

# **NEWS ALERT**

**MARCH 8-15, 2019**



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**COMPILED BY**  
**HEMANT KHARE**



**Indian Institute of Public Administration I.P. Estate, Ring  
Road, New Delhi-110002**

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**HINDU**

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## AGRICULTURE

HINDU (BUSINESS LINE), MAR 14, 2019

### **Maharashtra saw 4,500 farmer suicides despite 2017 loan waiver**

*In the last 5 years, 14,034 ryots from the State — 8 a day — have killed themselves*

In the last five years (2014-18), Maharashtra saw 14,034 farmers — that's eight a day — end their lives. In fact, over 4,500 committed suicide after the State announced a 34,000-crore loan waiver in June 2017.

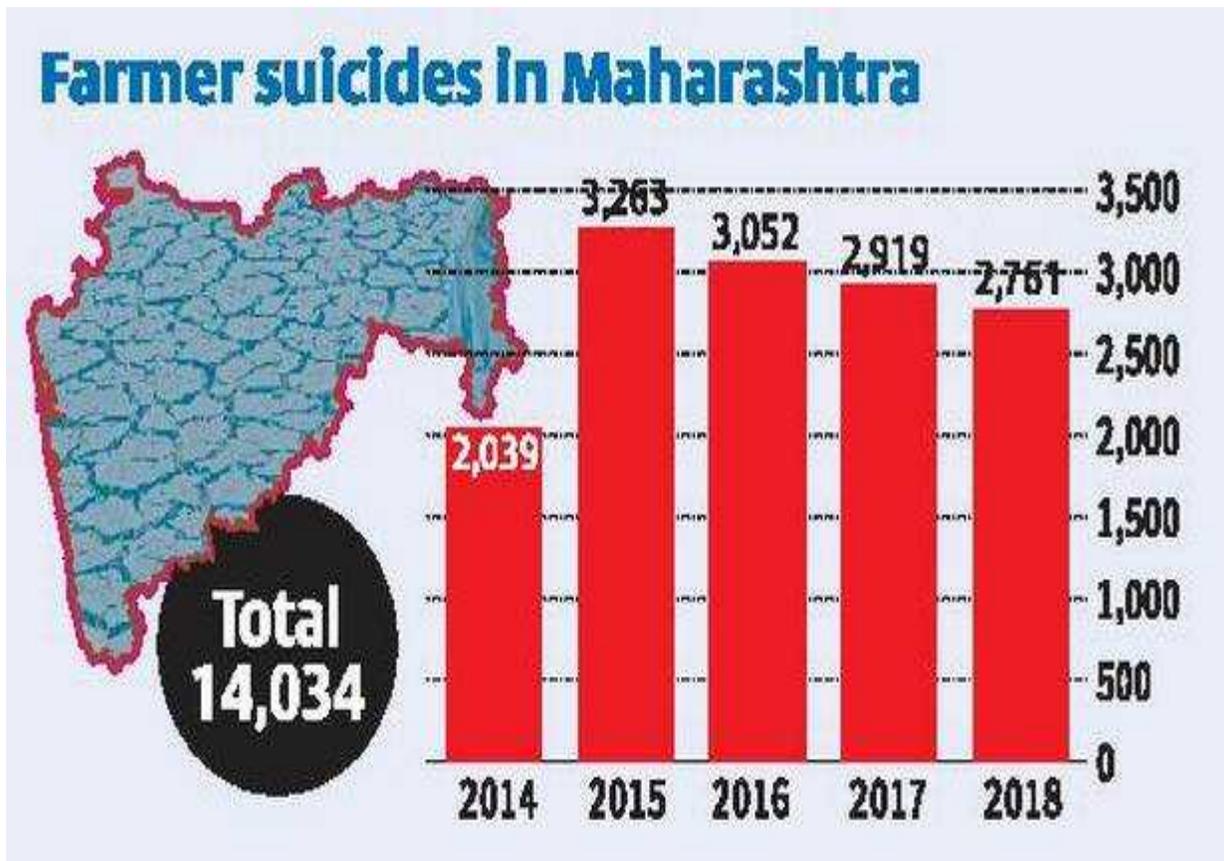
This information on farmer-suicides over the last five years has come to light from a response by the Maharashtra Government to an RTI application by Mumbai-based activist Jitendra Ghadge.

While 14,034 farmers committed suicide over the five-year period, the mega loan waiver of 34,000 crore announced by the State government in June 2017 did not help end the farmer-suicide wave.

### **No respite**

The RTI data reveals that 1,755 farmers across the State ended their lives from June 2017 to December 2017, while the number of farmers

who ended their lives in 2018 stood at 2,761. In other words, 4,516 farmers — eight a day — killed themselves despite the loan waiver.



Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had announced a 34,022-crore loan waiver to provide relief to 89 lakh farmers across the State. Speaking at the time, he had said: “It’s a historic decision. The waiver amount declared by our government is the highest.”

Of the total farmer suicides in the last five years, 32 per cent was recorded after the loan-waiver scheme was announced.

According to information from the State government provided to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), 6,268 farmer-suicide cases were registered in Maharashtra from January 2011 to December 2014. During the next four years (2015-18), the number of suicides almost doubled to 11,995.

The State government, in its letter to the NHRC in 2015, stated: “The prominent reasons noted for farmer suicides are debt, crop failure, inability to repay debt resulting in pressure from debtors, inability to procure enough money for daughter’s marriage or other religious activities, chronic severe illness, vices like alcohol addiction, gambling etc”.

## **AVIATION SECTOR**

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 15, 2019

### **Govt proposes national green aviation policy**

Printed from New Delhi, Mar 14 () The civil aviation ministry will create a simplified regulatory regime to speed up clearances for airport development and other aviation projects while taking due care of environment sustainability, according to a white paper. In a white paper on 'National Green Aviation Policy' that has been put up for public comments, the ministry said aviation regulator DGCA would work with other government agencies for making bio-jet fuels commercially viable. Besides, the watchdog would assess and understand emissions from all aviation related sources, their contribution to the local air quality and their effect on compliance with local air quality regulations, as per the paper. According to the paper, the ministry would create a "favourable regulatory regime for clearances of aviation projects such as new airports development and expansion". There would be a special provision and timelines that would be worked out in collaboration with central and state government bodies, environment ministry, pollution control boards and the DGCA to speed up the developmental activities with due care environment sustainability, it added. India is one of the fastest growing domestic aviation markets and is projected to become the the world's third largest air passenger market in 10 years. As part of the proposed green aviation policy, the DGCA would assess and

understand emissions from all aviation related sources and their contribution to the local air quality

"DGCA will work with aviation stakeholders and other government authorities with framework to adopt measures to reduce emissions in all areas -- aircraft, ground support, airport infrastructure and landside access traffic," it added. Among others, airports would adopt local air quality monitoring system and programs to monitoring the air quality around airport. The paper noted that the DGCA would work with other government agencies including petroleum and natural gas ministry as well as private agencies for ensuring availability of bio-jet fuels for aircraft use which is commercially viable. "All aviation stakeholders shall also explore the possibilities of use of bio-fuel and other alternate fuels with lower emissions for ground vehicle application," it added. Further, the paper noted that the stakeholders would work closely with government agencies, local bodies for effective waste management around the airport to ensure reduced bird hazards and safe airport operation. A centre of excellence for green aviation has also been proposed, that would focus on identifying environment friendly solutions, research, competency and skill developments and aviation programmes, among others. RAM DRR

HINDU, MAR 15, 2019

**Ethiopian Airlines crash: Six members of Indian family in Canada among 157 dead**

***The family who were living in Canada, heading for a safari vacation, were about to experience “the trip of a lifetime” in Kenya when the tragic loss happened.***

The “trip of a lifetime” to a safari park in Kenya turned into a nightmare for six members of a family from India in Canada who perished when the Nairobi-bound Ethiopian Airlines plane crashed minutes after take-off from Addis Ababa.

The Boeing 737 took-off from Bole International Airport on Sunday and lost contact six minutes later before coming down near Tulu Fara village outside the Ethiopian town of Bishoftu, killing all 149 passengers and eight crew on board, including tourists and business travellers.

The victims included Pannagesh Vaidya, 73; his wife Hansini Vaidya, 67; their daughter Kosha Vaidya, 37; her husband Prerit Dixit, 45; and their two children — Anushka and Ashka — Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown was quoted as saying by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

While the Surat-based Vaidya couple were Indian nationals, their daughter, husband and two children were Canadians of Indian-origin.

The family who were living in Canada, heading for a safari vacation, were about to experience “the trip of a lifetime” in Kenya when the tragic loss happened.

“This is an unbelievably tragic situation for this family,” Brown said in a statement.

“As more details become known, I will provide a further update on how Brampton residents can assist this family. Our thoughts and prayers are with them during this time of sorrow and reflection.”

The flags at city hall will remain at half-mast until further notice in honour of the family, Brown said in a message on Twitter.

“It’s a huge tragedy,” Manant Vaidya, son of Pannagesh, said.

“I lost my parents, I lost my sister. I don’t have anyone else now.”

Manant said his sister, who became a Canadian permanent resident in 2003, wanted to take her children to Kenya to visit her birthplace.

“They thought March break was the perfect time for them to go over there, have fun,” he said. “It was going to be a really great trip for everybody.”

“I asked my dad why he wanted to go and he told me that in his life he wants to go one more time.”

The Peel District School Board said Monday that two of our students Ashka and Anushka Dixit along with their parents and grandparents were passengers on the Ethiopian Airlines plane that was involved in a fatal crash over the weekend.

## DEFENCE

TRIBUNE, MAR 14, 2019

### **Rafale case: Will first decide preliminary objection raised by Centre, says SC**



The Supreme Court on Thursday said it will decide first on the preliminary objections raised by the Centre and then go into the facts of the Rafale fighter jet deal case.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi wrapped up the hearing on preliminary objections by the Centre that review petitioners in the Rafale jet deal case cannot rely on privileged documents obtained illegally.

It will be known later as to when the order will be pronounced on the issue.

The top court asked the petitioners seeking review of its order to focus on the preliminary objections regarding admissibility of the leaked documents.

“Only after we decide the preliminary objection raised by the Centre, we will go into the facts of the case,” said the bench, also comprising Justices S K Kaul and K M Joseph.

At the outset, Attorney General K K Venugopal, appearing for the Centre, claimed privilege over documents pertaining to the Rafale fighter jet deal with France and told the Supreme Court that no one can produce them in the court without the permission of the department concerned.

Venugopal referred to Section 123 of the Evidence Act and provisions of RTI Act to buttress his claim.

He told the top court that no one can publish documents which relate to national security as the security of the State supercedes everything.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, one of the petitioners seeking review, opposed the submission and said the Rafale deal documents, which AG

says are privileged, have been published and are already in public domain.

Former Union minister Arun Shourie, who is one of the review petitioners, submitted that he was thankful to the Centre and the Attorney General for saying in their affidavit that these are photocopies, proving the genuineness of these documents.

Bhushan further said that provisions of RTI Act say public interest outweighs other things and no privilege can be claimed except for documents which pertain to intelligence agencies.

There is no government-to-government contract in purchasing Rafale jets as there is no sovereign guarantee extended to India by France in the Rs 58,000-crore deal, Bhushan said.

He also said the Press Council of India Act provides provisions for protecting sources of journalists.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for another petitioner Vineet Dhanda, said that the government cannot claim privilege on these documents.

Yashwant Sinha, another former Union minister, is also a petitioner seeking review of the Supreme Court verdict of December 14 which held that there was no occasion to really doubt the decision making process warranting setting aside of the defence contract for purchase of 36 Rafale fighter jets from France. — PTI

STATESMAN, MAR 11, 2019

## **India's arms imports from Russia in 2014-18 down 42% from 2009-13: Report**

As a result, Russia accounted for 58 per cent of total Indian arms imports in 2014-2018, compared with 76 per cent in 2009-2013, according to the report "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2018" released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's effort to reduce country's dependence on foreign arms, India's import of arms decreased by 24 per cent between 2009-2013 and 2014-2018, according to the figures released by the report.

This decline in India's import is also partly due to delays in deliveries of arms produced under license from foreign suppliers, such as combat aircraft ordered from Russia in 2001 and submarines ordered from France in 2008.

Still, India was the world's second largest importer of major arms in 2014-18 and accounted for 9.5 per cent of the global total.

Israel, the USA and France all increased their arms exports to India in 2014-18.

Pakistan's arms imports decreased by 39 per cent between 2009-13 and 2014-18. The US has become increasingly reluctant to provide military

aid or sell arms to Pakistan: US arms exports to Pakistan fell by 81 per cent between 2009-13 and 2014-18, it said.

Pakistan has instead turned to other suppliers. For example, in 2018 it ordered 4 frigates and 30 combat helicopters from Turkey, it added.

The decrease in India's arms import is significant given that the volume of international transfers of major arms in 2014-18 was 7.8 per cent higher than in 2009-13 and 23 per cent higher than in 2004-2008.

The five largest exporters in 2014-18 were the United States, Russia, France, Germany and China. The five largest importers were Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia and Algeria.

The US was the top arms exporter in 2014-18 and 2009-13. Its exports of major arms grew by 29 per cent between the two periods and its share of total global exports rose from 30 per cent to 36 per cent. As a result, the gap between the USA and Russia – the second largest exporter – continued to widen.

In 2009-13, US exports of major arms were 12 per cent higher than those of Russia, whereas in 2014-18 they were 75 per cent higher.

Russian exports of major arms decreased by 17 per cent between the same periods.

The fall was partly due to general reductions in Indian and Venezuelan arms imports – two countries that have been among the main recipients of Russian arms exports in previous years, the SIPRI said.

“Although India remained the chief recipient of Russian arms in 2014-18, Russian arms exports to India fell by 42 per cent between 2014-18 and 2009-13. Arms exports to Venezuela, which was the fifth largest recipient of Russian arms in 2009-13, decreased by 96 per cent between the two periods,” it said.

## ECONOMIC REFORMS

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 14, 2019

### **India will continue economic reforms irrespective of who wins LS polls: CEA**



India will continue to implement economic reforms irrespective of who wins a general election beginning next month, a key government adviser said, seeking to reassure investors about policy continuity in one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

As reforms in the past few years -- from tax to inflation targeting -- start to manifest, the economy's potential growth rate will rise by 50 basis points to 7.5 percent to 8 percent, Krishnamurthy Subramanian, chief economic adviser in the finance ministry, said in an interview in New Delhi. He cited the global slowdown and trade tensions as risks to economic growth, which is seen at 7 percent in the year to March 31.

"The goods-and-services tax has given us a template for reforms absent a crisis," Subramanian said on March 11, referring to the nationwide tax introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2017. "Global money cannot find at this point a better country than India."

After sweeping to power in 2014 with the biggest mandate in three decades, Modi has pushed through long-pending reforms, such as a bankruptcy law and an inflation targeting framework for the central bank.

Investors are starting to worry about the policy outlook and economic imbalances if Modi fails to return to power. Foreign direct investment into Asia's third-largest economy fell 7 percent in the nine months to December from a year earlier.

## **Doing Business**

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party lost control of three key states to the main opposition Congress party in December, adding to the uncertainty about a weaker government after the elections. Distress in India's farm sector and rising unemployment have dented his popularity ahead of elections to be held from April to May.

While reforms under Modi helped India climb 23 spots to 77 in the World Bank's ease of doing business rankings, he's failed to win support from opposition lawmakers to overhaul laws governing land acquisition and labor.

"Land and labor will be important for any government," said Subramanian, an associate professor, who is currently on leave from a top Indian management school. "That will set the stage for even higher growth."

## ELECTION

HINDU, MAR 15, 2019

### **SC notice to EC on Opposition parties' plea for 50% EVM-VVPAT random verification**

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Election Commission of India to respond to a joint petition filed by 23 Opposition demanding the random verification of at least 50 per cent EVMs using VVPAT in every Assembly segment or constituency.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi issued notice to the Commission saying it should depute a suitable officer to assist the court on the next day of hearing on March 25.

In a show of pre-poll strength, the Opposition parties have further sought to quash an Election Commission of India guideline restricting Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) should be conducted “only for VVPAT paper slips of one randomly selected polling station of an Assembly constituency in case of election to State Legislative Assembly and each Assembly segment in case of election to the House of the People.”

The petition, led by presidents and leaders of 23 different national and regional political parties — six out of the seven national parties and 17 regional parties — said they electorally represent about 70-75% of the people of India.

HINDU, MAR 15, 2019

## **Govt. defends electoral bonds scheme in SC**

### *‘Ensures transparency, checks misuse’*

Electoral bonds have been introduced to promote transparency in funding and donation received by political parties, the government told the Supreme Court on Thursday.

“They [bonds] can be encashed by an eligible political party only through their accounts with authorised banks. The bonds do not have the name of the donor or the receiving political party and only carry unique hidden alphanumeric serial numbers as an in-built security feature,” a 21-page affidavit said. The government described the scheme, introduced on January 2 last year, as an “electoral reform” in a country moving towards a “cashless-digital economy.”

### **Yechury’s plea**

The government was responding to a petition filed by the CPI(M) and party secretary general Sitaram Yechury to strike down the ‘Electoral Bond Scheme 2018’ and amendments in the Finance Act, 2017, which allow for “unlimited donations from individuals and foreign companies to political parties without any record of the sources of funding.”

Denying the charge, the government said “the scheme envisages building a transparent system of acquiring bonds with validated KYC and an audit trail.” It said a limited window and a very short maturity

period would make misuse improbable. “The electoral bonds will prompt donors to take the banking route to donate, with their identity captured by the issuing authority. This will ensure transparency and accountability and is a big step towards electoral reform,” it said.

The electoral bond, a bearer instrument, can be bought for any value and has a life of only 15 days. Bonds will be available for purchase only for 10 days in designated months.

## ENERGY RESOURCES

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 15, 2019

### **India to buy 12% less Iran oil in April versus March: Report**

NEW DELHI: Indian state refiners will lift 8 million barrels of Iranian oil in April, a decline of about 12 per cent from the previous month, industry sources said, as the nation is in talks with the United States to renew the waiver from US sanctions against Tehran. The United States introduced sanctions aimed at crippling Iran's oil revenue-dependent economy in November but gave a six-month waiver to eight nations, including India, which allowed them to import some Iranian oil. India has been allowed by Washington to continue to buy about 300,000 bpd oil or 9 million barrels in a month till early May. New Delhi, Tehran's biggest oil client after China, has decided to lift lower volumes in April as a 'precautionary measure ahead of renewal of waiver,' said one of the sources familiar with the matter, without elaborating further. The United States aims to cut Iran's crude exports by about 20 per cent to below 1 million bpd from May by requiring importing countries to reduce purchases to avoid US sanctions, two sources familiar with the matter said.

The United States will likely renew waivers to sanctions for most countries buying Iranian crude, including the biggest buyers China and India, in exchange for pledges to cut combined imports to below 1

million bpd. That would be around 250,000 bpd below Iran's current exports of 1.25 million bpd. It is not yet clear if reduced volumes of 8 million barrels a month is the new condition imposed by Washington for granting a second waiver to New Delhi from sanctions against Tehran. For March, Indian Oil Corp had placed an order for 5 million barrels, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd for 2 million, and Hindustan Petroleum Corp and Bharat Petroleum Corp for 1 million each. In April, IOC would lift 4 million barrels, while there is no change in volumes to be loaded by other companies, the sources said. Oil ministry and IOC, BPCL, and HPCL did not respond to Reuters email seeking comment, while MRPL declined comment.

# ENVIRONMENT

PIONEER, MAR 14, 2019



*Developing economies are logging the highest consumption in spite of the fact that these countries are already suffering from poor monitoring and regulations. India must revisit policies to avoid poisoning of our natural resources*

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), that got under way on March 11 in Nairobi, put the spotlight on the chemical production industry of the world and how it is set to severely undermine global environmental conditions. On the first day, the UNEA delivered a wake-up call to the world that the globally agreed target of minimising adverse impacts of chemicals and waste by 2020 is all set to be missed thanks to the rapid growth of the sector making it the world's second largest manufacturing one. This does not bear good news for countries across the world and more so for fast-growing economies like India.

According to the Global Chemicals Outlook report, chemical production across the world will double by 2030. This clearly means that the countries must find ways in which this spiralling volume is controlled before the very same chemicals seep into our precious ecology and start impacting our food cycle and endanger our flora and fauna. Currently, the world has the capacity to produce 2.3 billion tonne chemicals and according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates, already 1.6 million lives have been lost in 2016 due to diseases related to chemicals. With dangerous consequences such as these, it is high time that growing economies, particularly India, focus on replacing the chemicals with more eco-friendly alternatives.

The efforts in the direction of reining in the chemicals in our lives was initiated strongly in 2015 when the world collectively adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — seventeen of these goals relate to chemicals and waste management. In fact, SDG Target 12.4 specifically mandates that “by 2020, achieve environmentally-sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in

accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimise their adverse impacts on human health and the environment.” But given our intrinsic dependence on these chemicals and the almost lax regulations governing their production, usage and disposal, one cannot help but observe that the impact on our environment is going to be grave indeed.

To understand the very gravity of the issue, one must refer to the assessment by UNEP and the International Council of Chemical Associations in 2018, which showed that there were 40,000-60,000 chemicals being commercially used globally. And 6,000 of them account for 99 per cent of the total volume. Despite a global agreement reached at high-level UN conferences and significant action already taken, environmental scientists continue to express concern over the lack of progress towards the sound management of chemicals and waste. The laxity in the matter is evident by the abundant growth in the sector uninhibited by a meaningful control mechanism and framework.

To make matters worse as of 2018, more than 120 countries did not implement the globally harmonised system of classification and labelling of chemicals.

Against this background, the stark threats of chemical production and their use are too real and serious to be ignored. Moreover, statistics show that developing economies are logging the highest consumption of these chemicals in spite of the fact that these countries are already suffering from poor monitoring and regulations. How this can be allowed is too difficult to fathom.

The fact that chemical production and consumption are shifting to emerging economies, in particular China, is alarming to say the least. The Asia-Pacific region is projected to account for more than two-thirds of global sales by 2030. Cross-border e-commerce pertaining to the chemical industry is growing at 25 per cent annually. This is expected to fuel the growth which will be highest in Asia, with China estimated to account for almost 50 per cent of global chemical sales by 2030. These developments are taking place in total disregard for the international efforts to control the chemical industry.

India in particular has unique environmental conditions, which are already very much burdened by the expanding population and high air pollution levels. Given this, India cannot afford a chemical pollution fiasco and must set up stringent regulations that can control prevalence. The government must revisit the laws governing the production and disposal of chemicals in India. Focus must also be laid on how the by products of chemical production are handled without compromising the environment. India must also check the content of heavy metals in the various categories of chemicals as these eventually find their way into nature, especially ground water tables, and directly impact human health.

The chemical industry needs to turn over a new leaf and thanks to advancements in science and technology, developed countries across the world are now leaving harmful substances out of manufacturing. This is encouraging responsible production and accountable consumption. For this to take place in India the government must educate people about the ill effects of chemicals and highlight the role of naturefriendly

alternatives. This alone can have a huge impact on saving the environment from a disastrous onslaught.

*(The author is an environmental journalist)*

## HEALTH SERVICES

HINDU, MAR 16, 2019

### **Pulse Polio programme for 2019 launched**

*More than 17 crore children below five years across the country will be given polio drops*

President Ram Nath Kovind launched the Pulse Polio programme for 2019 on March 9 by administering polio drops to children below five years at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Kovind administered the polio drops on the eve of National Immunisation Day, which is observed on March 10, a statement issued by the Health Ministry said. More than 17 crore children below five years across the country will be given polio drops as part of the central government's drive to sustain polio eradication from the country, it said.

Speaking at the function, Union Minister for Health J.P. Nadda said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Universal Immunisation Programme is focusing to protect children from more diseases than ever before and has introduced several new vaccines like pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, rotavirus vaccine and measles-rubella vaccine in the recent past.

“To provide additional protection to our children, the government has also introduced the injectable inactivated polio vaccine into its routine

immunisation programme,” Nadda said. He said the government is making all efforts to protect children from diseases and emphasised that all vaccines under the programme must reach every child of the country.

“Along with the Universal Immunisation Programme of the country, we have also launched Mission Indradhanush to accelerate our goal to achieve more than 90% full immunisation coverage.” More than 3.39 crore children and 87 lakh pregnant women have been vaccinated through Mission Indradhanush drive, Nadda elaborated.

Nadda informed that strengthening of immunisation programme has contributed significantly to the decline of Infant Mortality Rate from 39 in 2014 to 32 per 1,000 live births in 2017.



## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 15, 2019

### **India needs bargaining options to deal with China**

*The Wuhan summit seems to have badly failed. Not just Pakistan-backed terrorism, China has not yielded ground on anything else*



China has once again decided to put a technical hold on the listing of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist under United Nations Resolution 1267. Azhar Masood, as is well known, is the chief of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), the group responsible for a number of terrorist

attacks against India, including the one in Pulwama on February 14. The proposal to list Azhar was initiated by France and backed by the US and the UK among other members of the Security Council. What are the lessons for India from this incident?

First, one should be clear that the listing process is a symbolic move. The JeM is already a proscribed organisation and that hasn't stopped it from launching dastardly terrorist attacks on Indian soil. The Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief, Hafiz Saeed, too, features in the United Nations sanctions list. However, he continues to enjoy all kinds of freedom in Pakistan and has even floated a political party that contested the 2018 national elections. The listing, therefore, itself wouldn't have achieved a great deal.

Second, China responds to incentives. At the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) summit in February 2018, it agreed to grey listing of Pakistan in return of being offered a vice-presidency of the inter-governmental body. India obviously did not have an equivalent offer to make in exchange for Azhar's listing. New Delhi needs to find a range of bargaining options with China in the future. The options could be economic (access to Indian markets, tenders, etc.) as well as political (affecting Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang).

Third, India needs to realise the limits of its relationship with China. The informal summit in Wuhan in April 2018 was aimed at the two leaders — Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping — understanding each other's concerns. Either our concerns about Pakistan-backed terrorism weren't clearly communicated to him or Mr Xi simply chose to ignore them. In either case, the Wuhan exercise

seems to have failed. Not just Pakistan-backed terrorism, China has not yielded ground on anything else (from trade imbalance to India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group). At a time when China was facing economic pressure from the US in the form of a tariffs war, North Korea was increasingly moving out of Beijing's shadow and Australia was making noises about China's interference in its domestic politics, the Wuhan summit only helped remove the pressure on Beijing from one front altogether. India needs to add a dose of reality to its China relationship.

## **POLITICS AND GOVT.- JAMMU & KASHMIR**

HINDU, MAR 16, 2019



### **Former IAS officer Shah Faesal to launch political party**

*The 2010 batch UPSC topper resigned from the IAS in January this year to protest unabated killings in Kashmir and marginalisation of Indian Muslims.*

Former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Shah Faesal has decided to float a new political party, the J&K Peoples' Movement (JKPM), that is likely to field candidates in the Lok Sabha polls, posing a challenge to the State's regional parties.

The launch of the party on Sunday “will be a new beginning”, Mr. Faesal told The Hindu.

Mr. Faesal, a topper in the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination in 2010, had turned down an offer for a ticket from the National Conference (NC) to contest the Lok Sabha elections from north Kashmir’s Baramulla, a person close to the former civil servant said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had also offered to back him for a seat either from Srinagar or south Kashmir’s Anantnag.

Buoyed by support among the State’s youth, especially on social media platforms, Mr. Faesal had succeeded in roping in many popular faces in the Valley. Former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Students’ Union vice president Shehla Rashid Shora is likely to join the party on Sunday at the football ground located in Srinagar’s Rajbagh area.

Mr. Faesal was also in touch with a retired judge and a former legislator, besides many known civil society activists from the Valley, as part of his efforts to strengthen his fledgling party, the person said.

The new party is likely to field candidates for some of the State’s Lok Sabha seats, a major test of Mr. Faesal’s popularity ahead of the Assembly polls. The party was, however, yet to take a final decision on the seats it wants to contest in the Lok Sabha elections, starting April 11.

Leaders of both the NC and the PDP, speaking on condition of anonymity, admitted that Mr. Faesal’s party “will eat into our constituencies in the polls”, especially in seats where a separatists-backed boycott plays an important role.

Citing NC vice president Omar Abdullah, a party leader, who did not wish to be identified, said the NC was very clear that “if Mr. Faesal fields candidates our party will work hard to defeat him”.

## **RESERVATION**

PIONEER, MAR 9, 2019

### **Proposal for quota for SC-ST teachers OK'd**

The Centre on Thursday approved a proposal for promulgation of The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Ordinance, 2019 to provide for the reservation of faculty in appointments by direct recruitment of persons belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBL) in central educational institutions

It will also restore the earlier 200-point roster-based reservation system in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The new system will consider the university or college as one unit, instead of treating department or subject as one unit.

HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar said the decision will also now pave the way for filling up of more than 5,000 vacancies by direct recruitment in teachers' cadre.

The Ordinance will ensure that constitutional provisions of reservation for SC, ST and SEBL in the faculty recruitment will be protected and current impasse in recruitment would be resolved.

HINDU, MAR 12, 2019

## **‘10% quota a step towards casteless society’**

*It is meant to help a large section that is below the poverty line, Centre tells SC*

The 10% quota law is a step towards a classless and casteless society, the Union government has indicated in the Supreme Court.

The Centre referred to the court’s past decisions that called for the “attainment of economic equality as the final and only solution to the besetting problems” of the country. The Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, 2019, was meant “to benefit the economically weaker sections of society who were not covered by the existing schemes of reservation...”

It said the law was meant to benefit a “large section of the population of 135 crore people,” who are mostly lower middle class and below the poverty line. The government quoted the 2010 report of the Commission for Economically Backward Classes, chaired by Major General S.R. Sinho (retired), which said 18.2% of the general category came under the below poverty line (BPL).

In fact, the 13-page affidavit quoted from a 1985 Constitution Bench judgment in K.C. Vasanth Kumar *VS* Karnataka, which quotes Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi to drive home the point that the economy of a family, and not its caste, should be the determining factor of social and educational backwardness.

The government argued that the new law was inspired by “quantifiable data” collected by “several committees” that underscored the need for the economically weaker sections to enjoy the benefits of reservation in order to access higher education and employment. It said unaided educational institutions should also comply with the state’s wish to provide greater numbers access to higher education.

The government was responding to petitions that the Amendment to create 10% reservation for the poor in the unreserved category violated the basic structure of the Constitution and breached the 50% ceiling.

It argued that a “mere amendment” to an Article would not violate the basic structure of the Constitution. “Article 15(6) and Article 16(6) are enabling provisions for advancement of the economically weaker sections and are, in fact, in conformity with the principle of reservation and affirmative action,” it reasoned. Furthermore, the 50% ceiling applied to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. The new provision dealt with the economically weaker sections. “The limit of 50% is only applicable to reservation under Articles 15(4), 15(5) and 16(4) and does not apply to Article 15(6).”

## ROADS

STATESMAN, MAR 15, 2019

### **Amid anger over Mumbai bridge collapse that killed 6, CM Fadnavis sets evening deadline**

*Six people have been reported dead and 32 injured in the past 12 hours since a foot overbridge collapsed on Thursday evening near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CSMT) Railway Station.*



Amid anger over the Mumbai bridge collapse that killed 6 people on Thursday evening despite audit, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that he has asked for “primary responsibility to be fixed by Friday evening”.

Six people have been reported dead and 32 injured in the past 12 hours since a foot overbridge collapsed on Thursday evening near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CSMT) Railway Station.

Fadnavis on Friday visited the spot where the foot overbridge near the CSMT railway station collapsed. The chief minister also met the injured in the hospital.

Hours a portion of an overhead pedestrian bridge outside the CSMT railway station came crashing down, Fadnavis clarified that the authorities had already conducted a structural audit of the structure and found nothing wrong with it.

“A structural audit of the bridge had earlier been done, and it was found to be fit. If such an incident happened even after that, it raises a question on the audit. An inquiry will be carried out. Strictest action will be taken,” he added.

Police registered cases against Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Indian Railway officials charging them with culpable homicide.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has announced Rs 5 lakh ex gratia each to the kin of deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured. He has also ordered a high level probe into the Thursday’s incident.

Railways, senior police officials, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and BMC teams were overseeing operations on Friday.

This was the third footbridge collapse in the city in the last 18 months — occurred around 7.35 p.m. as the bridge was reportedly overloaded with commuters hurrying to their homes, the BMC Disaster Control said.

Connecting the CSMT's suburban platform No. 1 with the B.T. Lane near The Times of India Building and the Anjuman-e-Islam School, it was used by thousands of daily commuters rushing to catch the local trains on Central Railway and the Harbour Line.

# TERRORISM

TELEGRAPH, MAR 15, 2019

## **Bangladesh cricketers avoid Christchurch mosque shooting**

*The team were reportedly on their bus, approaching the Masjid Al Noor mosque when the shooting started*



Bangladesh cricket team's tour of New Zealand was Friday called off in the wake of an attack on a mosque which killed several people.

Bangladesh team, which was about to enter the mosque to offer prayers, were left unscathed but the prevailing situation led to the authorities calling off the third and final Test match at the Hagley Oval starting Saturday.

According to a report in Cricinfo: "The team was en route to the mosque for Friday prayers at the time of the attack but escaped to the nearby Hagley Oval. They are currently in lockdown at their team hotel."

Senior opener Tamim Iqbal has tweeted: "Entire team got saved from active shooters!!! Frightening experience and please keep us in your prayers."

Multiple people were killed at the two mosques, as New Zealand police warned people to stay indoors as they tried to determine if more than one gunman was involved.

One person was taken into custody but it was unclear if there were other people involved, Police Commissioner Mike Bush said. He said anybody who was thinking of going to a mosque anywhere in New Zealand on Friday should stay put.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described it as "one of New Zealand's darkest days" and said the events in the city of Christchurch represented "an extraordinary and unprecedented act of violence."

Arden issued a strong statement condemning the attack.

"There is no place in New Zealand for such acts of extreme and unprecedented violence, which it is clear this act was. This is significant and I can tell you now this is and will be one of New Zealand's darkest

days. I would describe it as an unprecedented act of violence, an act that has absolutely no place in New Zealand. This is not who we are."

"Certainly it has occurred at a place where people should have been expressing their religious freedom, where they should have been in a safe environment, and they have not been today. There is no place in New Zealand for such extreme acts of unprecedented violence.

"The people who were the subject of this attack today, New Zealand is their home, they should be safe here. The person who has perpetuated this violent act against them, they have no place in New Zealand society," the PM stated.

The players were initially barred from leaving the bus but, after several minutes, disembarked and made their way through to the Hagley Park ground. After that they went back to their hotel. The manager Khaled Mashud is in contact with both the NZC and BCB.

## WOMEN

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 15, 2019

### **India scores poor on women's representation as lawmakers, says analysis**

Nearly a century has passed since the first time an Indian woman voted to elect her representative in British India: it was in Madras in 1920. With universal adult suffrage in 1952 and granting 33 per cent reservation to women in rural local bodies in 1993, has come a long way over the last century.

However today, India lags its neighbours and peers when it comes to women's representation in national legislatures, an analysis of global data shows. Proportion of elected women representatives in the Indian Lok Sabha touched its peak at nearly 12 per cent in 2014.

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