

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

EC censures former judge-turned-BJP candidate, bars campaign for 24 hours



The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday censured former Calcutta High Court judge and BJP candidate from Tamluk in West Bengal Abhijit Gangopadhyay for his remarks against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. In its order, the poll body also asked BJP president J.P. Nadda to issue an advisory on behalf of the party to all candidates and campaigners to make sure that such a lapse does not recur during the campaign.

The EC had issued a show-cause notice to Mr. Gangopadhyay based on a complaint by the Trinamool Congress for his remarks against Ms. Banerjee while addressing a public meeting in Haldia on May 15. In its notice, the EC had said Mr. Gangopadhyay's comment was found to be "beyond dignity in every sense of the term" and "in bad taste", and prima facie violative of the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and its advisory to political parties.

Model Code of Conduct

The MCC is a consensus document. The political parties have themselves agreed to keep their conduct during elections in check and to work within the Code.

It helps the EC in keeping with the mandate it has been given under Article 324 of the Constitution, which gives it the power to supervise and conduct free and fair elections to the Parliament and State Legislatures.

The MCC is operational from the date on which the election schedule is announced until the date of the result announcement.

The government cannot announce any financial grants, promise construction of roads or other facilities, and make any ad hoc appointments in government or public undertaking during the time the Code is in force.

INTERNAL SECURITY

Bengaluru blast: NIA searches homes of two doctors in T.N.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday searched the residences of two doctors in Coimbatore, as part of their ongoing probe into the blast at The Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru on March 1.

Sources privy to the development said the two doctors were among the 13 persons who were convicted by an NIA special court in 2016 for plotting to kill politicians, police officers and journalists in 2012.

NIA officials from Bengaluru, who carried out the searches at the residences of the duo at Periya Subbanna Gounder Street and Narayana Guru Road at Saibaba Colony, seized mobile phones and SIM cards from them. The searches began early in the morning and ended at 8 a.m.

National Investigation Agency

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) was constituted in 2009 under the provisions of the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 (NIA Act). It is the central counter-terrorism law enforcement agency in the country.

The NIA was established in the backdrop of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, popularly known as the 26/11 incident. This national horror led to the realisation of the need for a separate federal agency to deal with terror-related crimes in the country. The NIA is headed by a Director-General. He is appointed by the central government. His powers are similar to the powers exercisable by a Director-General of Police in respect of the police force in a state.

The NIA works under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The state government extends all assistance and co-operation to the NIA for investigation of the offences specified under the NIA Act.

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INTERNAL SECURITY

Theatre Commands will lay foundation for catapulting armed forces into next orbit of military preparedness: CDS

Integrated Theatre Commands will lead to reforms such as single- to multi-domain operations and fusing space and cyberspace into traditional domains, says General Anil Chauhan

Stating that jointness and integration are prerequisites to the creation of functional Integrated Theatre Commands (ITC), the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Anil Chauhan, said on Tuesday that theatre commands would lay the foundation for catapulting the armed forces into the next orbit of military preparedness and war fighting.

“The creation of such commands will separate the ‘operational’ functions from the Raise-Train Sustain (RTS) and other administrative functions, and will allow greater focus of the operational commander to matters of security,” Gen. Chauhan said at the 22nd Major General Samir Sinha memorial lecture organised at the United Service Institution of India.

What are Integrated Theatre Commands (ITC) ?

Combining the resources of all three services (the Army, Navy, and Air Force) under a single commander to secure a particular geographic area is known as integrated theatre commands.

There are theatre commands in several countries, including China and the United States. The reports of the military reforms commission headed by Lt. General (ret.) DB Shekatkar made the concept of Theatre Command a sht has long been suggested that India should establish an integrated tri-services command; this recommendation came after the Kargil conflict.

After Gen. Rawat was named Chief of Defence Staff in January 2020, he met with the vice chiefs of the armed forces to brainstorm potential designs for these commands.

The Air Defence Command, the first of three commands, may be established by the end of 2020, according to a prediction made by Gen. Rawat in early 2020. However, several issues, notably the Covid-19 epidemic, have caused the procedure to be delayed.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

SC stays 90-acre project in ‘fragile’ Kumaon Himalayas



The Supreme Court has served a blow to “single window” clearances, meant to hasten infrastructural development, in the ecologically fragile and seismic-prone lower Himalayan ranges by temporarily staying the construction of a 90-acre hotel and township project in the Kumaon hills of Uttarakhand.

A Bench of Justices A.S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan has passed the interim order at a time when Uttarakhand is gasping from the after-effects of killer forest blazes.

The stay was based on a special leave petition filed by a landowner, Birendra Singh, represented by senior advocate P.B. Suresh and advocates Vipin Nair and Karthik Jayashankar, raising a substantial question of law whether “single window” clearances could replace prior environmental clearances and the system of submission of sanctioned building plans, which were mandatory before commencement of huge constructions such as hotel projects in ecologically fragile Uttarakhand.

The petitioner referred to an EIA notification of September 14, 2006, which clearly stated that “prior environmental clearance is required before any construction work starts as opposed to an ex-post facto approval”. “Ex- post facto approval tantamount to a fait accompli and has to be strongly deprecated as it causes ecological disasters,” the petitioner argued.

Kumaon Himalayas

It lies between the Sutlej and the Kali river and is 320 km long. Its western part is called the Garhwal Himalaya and the eastern part is called Kumaon Himalaya. Important Peaks: Nanda Devi, Kamet, Trishul, Badrinath, Kedarnath and Gangotri. The sources of Ganga and Yamuna rivers originate here.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a structured method used to analyze and understand the potential environmental effects that could occur from upcoming projects or activities. It helps in evaluating and predicting how these projects might impact the natural surroundings before they are put into action.

The concept of EIA emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to growing concerns about the environmental impacts of large-scale development projects. On 27 January 1994, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India issued the first EIA notification. The devastating effects of projects such as the construction of dams, highways, and industrial facilities on ecosystems and communities prompted the need for a systematic approach to assess and mitigate these impacts.

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

SC dismisses petitions to review Article 370 judgment

A Bench of five judges headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud has dismissed multiple petitions seeking a review of a Supreme Court judgment upholding the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. "Having perused the review petitions, there is no error apparent on the face of the record. No case for review under Order XLVII Rule 1 of the Supreme Court Rules 2013. The review petitions are, therefore, dismissed," the Review Bench passed a short order recently. The Review Bench, besides the CJI, included Justices Sanjiv Khanna, B.R. Gavai, Surya Kant, and A.S. Bopanna.

Article 370

Article 370 in the Indian constitution gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, a region disputed by India, Pakistan and China.

It was drafted by N Gopalaswami Ayyangar, a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, and was added to the constitution as a 'temporary provision' in 1949.

It allowed the state to have its own constitution, flag and autonomy over most matters except defence, foreign affairs and communications.

It was based on the terms of the Instrument of Accession, which was signed by the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, in 1947 to join India after an invasion by Pakistan.

11th December 2023, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India delivered a historic judgment on the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A. Through its judgment, the Court has upheld the sovereignty and integrity of India, something that every Indian cherishes. The Supreme Court observed that the decision taken on 5th August 2019 to abrogate Article 370 which ended the special status of the erstwhile state of J&K, was done to enhance constitutional integration and not disintegration. The Court has also recognised the fact that Article 370 was not permanent in nature.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Israel tries to contain the fallout after some allies support ICC warrant plea



Israel sought on Tuesday to contain the fallout from a request by the chief prosecutor of the world's top war crimes court for arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders, a move supported by three European countries, including key ally France.

Belgium, Slovenia and France each said on Monday that they backed the decision by International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Karim Khan, who accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and three Hamas leaders of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel.



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ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

FAME-II 'violations' could put electronic two wheeler firms in the blacklist



Three electric two-wheeler companies — Hero Electric, Okinawa and Benling India — can be de-registered or blacklisted from future government schemes if they do not pay back the money they owe to the government under the Faster Adaption of Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME)-II scheme, sources have said.

The companies earned ₹300 crore in violation of FAME-II scheme norms. The government has demanded this amount be paid back as per norms.

In April last year, the MHI had fined Hero Electric ₹133.8 crore, Okinawa Autotech ₹116.85 crore, and Benling India ₹48.42 crore for violating the FAME-II guidelines.

FAME -II scheme

Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase II (FAME India Phase II) is a scheme for promotion of electric mobility in the country.

It has an outlay of Rs. 10,000 Crore for a period of 3 years commencing from 1st April, 2019. The FAME India Phase II has been extended for a period of two years after 31st March, 2022.

Implementing Agency: Department of Heavy Industry, Ministry of Heavy Industry and Public Enterprises.

The main objective of the scheme is to encourage faster adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles by offering an upfront incentive on the purchase of electric vehicles and also by establishing a necessary charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.

The scheme will help address the issue of environmental pollution and fuel security.

This scheme is the expanded version of the scheme titled 'FAME India I, which was launched on 1st April, 2015, with a total outlay of Rs. 895 crores.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

Durable alignment of inflation with target only in H2 FY25: RBI officials



A modest easing of headline inflation in the reading for April confirms the expectation that an uneven and lagged pace of alignment with the target is underway but a durable alignment with the target-ed 4% inflation could re-commence and sustain only in the second half of the financial year, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officials led by Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra wrote in the RBI Bulletin.

The prices of vegetables, cereals, pulses, meat and fish in the food category may keep the headline [inflation] elevated and closer to 5% in the near term, in line with projections set out in the April MPC resolution in spite of deflation in fuel prices and further softening of core inflation to a new historic low," the officials wrote.

Monetary Policy Committee

The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (RBI Act) has been amended by the Finance Act, 2016 to provide for a statutory and institutionalized framework for a MPC.

Under Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act, 1934, the central government is empowered to constitute a six-member MPC.

Function: The MPC is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy rate (repo rate) required to contain inflation within the specified target level.

Composition:

MPC will have six members - the RBI Governor (Chairperson), the RBI Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy, one official nominated by the RBI Board, and the remaining three members would represent the Government of India.

The external members hold office for a period of four years.

The quorum for a meeting shall be four Members, at least one of whom shall be the Governor and, in his absence, the Deputy Governor, who is the Member of the MPC.

The MPC takes decisions based on a majority vote. In case of a tie, the RBI governor will have the second or casting vote. The decision of the MPC would be binding on the RBI.

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