

NEWS ALERT

FEBRUARY 8-15, 2019



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INDIAN EXPRESS

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TELEGRAPH

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CITIZENSHIP

PIONEER, FEB 12, 2019

10-hr bandh over Citizenship Bill affects life in Nagaland

Normal life was affected in Nagaland on Monday during a 10-hour bandh called by civil society organisations in protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

Schools and markets remained closed, vehicles were off the roads and people stayed indoors during the bandh which began at 6 AM.

The BJP is a constituent of the National Democratic Peoples Party-led Peoples Democratic Alliance (PDA) Government in the State.

The bandh has been called by the Nagaland Gaon Burhas Federation (NGBF). To implement the bandh, a Joint Coordination Committee of civil organisations, tribal bodies and indigenous citizens was formed on February 6.

The shutdown has been called in pursuance of a resolution adopted at a consultative meeting, called by the NGBF, at Dimapur on February 6.

The meeting had unanimously resolved to oppose the bill.

The opposition Naga Peoples Front (NPF) has extended its support to the bandh.

The Nagaland Cabinet has also rejected the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill which was passed in the Lok Sabha on January 8.

“This mass agitation is necessary as the bill will have adverse impacts on the people of the state,” the committee said in a release.

The bill, being vehemently opposed in the Northeast, was passed in Lok Sabha on January 8 and the Centre has said it will try to get the Rajya Sabha nod in this Budget Session.

The bill seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after six years of residence in India even if they do not possess any document.

The mass agitation, has also been called against the “lackadaisical attitude” of the Centre on the seven-decade-old Naga issue, the release said.

CLIMATE CHANGE

PIONEER, FEB 12, 2019

Naidu expresses concern over climate change

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu Monday called upon all nations to collaborate and cooperate in an unparalleled manner to ensure sustainable development even as he expressed concern over the impact of climate change on developing countries. Naidu was speaking at the inauguration of the three-day World Sustainable Development Summit 2019 here.

“The immediate impact of climate change was felt more by developing countries because of higher dependence on climatic variables, especially when it comes to agriculture, and their limited capacities to adapt, he said.

Naidu said climate change and global warming threaten lives and livelihoods of billions and upsets the delicate balance of nature. It is in its recognition that India is trying its best to include the paradigm of sustainability and environmental conservation in all its development endeavours,” he said.

Sharing the opinion of the vice president, Union Minister Harsh Vardhan said the issue of climate change was among the biggest challenges which needs to be addressed collectively.

“Climate change and environmental problems are amongst the biggest challenges today. It goes without saying that these issues need to be addressed collectively by all of us before it is too late,” Vardhan, the Union Minister for environment, forests and climate change, said at the summit organised by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

The Ministry of Environment also collaborated with TERI to set up a resource efficiency cell at the event.

Speaking about the collaboration, the Minister said, “Anticipating increased demand for raw materials in the future, it is vital to institute the best in resource efficiency as an effort toward decoupling economic growth and human wellbeing from ever-increasing consumption of natural resources.”

“The cell will enable inter-ministerial and inter-departmental synergy in promoting material resource efficiency in India while helping frame the blueprint of the integrated resource efficiency policy for India,” he said.

The Vice-President, in his key address at the event, emphasised on the importance of sustainable agriculture as a part of sustainable development and said more efficient systems of irrigation with “more crop per drop” mantra should be used.

“There is a need to make use of the endless possibilities of biotechnology and nano-technology to develop a range of green products, including nano-fertilisers. “We should move towards more efficient systems of irrigation with ‘more crop per drop’ as our mantra. Greater thrust has to be placed on organic farming and on the use of natural means of pest control,” he said.

Naidu, while kick-starting the summit, said sustainable development is inclusive development which includes sustainable agriculture, sustainable mobility solutions, urbanisation, energy security and clean energy, waste management and efforts in wildlife conservation.

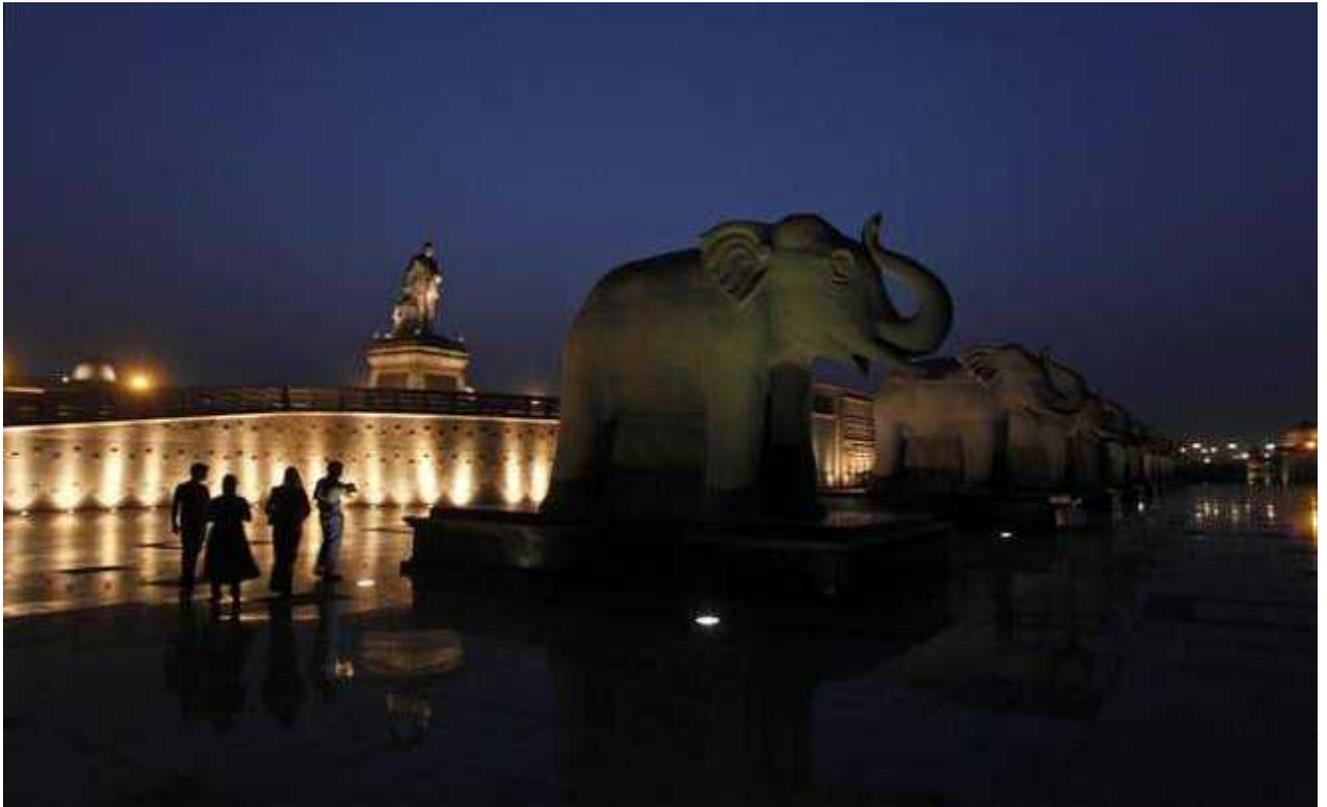
“Sustainable development is a common goal for all world nations, given the unprecedented scale of environmental degradation and its drastic consequences that we have been witnessing,” the vice president said.

Naidu said India’s traditional practices reflected a sustainable lifestyle and the Vedic philosophy of India always emphasised the undeniable connection that human beings share with nature.

CORRUPTION

HINDU, FEB 08, 2019

Mayawati has to repay public money spent on erecting her statues, BSP symbols in parks: SC



Supreme Court advocate has alleged that about 2,000 crore was used from the State budget for 2008-09 and 2009-10 to 'falsely glorify' the then CM.

The Supreme Court on Friday indicated its "tentative view" that Bahujan Samajwadi Party leader Mayawati will have to cough up and pay back to the public exchequer the money she spent on erecting statues of herself and party symbol 'elephant' in public parks across Lucknow and Noida.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, posted the petition filed by Supreme Court advocate Ravi Kant in 2009, alleging that crores of public money was spent by then Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister on these acts of self-aggrandisement.

“We are of the tentative view that Mayawati has to deposit the public money spent on her statues and party symbol to the State exchequer,” Chief Justice Gogoi orally observed.

The Bench, also comprising Justices Deepka Gupta and Sanjeev Khanna, posted the matter for final hearing on April 2.

Mr. Kant has alleged that about 2,000 crore was used from the State budget for 2008-09 and 2009-10 to ‘falsely glorify’ the then Chief Minister. He said the State government should be directed to remove the statues of Mayawati and her party symbol ‘elephant’ from public land.

“The said activity is being carried out as a State policy, which is arbitrary and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution. Sixty statues of elephants were installed at a cost of 52.20 crore at public places by utilising State funds,” the petition alleged in 2009.

ELECTION

HINDU, FEB 14, 2019

CBDT chief Sushil Chandra appointed as Election Commissioner



Mr. Chandra, an IIT graduate, is a 1980 batch Indian Revenue Service official.

Sushil Chandra, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman, was on Thursday appointed as an Election Commissioner by President Ram Nath Kovind.

The post had fallen vacant after the appointment of then Election Commissioner Sunil Arora as Chief Election Commissioner on

superannuation of his predecessor O.P. Rawat in December last. Former bureaucrat Ashok Lavasa is the first and most senior Election Commissioner.

Mr. Chandra, an IIT graduate, is a 1980 batch Indian Revenue Service (IRS) official. Having held several posts in the Income-Tax Department, he was appointed CBDT Chairman on November 1, 2016. Subsequently, he got two extensions and his tenure was to end on May 31.

HINDU, FEB 15, 2019

Look beyond bureaucrats for CIC, State Information Commissioners appointments: SC



Supreme Court equates the status of Central Information Commissioner to that of the Chief Election Commissioner

The Supreme Court on Thursday pierced the virtual glass ceiling in Central Information Commission and State Information Commissioners by directing the government to not confine appointments to bureaucrats.

The government should not restrict the focus of appointments of Central Information Commissioner, information commissioners to just retired bureaucracy when the Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2005 itself allows talent and experience to be drawn from a vast pool of professions and fields, a Bench led by Justice A.K. Sikri said.

The court equated the status of the Central Information Commissioner to that of the Chief Election Commissioner, ensuring autonomy to the statutory office under the RTI Act.

The court directed that the criteria and guidelines of the Search Committee, which scopes out candidates for appointment as information commissioners, should be made public.

The process to fill up a vacancy should start two months before retirement is due.

The court gave the government (Centre and States) two or three months more to fill up existing vacancies if they have already started the process. In case the process has not begun, the court gave them six months.

The court noted that the Centre has already commenced the process of appointments and have issued advertisements. The Bench said, however, the strength of information commissioners in the States is “less”.

The judgment comes on petitions highlighting the vacancies in information commissions across the country and the need for transparency in the appointment process to these bodies set up under the Right to Information Act.

The court had reserved the petitions for judgment on January 29. It had on that day asked the government why the information bodies, especially the apex forum of Central Information Commission (CIC), are almost completely manned by bureaucrats.

Justice Sikri, who is retiring on March 7, had pointed out that the law required people with a range of experience and from various fields to serve as information commissioners.

The petitioners like activists, Anjali Bhardwaj and Commodore (retired) Lokesh Batra had alleged in their petitions that the Centre and the State governments “have attempted to stifle the functioning of the Right to Information Act by failing to do their statutory duty of ensuring appointment of commissioners in the Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions in a timely manner.”

They had highlighted the “huge backlogs of appeals and complaints in many information commissions” and the delay in hearing and deciding appeals for information filed by the common man.

EMPLOYMENT

HINDU, FEB 15, 2019

Is the unemployment crisis for real?

By MAHESH VYAS

Employment opportunities, formal jobs and the labour force are all shrinking

The jobs situation in India does not reflect a crisis, but it is a matter of serious concern. A crisis is understood as an emergency that demands immediate attention, without which we could see a calamity of sorts. There is no immediate calamity of any kind on hand. But there is a deeply insidious problem at work in the form of shrinking employment opportunities, shrinking formal jobs, and a shrinking labour force.

A populous and demographically young country like India has a lot to gain if the expanding working-age population can join the labour force and be provided with gainful employment. More hands at work can ensure greater prosperity and relatively evenly spread growth.

Problems of unemployment

But if India cannot provide employment to its growing working-age population, it does not just miss a chance to become a prosperous

country, but also risks becoming an unmanageable or unruly country. Unemployed youth, beyond a threshold, can lose hope of a job and can easily stray into becoming unsocial elements.

A bigger problem is that those who do get jobs and prosper do not appreciate the plight of those who do not. It is mistakenly believed that those who do not get good jobs are not worthy of getting them. The blame is placed at the door of the unemployed as if it is entirely their problem. The macro-economic and social dimension of the problem is not appreciated in India.

Statistics give us clues of the brewing problem and its insidious nature. First, we are in the midst of a serious investments deficit. CMIE's CapEx database demonstrates the persistent fall in new investment proposals since 2011-12. New investment proposals had peaked at 25 trillion in 2010-11. In 2017-18, these were down to 11 trillion, and in 2018-19, these are unlikely to cross 10 trillion.

The impact of this fall in investments is visible in shrinking jobs. In a point-to-point comparison, in 2018, the number of persons employed declined by 11 million. An estimated 408 million people were employed in December 2017. This fell to 397 million in December 2018. The average employment in 2017 was 406.5 million. This fell to an average of 402.1 million in 2018. This shows a smaller fall of 4.5 million. Either way, we see a very substantial fall in employment. One (11 million) is only much worse than a fairly bad fall of 4.5 million, or 10%.

Labour participation rate

This fall in jobs is not translating into a proportionate rise in unemployment. But it is showing up in a fall in the labour participation rate. A rise in unemployment is bad, but a fall in the labour participation rate is worse. The former reflects a shortage of jobs compared to the number of people looking for jobs. The latter reflects a fall in the number of people looking for jobs. When we juxtapose this against falling jobs, we see a glimpse of the hopelessness of people who should be looking for jobs.

Our real crisis is in the nature of the government's response to the situation. When the establishment works hard to rubbish sound statistical practices and results of large sample household surveys and instead uses back-of-the-envelope calculations to measure employment, we are headed towards a bigger crisis than the jobs crisis.

Mahesh Vyas is Managing Director & CEO of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Private Ltd. (CMIE)

HEALTH SERVICES

PIONEER, FEB 09, 2019

e-AUSHADHI portal launched for licensing of AYUSH medicine

Minister of State for AYUSH, Shripad Yesso Naik on Wednesday launched the e-AUSHADHI portal, for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters here.

The e-AUSHADHI portal aims increased transparency, improved information management facility, improved data usability and increased accountability, said the Minister here at an event.

“Timelines will be fixed for processing of application through this portal with SMS and e-mail status updates at each step of the process, “ said the Minister while underlining that such an initiative is a reflection of the Government’s commitment towards e-governance, ease of doing business and Make in India.

Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH said that the Ministry endeavours to come out with new initiatives and solutions to address the problems faced by practitioners, manufactures and consumers of AYUSH medicines.

“In this direction, this new e-portal is an acronym for Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy Automated Drug Help Initiative.

“This portal will not only aid the licensing authority , manufactures and consumers, it will also provide real time information of the licensed manufactures and their products, cancelled and spurious drugs, contact details of the concerned authority for specific grievances,” said Kotecha.

HINDU, FEB 13, 2019

PM inaugurates AIIMS cancer institute

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday dedicated AIIMS, Delhi’s – National Cancer Institute, Jhajjar (NCI) to the country.

Built at 2035 crores, NCI is the largest investment by the Government in a single hospital project and holds the unique distinction of being one of the mega healthcare project to be completed in a record time of 3 years from the 1st shovel to the 1st patient.

NCI is to be equipped with cutting edge technology including ----- 25 Operation Theatres, 5 Linear Accelerators, 4 PET Scanners, 3 Brachytherapy, 2 CT Scanners, 2 MRI Scanners and much more.

“NCI will also have the 1st Public Sector Proton Facility of the Country which will be a new paradigm in the treatment of cancer patients,” noted the release.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 15, 2019

Will ensure complete isolation of Pak, says Govt; withdraws MFN status

India withdrew the most favoured nation status given to Pakistan in the aftermath of Pulwama terror attack, in which 44 CRPF jawans are feared to have been killed.

India on Friday served a strong message to Pakistan and terror groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir in the aftermath of the Pulwama terror attack, in which 44 Central Reserve Police Force jawans are feared to have been killed on Thursday. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, decided to withdraw the most favoured nation (MFN) status granted to Pakistan and “initiate all possible steps” to ensure complete isolation of the country.

In a rare media briefing after a CCS meet, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said, “The most favoured nation status granted to Pakistan stands withdrawn. The ministry of commerce will issue necessary notification in this regard.” India had granted MFN status to Pakistan in 1996, a year after formation of the World Trade Organisation for promotion of international trade.

The MFN status was not withdrawn even during the 1999 Kargil War, neither in the aftermath of the attacks on Parliament in 2003, Mumbai

terror attacks of 2008, when more than 160 people were killed or after the Uri terror attack, which saw special forces of the Indian Army cross the Line of Control (LoC) to conduct a surgical strike to demolish terror launch pads in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in 2016.

The minister also said India will press for an early adoption of a draft convention on international terrorism pending with the United Nation since 1986. India had tabled a draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism in the United Nations in 1986, when late Congress president Rajiv Gandhi was the prime minister.

“But for the past 33 years, it has not been implemented because there is no unanimity on the definition of terrorism,” Jaitley said adding, the government will consult all countries to implement it and engage with them for early adoption of the anti-terror measure.

The draft convention proposes to declare all forms of international terrorism a criminal offence and seeks to deny funding and shelter to terrorists.

Jaitley also said there is “incontrovertible evidence” to prove Pakistan’s hand behind the Pulwama terror attack on a convoy of 78 vehicles carrying more than 2,500 CRPF jawans from Jammu to Srinagar. The convoy was targeted by the militants in a suicide attack ramming one of the buses with an explosive-laden SUV on Jammu-Srinagar highway.

Thursday’s terror attack is the worst of its kind in the Kashmir Valley in terms of loss of lives. In 2001, 38 people had died when militants attacked the Jammu and Kashmir assembly. Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed claimed responsibility for the Pulwama terror

attack. The group also released a video of the suspected attacker, who was a local youth. The authenticity of the claim is yet to be verified by the security agencies.

“The ministry of external affairs will initiate all possible steps... all possible diplomatic steps, which have to be taken to ensure complete isolation of Pakistan of which incontrovertible evidence is available of having a direct hand behind this gruesome attack,” Jaitley said.

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 15, 2019

China condemns Pulwama terror attack, but says no to list JeM chief Masood Azhar as global terrorist

China on Friday condemned the Pulwama terror attack carried out by a Jaish suicide bomber but once again declined to back India’s appeal to list the Pakistan-based terror group’s chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist by the UN.

At least 40 CRPF personnel were killed and five injured on Thursday in one of the deadliest terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir when a Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) suicide bomber rammed a vehicle carrying over 100 kg of explosives into their bus in Pulwama district.

“China has noted the reports of suicide terrorist attack. We are deeply shocked by this attack. We express deep condolences and sympathy to

the injured and bereaved families,” spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry Geng Shuang told a media briefing here.

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 15, 2019

Pulwama terror attack: Indian envoy to Pak called to Delhi for consultations

Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria was called to Delhi for consultations a day after a terror attack on CRPF jawans in Kashmir’s Pulwama, reports ANI.

This came on a day India summoned Pakistan envoy Sohail Mahmood to lodge a strong protest over the suicide bombing by Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale told the high commissioner that Pakistan must take “immediate and verifiable action” against the Jaish-e-Mohammed terror group that has claimed responsibility for Thursday’s attack in Kashmir.

HINDU, FEB 16, 2019

Diplomatic offensive launched against Pak

After vowing to avenge the killing of 44 CRPF jawans at Pulawama in Jammu & Kashmir, India on Friday launched a major diplomatic offensive against Pakistan to mobilise international opinion in favour of

a possible punitive action. India briefed envoys of 25 countries, including from P5 nations — US, China, Russia, the UK and France — on Islamabad's hand behind the attack. .

Ahead of the full-scale briefing to international community, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale summoned Pakistan High Commissioner to India Sohail Mahmood to his South Block office and issued a very strong demarche over the attack in which at least 40 CRPF personnel were killed in Kashmir's Pulwama district.

Pakistan must take "immediate and verifiable action" against the JeM and that it must immediately stop any groups or individuals associated with terrorism operating from its territories, Gokhale told the envoy.

According to sources, Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria has also been called to Delhi for consultations in the wake of the horrific attack.

Hours after vowing to isolate Pakistan diplomatically in the wake of the attack, the Government undertook the exercise of reaching out to the international community, most of which has univocally condemned the attack by the UN-proscribed Pakistan-based JeM terror outfit.

China expressed deep "shock" over the Pulwama terror attack carried out by a Jaish suicide bomber, but did not give an assurance to India that it will back New Delhi's appeal to list the UN-proscribed Pakistan-based terror group's chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist.

Apart from the envoys of the P5, Gokhale met the envoys of key countries in Europe and Asia such as Germany, South Korea, Japan, as well as Australia, they said.

“All the Heads of Missions were left in no doubt about the role played by Pakistan based and supported JeM in the terrorist attack and our demand that Pakistan ceases forthwith all support and financing to terror groups operating from areas under their control. The foreign secretary also highlighted the role played by Pakistan in using terrorism as an instrument of its state policy,” a source said.

The MEA will continue to take all steps to expose the complicity of Pakistan in the Pulwama terrorist attack and demand immediate and verifiable action against JeM and its leader Masood Azhar, the source added.

Countries from across the globe condemned the terror attack with nations such as the US, UK, Russia and France asserting that they stand with India in this hour of grief.

Condemning the attack, Russian President Vladimir Putin said perpetrators and sponsors of the attack should be brought to book and reiterated his country’s support for further strengthening counterterrorist cooperation with India.

LABOUR

HINDU, FEB 14, 2019

Panel moots minimum wage of 375 per day

‘Different wages for different regions’

An expert panel has recommended that a need-based national minimum wage for workers across the country be set at 375 per day, or 9,750 per month.

In a report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Employment on Thursday, an Expert Committee on Determining the Methodology for Fixation of the National Minimum Wage has also recommended different national minimum wages for “different geographical regions of the country to suit the local realities and as per socio-economic and labour market contexts.”

These regional wage recommendations range from 342 per day in some States including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal to 447/day for States such as Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab.

Different wages

While the Minimum Wages Act was enacted in 1948, it stipulates different wages according to occupation and State; there is no national minimum wage. In 2016, then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley hiked

minimum wages for unskilled non-agricultural workers by 42% to 350 per day.

The Code on Wages Bill, 2017, had proposed a national minimum wage and five regional minimum wages. However, it was referred to a parliamentary standing committee which, in its December 2018 report, said State governments must be consulted before any national minimum wage is set by the Centre.

MIGRATION

PIONEER, FEB 12, 2019

India assures B'desh of support for speedy return of Rohingyas

Foreign Ministers of India and Bangladesh held talks on Friday to further intensify ties between the two countries as they called for expediting safe and sustainable repatriation of the Rohingya refugees, according to a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs.

During the fifth meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj assured her Bangladeshi counterpart AK Abdul Momen India's continued support for safe, speedy and sustainable return of the displaced persons to Myanmar.

The two sides also inked three pacts, including in the areas of health services and training of civil servants.

The Ministers discussed the gamut of bilateral issues of mutual interest and reviewed ongoing cooperation, including the implementation of decisions taken during the visits of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the statement said.

They also expressed satisfaction that both countries are working closer than ever before in every sector, ranging from security and border

management to mutually-beneficial trade and investment flows, power and energy, river water sharing, development partnership, transport connectivity, culture and people-to-people contacts.

They also welcomed the broadening of ties in areas such as space, nuclear energy, IT and electronics.

“Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen conveyed the gratitude of Government of Bangladesh for the humanitarian assistance provided by India in four tranches since September 2017 to help meet the requirements of the displaced persons from Myanmar. The two ministers agreed on the need to expedite safe and sustainable repatriation of the displaced people from Rakhine State of Myanmar,” the statement said.

India has been calling on Myanmar to implement the accord it signed with Bangladesh — Rohingya repatriation agreement — that involves return of the refugees to Myanmar.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

PIONEER, FEB 09, 2019

India to train 1,800 B'deshi civil servants

India will train 1,800 civil servants from Bangladesh in ethics in administration and public policy among other areas of governance, officials said.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Friday between the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), an institute under the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), and the Ministry of Public Administration, Government of Bangladesh, in this regard, they said.

KV Eapen, Secretary DARPG and Director General of NCGG, said the collaboration represents a historic milestone in training and capacity building programmes between India and Bangladesh.

He said that Bangladesh civil servants will be trained in e-governance and service delivery, public policy and implementation, information technology, decentralization, urban development and planning, ethics in Administration and challenges in implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

This is the second time that the NCGG has signed an MOU for a training programme for Bangladesh civil servants

RAILWAYS

HINDU, FEB 15, 2019

PM flags off Vande Bharat Express, India's fastest train

The bookings for the train, also known as Train 18, have begun and it will run commercially from February 17 from Delhi to Varanasi five days a week

India's first semi-high-speed train, Vande Bharat Express, was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday from the New Delhi Railway Station amid sombre mood in the backdrop of the terror attack in Pulwama.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and members of the Railway Board were present on the occasion and will be on board the train on its inaugural journey.

"I am grateful to designers and engineers behind Vande Bharat Express which will take its first trip from Delhi to Varanasi today. With our sincerity and hardwork in the last 4.5 years we have tried to improve railways," the PM said.

The train will travel from Delhi to Varanasi in 9 hours and 45 minutes. This includes stoppage time of 40 minutes each at Kanpur and Allahabad where there will be special programmes.

The PM inspected the train and said he was proud that such a train had been produced indigenously at the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai in 18 months.

The semi-high speed Train 18, which has been recently rechristened Vande Bharat Express, can run up to a maximum speed of 160 kmph and has travel classes like Shatabdi trains but with better facilities. It aims to provide a totally new travel experience to passengers.

RELIGION

HINDU, FEB 15, 2019

SC sends plea challenging Ayodhya Act to Bench hearing Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid appeals

“List it before that Bench,” a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi directed.

The Supreme Court on Friday referred to **Ayodhya** Bench a plea challenging validity of Ayodhya Act of 1993 under which the Centre acquired 67.703 acres of land, including the disputed Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid premises and adjacent areas.

“List it before that Bench,” a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi directed.

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhawan, for the Muslim side in the Ayodhya title suit appeals, said the issue raised in the petition has already been decided by a Constitution Bench in 1994 Ismail Faruqui verdict.

“We cannot have a review now, 27 years later,” Mr. Dhawan said.

“We are sending it to that Bench. Let it come there,” Chief Justice Gogoi replied.

The present petition has been filed despite the fact that the Constitution Bench of the **Supreme Court**, in its 1994 judgment in the Ismail

Faruqui case, has already upheld the validity of the Ayodhya Act except sub-section (3) of Section 4 which mandates the abatement of “all pending suits and legal proceedings without providing for an alternative dispute resolution mechanism for resolution of the dispute between the parties”.

The petition filed by several persons, including two Lucknow-based advocates who claim to be devotees of Ram Lalla, has challenged the legislative competence of the Parliament to acquire religious land.

Recently, the Centre has also moved an application to return the superfluous excess land acquired adjacent to the disputed area to its rightful owners after mapping out the exact extent of acreage required to provide easy access and enjoyment of the RJBM area to the ultimate winner of the title dispute appeals pending in the apex court.

The petitioners had claimed that the 1993 Act infringed on the right to religion of Hindus guaranteed and protected under Article 25 (freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion) of the Constitution.

The plea has sought the court’s direction restraining the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh government from interfering in “puja, darshan and performance of rituals at the places of worship situated within the land admeasuring 67.703 acres acquired under the Act particularly at the land belonging to Shri Ram Janm Bhoomi Nyas, Manas Bhavan, Sankat Mochan Mandir, Ram Janmasthan Temple, Janki Mahal and Katha Mandap”.

RESERVATION

PIONEER, FEB 09, 2019

SC refuses to stay 10% EWS quota in jobs

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stay the Centre's decision to grant 10 per cent quota in jobs and admissions to poor candidates in the general category.

The apex court, however, agreed to examine the validity of the law and issued the notice to the Centre on the plea filed by businessman and Congress supporter Tehseen Poonawala.

“At this stage, we are not inclined to pass any order,” said a bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi.

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for Poonawala, told the bench that his only grievance at this stage was that this quota should not breach the ceiling of 50 per cent as mandated by the apex court.

The bench, also comprising Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna, had earlier issued notice to the Centre on similar petitions and on Friday ordered tagging of the fresh plea of Poonawalla with pending ones.

Petitions have been filed by parties, including ‘Janhit Abhiyan’ and NGO ‘Youth For Equality’, challenging the Centre's decision.

PIONEER, FEB 14, 2019

Raj House passes Gujjar quota Bill

The Rajasthan Assembly Wednesday passed a Bill giving a five per cent quota in Government jobs and educational institutes to the Gujjars and four other communities agitating for it. The Gujjar protests led by community leader Kirori Singh Bainsla continued in the State for the sixth day even after the Bill was passed.

Gujjar protesters have blocked the Delhi-Mumbai railway track in Sawai Madhopur district and several highways since Friday. Traffic is also held up on several roads in the State.

Bainsla said the community will wait for more clarity on the Bill before calling off the stir. The Rajasthan Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointments and Posts in Services under the State) (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced by the new Congress Government earlier in the day.

The Bill sought to increase the backward classes' reservation from the present 21 per cent to 26 per cent with a five per cent quota for Gujjars, Banjaras, Gadia Lohars, Raikas and Gadaria communities.

The statement on the objective and reasons for the bill said the five castes are the most backward and required separate reservation in Government jobs and educational institutes.

“We will remain on dharna till there is clarity that the Bill passed in the Assembly is legally sound,” Bainsla said.

“It is a sacred document for us and we will take the next decision only after taking the opinion of intellectuals of the community working in different fields,” he added.

A North Western Railway spokesperson said two trains were cancelled on Wednesday due to the dharna.

While introducing the Bill, Rajasthan Energy Minister Kalla said the Centre has provided only 27 per cent reservation for the backward classes while their proportion in the population is 52 per cent.

Since the population of backward classes in Rajasthan is estimated by the State Backward Classes Commission to be about 52 per cent, the percentage of reservation for them needed to be increased, he said.

ROADS

PIONEER, FEB 15, 2019

Bring Ordinance on road safety, Gadkari told

A day after the last session of the current Lok Sabha, the Road Safety Network has written to the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari to bring Ordinance on Road Safety.

The Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill, 2017 that sought to carry out the much-required overhaul of the Motor Vehicles Act of 1988 had received the assent of the Lok Sabha on April 10, 2017 and was introduced for consideration and passage in the Rajya Sabha in the Winter Session of 2017. However, after the failure to get the Bill passed, the network has urged the Government to take the extraordinary measure of issuing an ordinance to save lives.

“The Government had committed to bringing a strong road safety law since 2014 and many statements of the Minister indicated his commitment to reduce road casualties. Since his efforts in Parliament to pass the Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill has failed to garner support, we urge the Minister to bring Ordinance in interim period on this important issue so that lives can be saved,” said Ashim Sanyal of Consumer Voice.

He said regrettably India has the dubious distinction of being world number one in road crash deaths and every year nearly 1.5 lakh people are killed in road crashes and another five lakh are severely injured, many of them disabled for life.

TERRORISM

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 15, 2019

Pulwama attack: India says will make Pakistan pay, Opposition stands with govt

The terror attack at paramilitary forces in south Kashmir's Pulwama district Thursday is the worst the valley has seen. This is, however, not the first time JeM has been involved in terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.



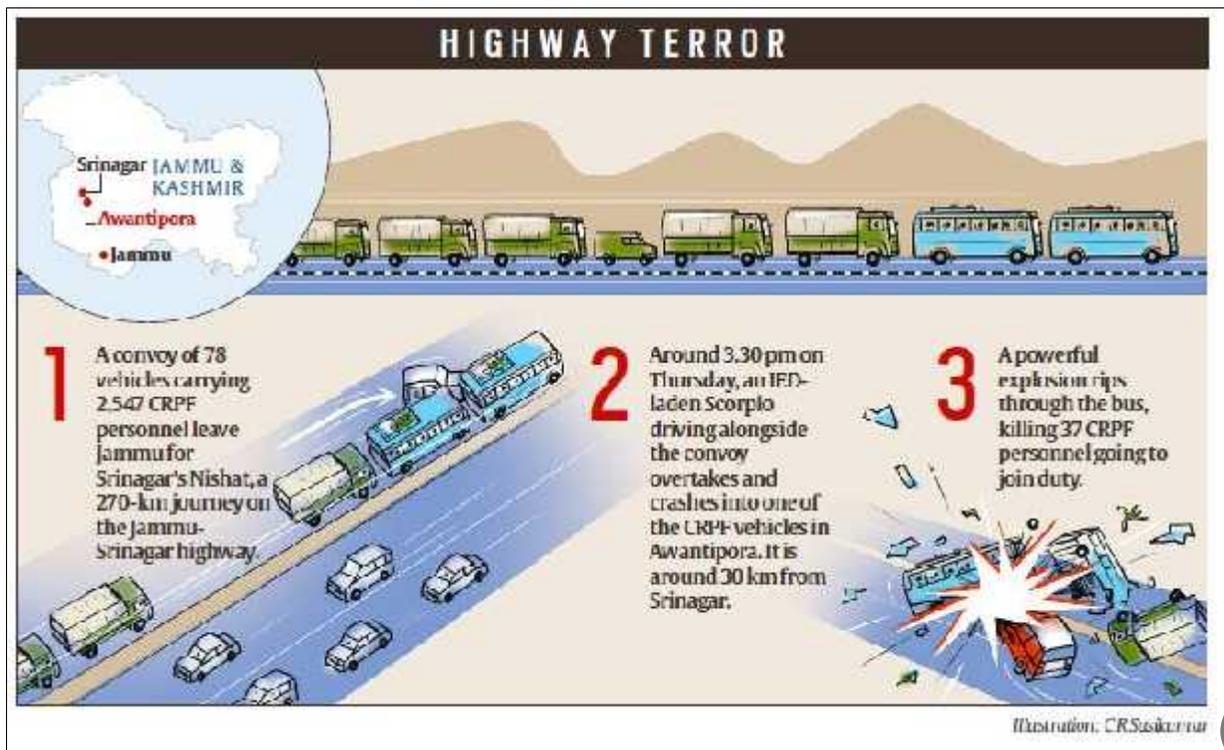
The killing of at least 40 CRPF soldiers in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district Thursday in the worst terror attack the Valley has seen, has reignited the debate on active militancy in the area, the preparedness

of intelligence agencies, the diplomatic roadblock by China to bring Masood Azhar, head of Jaish-e-Mohammad which has claimed responsibility of the attack, to justice, and the political ramifications in the time of general elections.

The attack, condemned by world leaders, especially by the United States, has put pressure on Pakistan to stop providing safe havens to terror groups. The attack also puts focus on fidayeen attacks by the Pakistan-based terror group and what challenges lie ahead for the paramilitary forces which took over the law and order duties in the state from the BSF in 2005. After a cabinet committee of security meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday, the PM said “those behind the heinous crime will have to pay”.

The car bombing

On Thursday afternoon, a suicide bomber rammed his Scorpio SUV laden with explosives into a CRPF bus in south Kashmir where a convoy of 78 vehicles, carrying over 2,500 jawans were moving to Kashmir from Jammu. Most of the men were returning from leave to join duty in Srinagar, said sources. The convoy had started from 3.30 AM from Jammu to reach Kashmir. About 35 kilometres from Srinagar, at around 3.30 PM at the Jammu-Kashmir highway, a Scorpio SUV laden with explosives is suspected to have emerged from a side road to hit the bus at a right angle.



“A car suddenly came in the middle of the convoy and there was a huge explosion,” said a CRPF man who was travelling in another vehicle that was part of the convoy. “When we came down, the bus was not there. It had been completely charred and the bodies were scattered all around”.

A resident of Lethpora told The Indian Express that the explosion seemed to shake the ground beneath. “We were sitting at home when there was a deafening bang and the earth shook,” he said. “It was so powerful that we were thrown away from the place we were sitting”. The national highway was then closed for traffic and the media barred from moving towards the explosion site. Mobile internet services were snapped in south Kashmir and Jammu, while the data speed in Srinagar was scaled down to 2G.

Security sources said while the Intelligence Bureau did not have any input about an impending attack, all the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were followed. A road opening party was sent before the movement of the convoy. The whole route was sanitised. IEDs were ruled out. How this attack happened still, is now in the realm of investigations,” CRPF IG (Operations), Kashmir, Zulfikar Hassan said.

The terror attack at paramilitary forces in south Kashmir’s Pulwama district Thursday is the worst the Valley has seen.

Before Thursday’s attack, the most casualty suffered by CRPF in an attack was on June 25, 2016, when a vehicle was attacked by three LeT militants, leaving eight personnel dead and 22 injured.



The scale of Thursday’s attack can be gauged from the fact that in the whole of 2018, CRPF did not lose as many men as it did on Thursday. According to the Union Home Ministry’s figures, CRPF lost 30 men in terror attacks in 2018. Governor Satya Pal Malik said that the attack was

partly the result of an intelligence failure, especially due to the fact that security forces could not detect the loading and movement of the explosive-laden Scorpio.

India says will make Pakistan pay

After holding a cabinet committee on security (CCS) meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday said those who committed the heinous act will pay “a heavy price”. “Those who did the heinous act will have to pay a heavy price. Those who supported it will definitely be punishment,” PM Modi said. “To all my colleagues, in ruling and Opposition, it’s a sensitive time. We need to speak in one voice because this battle is for us to win,” he said.

PIONEER, FEB 12, 2019

INTERPA chief expresses concern over terrorists using internet

The International Association of Police Academies (INTERPA) president Yilmaz Colak on Monday expressed concerns over growing use of internet by terrorists for radicalisation and secret communication.

Colak, who heads Turkish National Police Academy, said terrorists are also trying internet to infiltrate various Government organisations like police and judiciary to carry forward their ill designs.

“Terrorist organisations use internet for radicalisation, threats and intimidation. They also use it for secretly communicating their plans,” said Colak. He was speaking at the three-day 8th INTERPA conference on “Cyber Security and Combating Cyber Crime”, which was inaugurated at the Gujarat Forensic Science University in Gandhinagar by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.

Colak said cyber crimes like syohoning off money, child pornography etc. are the “extension” of the criminal behaviour. These crimes existed in the past when internet was not around, he added.

PIONEER, FEB 16, 2019

Major J&K terror strikes since '99

Chronological list of all major terror attacks on security forces in Jammu & Kashmir in the last two decades:

* 26 August 2017 — Three Jaish terrorists storm District Police Lines Pulwama, killing eight security force personnel, before the assailants were shot dead.

* 29 November 2016 — Three terrorists storm Army artillery camp at Nagrota in Jammu, killing seven soldiers, before the assailants were eliminated.

- * 18 September 2016 — Four Pakistani terrorists storm an Army camp at Uri in Baramulla district, killing 18 soldiers, most of them were in sleep. The assailants were also killed. The incident led to reprisal surgical strikes inside the Pakistan occupied Kashmir by Indian Army.
- * 25 June 2016 — Terrorists open indiscriminate firing on a CRPF bus, killing eight jawans at Pampore on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway.
- * 3 June 2016 — Terrorists target a CRPF bus at Pampore, killing two personnel before taking refuge in a Government building. Two-day encounter ends with killing of three soldiers including two officers and the two assailants. One civilian was also killed.
- * 5 December 2014 — Six heavily-armed terrorists storm an Army camp at Mohra in Uri. Ten soldiers were killed in the gun battle with the intruders, who were all shot dead.
- * 24 June 2013 — Terrorists ambush a bus carrying unarmed Army personnel at Hyderpora in Srinagar. Eight soldiers were killed in the attack.
- * 19 July 2008 — Ten soldiers were killed when terrorists triggered an IED planted by the roadside at Narbal on Srinagar-Baramulla highway on the outskirts of the city.
- * 2 November 2005 — A suicide bomber blew up his car at Nowgam, near the private residence of then Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, killing three cops and six civilians.

- * 20 July 2005 — A suicide car bomber blew his vehicle by ramming it into a vehicle of security forces. Three security force personnel and two civilians were killed.
- * 24 June 2005 — Nine army soldiers were killed in a car bomb triggered by terrorists on the outskirts of Srinagar.
- * 4 August 2004 — Nine CRPF jawans were killed in a terrorist attack on their camp at Rajbagh in Srinagar. One terrorist was also killed in retaliatory action.
- * 8 April 2004 — 11 persons were killed in a grenade attack by terrorists on a PDP rally at Uri in Baramulla district. The PDP was demanding opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Road.
- * 22 July 2003 — Eight soldiers, including a Brigadier, were killed in a terrorists attack on their camp at Akhnoor. Several other senior Army officers sustained injuries in the attack.
- * 28 June 2003 — 12 soldiers, including an officer, were killed in a suicide attack by terrorists on Sunjwan Army camp. Two terrorists were neutralised.
- * 14 May 2002 — In one of the biggest strikes on an Army installation, 36 persons were killed by three terrorists who stormed the Kaluchak Army Cantonment in Jammu. The assailants were also killed.
- * 17 November 2001 — Terrorists storm a security forces base in Ramban (then part of Doda district), killing 10 security forces. Four terrorists were also killed.

- * 1 October 2001 — Terrorists trigger a car bomb outside the old Legislative Assembly Complex in Srinagar. 38 persons were killed while three assailants were also eliminated.
- * 10 August 2000 — Terrorists hurl a grenade at Residency Road in Srinagar. As the security officials assembled at the spot, they triggered a car bomb, killing 11 persons and a photojournalist.
- * 19 April 2000 — The "human bomb" was used for the first time in Kashmir insurgency. Two soldiers were killed in the suicide car bomb at the Army headquarters at Badamibagh area in Srinagar.
- * 3 November 1999 — Terrorists storm the Badamibagh Army headquarters, killing 10 soldiers including Defence Public Relations Officer Major Purshottam.

For Limited Circulation
