

● POLITY

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POLITY

GOVT. WILL WORK FOR CONSENSUS IN PARLIAMENT: MODI

CONTEXT: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his opening address for the 18th Lok Sabha, emphasized striving for consensus and criticized the Opposition's past conduct, while Congress leaders responded with sharp rebukes.

PRIME MINISTER MODI'S ADDRESS ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE 18TH LOK SABHA

Striving for Consensus

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized his government's commitment to driving consensus both inside and outside the Parliament.
- He highlighted the need for a "good and responsible" Opposition that focuses on substance rather than slogans, avoiding "drama and disruption".

Historical Reference to the Emergency

- Modi mentioned the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi's Congress government, stating the government's effort to prevent such days from recurring.
- Opposition MPs gathered at Mahatma Gandhi's statue, now at 'Prerna Sthal', holding copies of the Constitution and vowing to protect it.

Mandate and Responsibilities

- Modi interpreted the 2024 Lok Sabha election results as an endorsement of his government's intentions and policies.
- He assured that his government would work three times harder in its third term, delivering three times more.

Critique of the Opposition

- Modi expressed disappointment with the Opposition's past conduct, urging it to play a constructive role and maintain democratic decorum.
- He described his alliance's victory as historic, noting it was the first time in 60 years that a government had assumed office for a third consecutive term.

RESPONSE OF THE OPPOSITION

Kharge's Rebuke

- Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge criticized Modi for his comments on the Emergency, accusing him of arrogance despite a "moral and political defeat".
- Kharge accused Modi of ignoring the last 10 years of what he called an "Undeclared Emergency" under Modi's rule, which he claimed was ended by the people.

Call for Accountability

- Kharge expected Modi to address significant issues, such as the NEET exam question paper leak and other recruitment examination irregularities, but claimed the PM avoided responsibility.
- He also criticized Modi for remaining silent on the recent train accident in West Bengal and the alleged mismanagement of the Railways.

Jairam Ramesh's Criticism

- Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh claimed that Modi did not understand the true meaning of the people's verdict, pointing out the PM's narrow and dubious win in Varanasi.

CONCLUSION: The opening of the 18th Lok Sabha session showcased a stark contrast between Prime Minister Modi's call for consensus and the Opposition's demand for accountability, setting the stage for intense parliamentary debates.

POLITY

KERALA HOUSE PASSES RESOLUTION TO RENAME THE STATE 'KERALAM'

CONTEXT: Kerala seeks to change its official name to "Keralam" to match the Malayalam pronunciation.

Kerala Seeks Name Change

- **Resolution Passed:** The Kerala Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on Monday.
- **Aim:** To change the state's name from "Kerala" to "Keralam".
- **Reasoning:** Align the official name with the Malayalam pronunciation ("Keralam" is the name in Malayalam).
- **Process:**
 - Amending the First Schedule of the Constitution (Article 3).
 - This is the second attempt after a previous resolution (2023) was returned by the Central government due to procedural issues.
- **Original Request:** Amending the names across all languages in the Eighth Schedule (to "Keralam").
- **Revised Focus:** Amending only the First Schedule based on advice from the Union Home Ministry.

CONCLUSION: The Kerala Assembly's renewed push to rename the state "Keralam" reflects a desire for official recognition that aligns with the Malayalam language. While the Central government's approval is still needed, this unanimous resolution signifies strong local support for the change.

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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

KUKI-ZO GROUPS TAKE OUT RALLIES IN MANIPUR SEEKING UNION TERRITORY

CONTEXT: The Kuki-Zo tribal groups in Manipur held rallies demanding a separate Union Territory to resolve ongoing ethnic conflicts, while counter-protests and political discussions highlighted the need for decisive leadership and resolution efforts.

MANIPUR'S ETHNIC STRIFE: CALLS FOR UNION TERRITORY AND DECISIVE GOVERNMENT ACTION

Rallies Across Hill Districts

- The Kuki-Zo tribal bodies organized rallies across Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Chandel, Pherzawl-Jiribam, and Tengnoupal districts.
- The rallies demanded that the Centre carve out a Union Territory for the Kuki-Zo community to resolve the ongoing ethnic conflict.

Demand for Union Territory

- Protesters reiterated that a Union Territory with a legislature, as provided under Article 239A of the Constitution, was the solution to the crisis.
- Speakers at the rallies called for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Manipur and show his intent to resolve the crisis.

Memorandum to Amit Shah

- The Kuki-Zo bodies submitted a memorandum to Union Home Minister Amit Shah through district administrations, seeking expedited action on their demand.

Counter-Protests in Imphal

- Imphal's women vendors, known as 'Imas' or 'mothers', held demonstrations in the capital city, urging the Centre to stop supporting Kuki militants.
- They held posters with slogans such as "No separate administration".

Ongoing Ethnic Conflict

- The conflict between the Meitei community and the Kuki-Zo people has been ongoing since May 3, 2023, resulting in over 220 deaths and tens of thousands displaced.
- The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum in Churachandpur reported that thousands of people attended the march.

STATEMENTS FROM KUKI-ZO LEADERS

- Janghoulun Haokip of the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) described the rally in Kangpokpi as massive, reflecting the people's sentiments for a swift solution.
- BJP MLA Paolienlal Haokip urged Prime Minister Modi to visit Lamka (Churachandpur) for a solution, noting that Kuki-Zo MLAs had sought a meeting with him a year ago but were not granted audience.

PRAYER SERVICES AND PROTESTS

- Kuki-Zo tribal bodies held rallies and prayer services in Chandel and Tengnoupal.
- The Indigenous Tribes Advocacy Council of Jiribam and Pherzawl districts also held protests pushing for a separate administration.

IMPHAL VALLEY DEMONSTRATIONS

- Women vendors demonstrated at Khwairamband Keithel, objecting to the Union government's handling of the conflict.
- They accused the Union government of siding with Kuki militants.

POLITICAL REACTIONS

- Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and MP Rahul Gandhi, along with other senior leaders, discussed the crisis with the Manipur unit of the party on Monday night.

ANALYSIS: NEED FOR DECISIVE CHANGE IN MANIPUR ESCALATION OF CONFLICT

- The conflict in Manipur has expanded to previously peaceful districts, with rising extortion and abductions in the Imphal valley and other areas.
- The increase in armed militias, armed with looted weapons, has exacerbated the situation.

GOVERNMENT'S TENUOUS PEACE EFFORTS

- The Union government has attempted to maintain peace by unofficially imposing provisions of Article 355 of the Constitution.
- Despite ongoing conflict, the Union government continues with the same political leadership, maintaining a facade of power for the BJP Chief Minister.

PRIME MINISTER AND HOME MINISTER'S ROLES

- Prime Minister Modi has been minimally involved, not seeking a humanitarian pause or peaceful resolution.
- Home Minister Amit Shah routinely holds security briefings with little success, and the Chief Minister was excluded from the latest meeting with security officials.

CALL FOR LEADERSHIP CHANGE

- The Union and State governments must recognize the need for change, as the status quo is only deepening the ethnic divide.
- A change in leadership is necessary, but it must be accompanied by efforts to curb and disarm militias in both hill and valley areas.

EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY AND DIALOGUE

- Civil society actors committed to peace should be empowered to facilitate dialogue across ethnic lines.
- Representatives from neighbouring States and newly elected parliamentarians can assist in reconciling hostile groups.

CONCLUSION

- Resolving the conflict in Manipur requires decisive action and a significant shift in the current state of affairs, addressing both political leadership and armed militias to restore peace and normalcy.



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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

NICOBAR TRIANGLE

CONTEXT: The Govt. of India plans a large infrastructure project on Great Nicobar Island, raising concerns about the environment and indigenous people.

GREAT NICOBAR ISLAND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT: A BALANCING ACT

- **Project Overview:**
 - The NDA government is planning a ₹72,000 crore infrastructure project on Great Nicobar Island.
 - The project includes a transshipment port, international airport, township development, and power plant.
- **Environmental Concerns:**
 - The project requires clearing over 130 sq. km. of pristine rainforest.
 - Compensatory afforestation planned in Haryana, a different ecological zone, raises questions about effectiveness.
 - The project threatens rare species like the leatherback turtle.
- **Lack of Transparency:**
 - Details of environmental clearances and project appraisals are not publicly available.
- **Indigenous Rights Issues:**
 - The project disregards the rights of Indigenous Shompen tribes regarding consent.
 - The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has demanded clarification from the administration.
- **Recommendations:**
 - The government should ensure transparency in the project's environmental impact assessment.
 - Consultation with the Shompen tribes is crucial before proceeding.
 - The project's goals (strategic location vs. tourism) need a clear definition.

CONCLUSION: The ambitious Great Nicobar project demands a cautious approach. Balancing development needs with environmental and indigenous rights requires transparency, thorough consultation, and a clear project vision.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FROM CHINA TILT TO A BALANCING WITH BEIJING AND DELHI

CONTEXT: Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's visit to India for Prime Minister Modi's swearing-in highlights his shifting India policy. Driven by economic challenges, unmet expectations from China, and India's accommodative approach, Muizzu aims to balance relationships with both India and China while prioritizing the Maldives' national interests.

MOHAMED MUIZZU'S FLUCTUATING INDIA POLICY

- **Initial Stance**
 - Called India a "bully".
 - Visited New Delhi as an invitee to Narendra Modi's swearing-in as Prime Minister for a third term in June 2024.
- **"Pro-Maldives" Policy**
 - Since his swearing-in as President in November 2023, Muizzu has reduced the Maldives' dependence on India.
 - Increased relations with China.
 - Diversified the Maldives' foreign policy.

Domestic and External Factors Shaping Foreign Policy

- **Domestic Influences**
 - Muizzu's party led the "India Out" campaign.
 - Used anti-Indian rhetoric to appeal to nationalist and religious sentiments in the Maldives.
- **External Influences**
 - Close ties with China, viewed as a partner for ambitious projects.
 - Interest in deepening relations with Japan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the UAE, the UK, and the US due to the Maldives' geostrategic importance.

Male's Economic Difficulties

- **Economic Struggles**
 - Increasing debt maturities, low revenues, and declining foreign reserves.
 - Debt-to-GDP ratio of 110%.
 - Foreign reserve of \$622 million with annual debt servicing of \$512 million for 2024 and 2025, and around \$1 billion in 2026.
 - Heavy dependence on imports, leading to food and fuel inflation.
 - Convincing India and China to pay for imports in local currency.

Ties with China

- **High Expectations and Limited Results**
 - January 2024 visit to China resulted in over 20 Memoranda of Understanding.
 - Agreements to revive Belt and Road Initiative projects and a free trade agreement.
 - Defence pact and exploration of the Global Security Initiative with China.

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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

HUMAN DIGNITY VERSUS RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

CONTEXT: The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court reinstated the practice of "angapradakshanam" at a religious site, citing constitutional rights and overlooking concerns of human dignity and universal human rights norms.



BACK GROUND

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court recently allowed the resumption of certain religious practices, sparking a debate on the balance between human dignity and religious freedoms. The key points and arguments surrounding this issue:

Judicial Decision and Legal Basis:

- Madurai Bench permitted "annadhanam" and "angapradakshanam" at a religious site.
- Justice G.R. Swaminathan invoked Article 25(1) of the Constitution, protecting religious practices.

Overlooking Critical Factors:

- Justice Swaminathan's decision linked spiritual beliefs to privacy rights, overlooking distinctions between spiritual and personal orientations.
- Citing cultural and religious significance, he defended the practice of rolling on leftover food.

Legal Analysis and Criticism:

- The judgment defended the practice under fundamental rights but failed to address broader societal duties.
- Critics argue that such practices can undermine human dignity and violate equality and life rights.

Conflict of Universalism vs. Relativism:

- The case highlights the clash between universal human rights and cultural relativism.
- Universalists stress adopting human rights standards, while relativists favour traditional and religious practices.

State's Role and Responsibilities:

- The state should balance religious freedoms with public health and dignity concerns.

- Relations upgraded to a 'China-Maldives Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership' for 2024-2028.
- Permission for a Chinese 'spy' ship to dock in Male.
- **Challenges with China**
 - China is hesitant to invest in mega-infrastructure projects, focusing instead on community development and housing.
 - Maldives owes China around \$1.5 billion.
 - China's debt relief offers complicate future borrowing.
 - Limited new loans from China, offering assistance mainly in grants.

India's Accommodative Policy

- **High-Level Engagements**
 - Despite anti-Indian rhetoric, India maintained high-level engagements.
 - Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met his Maldivian counterpart multiple times.
 - India replaced its 76 military personnel with civilian experts at Male's request.
 - Increased development assistance from ₹400 crore to ₹600 crore for 2024.
 - Increased export quota of food products by 5% and construction items by 25%.

The Signal from New Delhi

- **Maldivian Foreign Minister's Visit**
 - Maldivian Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer visited India in May, marking the first high-level visit of the new government.
 - India extended a \$50 million treasury bill for a year on zero interest through the State Bank of India.
 - Invitation extended to Muizzu for Modi's swearing-in.
- **Implications for Bilateral Relations**
 - New Delhi aims to continue engaging with Male regardless of its leadership.
 - Hopes for Muizzu to reciprocate India's accommodative policy by respecting its sensitivities.
 - Muizzu sees the invitation as an opportunity to improve bilateral ties and rescue the Maldives' economy.

Balancing Relationships

- **Continuing Relations with China**
 - Muizzu has not fully embraced a pro-India policy.
 - Maintains regular high-level exchanges with China.
- **Strategic Balancing**
 - Realizes he cannot completely alienate India.
 - Benefits more by balancing relationships and playing India and China against each other.
 - Aims to further Maldives' interests by leveraging competition between India and China.

CONCLUSION: In conclusion, President Mohamed Muizzu's nuanced approach from a China tilt to a balanced engagement with Beijing and Delhi underscores strategic recalibration. Amid economic challenges and diplomatic dynamics, his aim to prioritize Maldives' interests through a calibrated diplomacy reflects a pragmatic stance in navigating regional partnerships.

- Education and rational discussions can promote a humane community while respecting religious sentiments.

CONCLUSION: The reinstatement of religious practices by the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court underscores a complex interplay between constitutional rights, cultural beliefs, and human dignity. While legal frameworks protect religious freedoms, they must be balanced with broader societal duties to uphold equality and dignity for all. The clash between universal human rights and cultural relativism necessitates careful consideration by the state, emphasizing education and rational discourse to foster a harmonious community that respects both religious sentiments and fundamental human values.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

THE NITI AAYOG'S PROJECT IN GREAT NICOBAR

CONTEXT: The Congress party has called for the suspension of NITI Aayog's project on Great Nicobar due to concerns over tribal rights violations, ecological damage, and seismic risks. Opposition stems from forest land diversion, wildlife sanctuary denotification, and potential impacts on indigenous communities and endangered species.



THE GIST

- On June 17, the Congress party demanded an "immediate suspension" of all clearances granted to NITI Aayog's mega project on Great Nicobar island in light of "violations of due process, legal and constitutional provisions protecting tribal communities, and the project's disproportionate ecological and human cost."
- In March, 2021, NITI Aayog unveiled a ₹72,000 crore plan called 'Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island at Andaman and Nicobar Islands'.
- The project requires the diversion of about 130 sq. km of forest land and the felling of around 10 lakh trees. In January, 2021

the Indian government denotified two wildlife sanctuaries — the Galathea Bay wildlife sanctuary and the Megapode Wildlife Sanctuary — to make way for the project.

Demand for Suspension

- On June 17, the Congress party called for an immediate suspension of NITI Aayog's mega project on Great Nicobar island.
- This demand was based on perceived violations of due process, legal and constitutional provisions safeguarding tribal communities, and concerns about the project's disproportionate ecological and human costs.

Ecological Concerns

- The project involves diverting approximately 130 sq km of forest land and felling around 10 lakh trees.
- Denotification of wildlife sanctuaries, including Galathea Bay and Megapode Wildlife Sanctuary, has raised conservation concerns.
- The development of a transshipment terminal at Galathea Bay threatens habitats of endangered species like the giant leatherback turtle and Nicobar megapode, both listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection Act), 1972.

Social Concerns

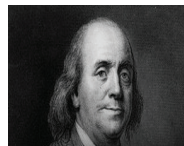
- The project's impact on tribal communities, particularly the Shompen and Nicobarese, is a major concern.
- Shompen's vulnerability to diseases due to limited contact with the outside world raises health risks.
- Land acquisition processes and potential displacement of tribal communities have sparked social unrest and opposition.

Threat of Earthquakes

- The Andaman and Nicobar archipelago, including Great Nicobar, is in a seismic zone with frequent earthquakes.
- Concerns have been raised about inadequate assessment of earthquake risks in the project's planning and implementation.
- Researchers and local authorities have highlighted the need for comprehensive disaster management strategies considering the region's seismic activity.

Analysis The demand for suspending the project reflects broader concerns about balancing development goals with environmental conservation, tribal rights protection, and disaster preparedness. The ecological impact, including deforestation and wildlife habitat loss, requires careful evaluation and mitigation strategies. Social impacts, such as community displacement and health risks for isolated tribes, necessitate inclusive and transparent decision-making processes. Adequate risk assessment and disaster management plans are essential to address seismic threats and ensure sustainable development in the region.

CONCLUSION: The call for suspending NITI Aayog's project on Great Nicobar highlights critical concerns over tribal rights, ecological preservation, and seismic risks. Balancing development with conservation and inclusive decision-making is imperative for sustainable progress, emphasizing the need for thorough risk assessment and disaster management strategies in the region.



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—Benjamin Franklin

POLITY&INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HOW THE PESA HAS BOOSTED FOREST CONSERVATION IN INDIA

CONTEXT: The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) has significantly enhanced forest conservation in India by empowering Scheduled Tribes as political actors, leading to better protection of trees crucial for their livelihoods and fostering opposition to destructive activities like commercial timber and mining.

Empowerment through Political Representation

- **Introduction of PESA:** The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act empowered Scheduled Tribes as political actors, fostering a protective stance towards trees crucial for their livelihoods, particularly against activities like commercial timber and mining.

Challenges in Conservation Policy

- **Conflicting Priorities:** India's conservation policy has faced conflicts between conservation and resource extraction by local communities, as well as between conservation and economic development, often resulting in piecemeal approaches that favor centralized elites and big capital over local interests.

Reconciling Contradictions: Decentralization and Democratisation

- **Mandated Political Representation:** Providing mandated political representation to marginalized communities, as advocated by Saad Gulzar, Apoorva Lal, and Benjamin Pasquale, is proposed as a solution that boosts forest conservation while securing economic interests.

PESA: A Game-Changer

- **Legislative Impact:** PESA's introduction of electoral quotas for Scheduled Tribes in local government councils significantly influenced forest outcomes, leading to an average increase in tree canopy and a reduction in deforestation rates.

Equitable Representation and Conservation Gains

- **Boosting Formal Representation:** The study found that boosting formal representation for Scheduled Tribes led to tangible conservation gains, including increased tree canopy and a decrease in deforestation rates.

Opposition to Destructive Practices

- **Resisting Mining Interests:** PESA empowered ST communities to resist mining and large-scale commercial operations, contributing to improved overall forest health and a greater reduction in deforestation rates in areas close to mines.

Comparative Analysis and Policy Implications

- **Comparing PESA and FRA:** The study compared the impacts of PESA with the Recognition of Forest Rights Act, highlighting PESA's significant role in conservation beyond other legislative measures.

Theoretical Framework: Democratic Decentralisation

- **Key Theoretical Distinction:** The paper emphasizes the importance of democratic decentralization, where local actors have autonomous decision-making power, in contrast to administrative decentralization focused solely on efficient execution.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- **Institutional Mechanisms:** Mandated political representation and empowering a single umbrella institution are proposed as critical institutional mechanisms for achieving balanced development and conservation objectives.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA, PAK. DELEGATIONS REACH J&K TO INSPECT POWER PROJECTS UNDER INDUS WATER TREATY

CONTEXT: Indian and Pakistani officials meet to inspect power projects in Kashmir under a water treaty.

INDUS WATER TREATY INSPECTIONS IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- **Delegations Arrive for Project Inspection**
 - Indian and Pakistani officials, along with neutral experts, travelled to Kishtwar district for inspections.
 - Roughly 40 people arrived on Sunday and began inspections on Monday.

First Pakistani Visit in Five Years

- This visit marks the first time a Pakistani delegation has been to Jammu and Kashmir in over five years.
- The visit is facilitated by the dispute settlement mechanism of the 1960 Indus Water Treaty.

Indus Water Treaty Background

- The Indus Water Treaty, signed by India and Pakistan with the World Bank, governs water usage from shared rivers.
- The treaty outlines cooperation and information exchange between the two countries.

Previous Inspections

- The last Pakistani inspection of the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydroelectric projects occurred in January 2019.

Inspection Itinerary

- The delegation began by visiting the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation headquarters.
- They then proceeded to the Ratle hydroelectric project site for dam inspection.
- Future inspections include the Pakal Dul project and other power plants in Kishtwar.

CONCLUSION: This inspection trip signifies a potential thaw in relations between India and Pakistan, facilitated by the Indus Water Treaty.



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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

18TH LOK SABHA OPENS WITH 262 MPS TAKING OATH ON THE FIRST DAY

CONTEXT: The 18th Lok Sabha's inaugural session witnessed 262 MPs taking oath, including PM Modi. Opposition displayed the Constitution, and pro tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab's appointment faced objections. BJP's J.P. Nadda is Rajya Sabha's Leader of the House.

18th Lok Sabha Inaugural Session:

- 262 MPs took oath on the first day.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first to take oath.
- Opposition displayed copies of the Constitution.
- Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan greeted with slogans of "NEET".
- Pro tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab administered oath.

Controversies and Opposition Reaction:

- INDIA bloc opposed Bhartruhari Mahtab's appointment as pro tem Speaker.
- Opposition leaders like K Suresh, T.R. Baalu, and Sudip Bandyopadhyay did not attend the oath-taking.
- Congress and INDIA objected to Mahtab's appointment, advocating for Dalit leader K Suresh instead.

Outside Parliament Display:

- INDIA bloc MPs protested outside, advocating for democracy and the Constitution.
- Leaders like Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi gathered at the Parliament complex.

Leadership Appointments:

- J.P. Nadda appointed Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha, replacing Piyush Goyal.
- Rajya Sabha session to commence on July 27, led by Congress's Mallikarjun Kharge as Leader of the Opposition.

CONCLUSION: The 18th Lok Sabha's inaugural session featured 262 MPs taking oaths, with PM Modi included. Opposition's Constitution display emphasized democratic values. Controversies around Mahtab's appointment and outside protests showcased diverse political voices. Nadda in Rajya Sabha and Kharge as Opposition leader signify vibrant parliamentary debates ahead.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

MATERNITY LEAVE FOR PARENTS OF CHILD BORN THROUGH SURROGACY

CONTEXT: The Centre has amended rules to grant maternity leave of 180 days to women government employees for children born through surrogacy, along with paternity leave and childcare leave provisions for commissioning parents.

Maternity Leave for Surrogate and Commissioning Mother:

- Surrogate mothers who are government employees will receive 180 days of maternity leave.
- Commissioning mothers, the intending mothers of the child, are also eligible for 180 days of maternity leave if they have less than two surviving children and are government servants.

Paternity Leave for Commissioning Father:

- Commissioning fathers, the intending fathers of the child, who are male government servants with less than two surviving children, can take paternity leave of 15 days within six months from the child's delivery date.

Child Care Leave:

- Commissioning mothers with less than two surviving children are granted childcare leave as per the Central Civil Services (Leave) (Amendment) Rules, 2024.
- Existing rules allow female government servants and single male government servants childcare leave for up to 730 days during their entire service.

Clarification on Terminology:

- "Surrogate mother" refers to the woman who bears the child on behalf of the commissioning mother.
- "Commissioning father" refers to the intending father of the child born through surrogacy, as clarified by the Personnel Ministry in the amended rules.



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ECONOMY

CURRENT ACCOUNT LOGS \$5.7-BN SURPLUS IN Q4 AFTER 10 QUARTERS

CONTEXT: India's current account showed a \$5.7 billion surplus in Q4 FY24, marking a positive shift after 10 quarters, with the FY24 deficit decreasing to \$23.2 billion.

India's Q4 FY24 Current Account Surplus:

- Surplus Figures:** Recorded \$5.7 billion surplus (0.6% GDP) in Q4 FY24, a shift from a \$1.3 billion deficit (0.2% GDP) a year earlier.
- Trade Deficit:** Merchandise trade deficit decreased to \$50.9 billion in Q4 FY24 from \$52.6 billion YoY.
- Services Growth:** Q4 services exports grew by 4.1% YoY, driven by rising software exports, travel, and business services.

Factors Contributing to Surplus:

- Services Receipts:** Net services receipts at \$42.7 billion were higher YoY, contributing to the Q4 FY24 surplus.
- Primary Income Outgo:** Rose to \$14.8 billion from \$12.6 billion YoY, impacting the current account balance.
- Private Transfers:** Remittances by overseas Indians were \$32 billion, up by 11.9% YoY.

Financial Account Highlights:

- FDI Flows:** Net foreign direct investment was \$2 billion in Q4 FY24, down from \$6.4 billion YoY.
- Portfolio Investment:** Net foreign portfolio investment inflow recorded \$11.4 billion in Q4 FY24 compared to a net outflow of \$1.7 billion YoY.
- External Borrowings:** Net inflows under external commercial borrowings increased to \$2.6 billion.
- Non-resident Deposits:** Recorded a higher net inflow of \$5.4 billion in Q4 FY24.

Balance of Payments Overview:

- Current Account Deficit:** FY24 deficit moderated to \$23.2 billion (0.7% GDP) from \$67.0 billion (2% GDP) in FY23.
- Invisibles Receipts:** Higher during FY24, primarily due to services and transfers.
- Investment Flows:** Portfolio investment saw a net inflow of \$44.1 billion in FY24, contrasting with an outflow of \$5.2 billion in the previous year.
- FDI Inflow:** FY24 net FDI inflow was \$9.8 billion compared to \$28 billion in FY23.

CONCLUSION: India's current account surplus in Q4 FY24 reflects a positive economic trend, supported by improved trade balances and robust services growth. With a moderated FY24 deficit, India's balance of payments shows resilience.



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