaramakrishnan, CEO and founder of identity-management company Drawbrige; are in the list.

“Women don't wait for the future. The 2018 Inaugural Top 50 Women In Technology list identifies three generations of forward-thinking technologists leading more than a dozen tech sectors across the globe,” Forbes said in its ‘America's Top 50 Women in Tech 2018’.

Warrior (58) served in executive positions at both Motorola and Cisco and is now the US CEO of the Chinese electric-autonomous-vehicle startup NIO.

At the USD 138-billion Cisco Systems, she had help Cisco the tech giant grow in influence through acquisitions. She is also on the boards of Microsoft and Spotify.

“Warrior still finds the time to mentor other women in the tech industry, stay in touch with her 1.6 million Twitter followers and follow a nightly meditation routine,” the business magazine said.

Mangtani, an alumnus of Dharmsinh Desai Institute of Technology in Gujarat, heads business intelligence at Uber. Currently, she serves on the

board of nonprofit organisation Women Who Code and led Uber's USD 1.2-billion donation and partnership with Girls Who Code to increase access to computer science.

Narkhede, who studied at Pune university, had as a software engineer at LinkedIn helped develop Apache Kafka -- which can process the huge influx of data coming from the site in real time. The data-processing software has become the heart of Confluent, an enterprise Narkhede founded with her LinkedIn co-workers to build tools for companies using Apache Kafka, Forbes said.

The 32-year-old's firm counts Goldman Sachs, Netflix and Uber as customers.

Forty-three-year-old Sivaramakrishnan's company, Drawbridge, uses large-scale artificial intelligence and machine learning to identify the different devices people.

"As the number of devices people use on a daily basis -- computers, laptops and smartphones -- increase, advertisers need a way to show ads to a person across all their devices. Facebook and Google already offer these services to advertisers, but now they have a competitor with Kamakshi Sivaramakrishnan's Drawbridge," Forbes added.

For Limited Circulation
