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Automobile sales still in free fall

As per the data released, sales of light commercial vehicles stood at 36,324 units, down 28.21% from 50,595 units a year ago, while sales of heavy commercial vehicles declined by a whopping 54.30% to 15,573 units.

Two-wheelers too

Similarly, total two-wheeler sales last month declined by a record 22.24% to over 15.14 lakh units. Motorcycle sales, which largely reflect the demand slump in the rural market, declined by 22.33% to about 9.37 lakh units, while scooter sales were down 22.19% to about 5.20 lakh units.

"While we have been expecting month after month

that this [fall in sales] will bottom out, it doesn't seem to be the case. Every time we look at the numbers, we see a decline. Now is a very crucial month as we head into the festive season. If we don't see a recovery, even if a small one, this month and the next month, it will be a very alarming situation," Ashim Sharma, Partner and Group Head, NRI Consulting & Solutions India, told *The Hindu*.

The industry, which has been forced to resort to job cuts given the tepid demand, has been pitching for a cut in current GST rates of 28% to boost sales.

A cut in GST may also help revive the sales in rural market, Mr. Sharma said.

Shah allays fears over new Citizenship Bill

Asking whether the Centre would bypass the States before reintroducing the Bill, Mr. Sangma requested the Centre to invite all stakeholders to arrive at a consensus. "We are also worried by the exclusion of 19 lakh people from Assam's NRC. Meghalaya shares a long border with Assam, and there are fears many of them could sneak in," he said.

Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga too opposed the Bill. He also said the regional parties that supported the Bill had committed "political suicide", insisting that the northeast should be excluded from its purview.

The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill on January 8

but it was not tabled in the Rajya Sabha.

The Chief Ministers also called for settling the prolonged border disputes among the States. Almost all of them have disputes with Assam.

Assam Finance Minister and NEDA Convenor Himanta Biswa Sarma said the disputes — some of which claimed lives — had often come in the way of development in the region.

"The NEDA forum can be used to solve the border disputes and other issues plaguing the region. The constituents can hold discussions to resolve these contentious issues," Mr. Sarma said, also expressing concern over drug dealing in the region.

UNHRC asks India to end lockdown in J&K

The official also raised the issue of exclusion of 1.9 million nationals from the exercise of the NRC of Assam and said the process has caused great uncertainty and anxiety among the people. She said, "I appeal to the Government to ensure due process during the appeals process, prevent deportation or detention, and ensure people are protected from statelessness."

The official referred to an entire range of issues across the world but problems of human rights violation from India and Myanmar found greater attention.

The global attention to developments in Kashmir is on expected lines and *The Hindu* had reported on Saturday that India was getting

ready for a season of diplomatic blitz as Pakistan intensified its campaign against it after the August 5 decision on Kashmir.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan welcomed the comments from UNHRC and asked it to "set up the in-depth investigation commission to probe human rights abuses" in the Indian territory.

The Ministry of External Affairs has stationed a high-power diplomatic team led by India's High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria in Geneva for several weeks to explain the Indian position on Kashmir. Pakistan sent back Mr. Bisaria while protesting against India's removal of Kashmir's special status.

Lander 'tilted' not broken, says ISRO

Efforts are under way to see whether communication can be re-established with the lander but chances of that are bleak with full system functionality a prerequisite to restoring contact, officials explained.

"The lander is there (on the moon) as a single piece, not broken into pieces. It's in a tilted position," an ISRO official associated with the mission said.

Images sent by the orbiter's on-board camera shows that though the lander hit the lunar surface hard while landing, it is still very close to the scheduled touchdown site. "We are making all-out efforts to see whether communication can be re-established," the official said.

"An ISRO team is on the job at the ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC)," he added.

landed and rover is one lunar day, which is equal to 14 earth days.

ISRO Chairman K Sivan said on Saturday that the space agency would try to restore link with the lander for 14 days. He reiterated the resolve on Monday after the orbiter's camera spotted the lander on the Moon.

However, another ISRO official said chances of restoring a link with the lander were bleak since system functionality was a prerequisite.

"Unless and until everything is intact (in the lander), it's very difficult (to re-establish contact). Chances are less. Only if it had a soft-landing, and if all systems functioned, could communication be restored. Things are bleak as of now."

Another space agency official added that there might be some chances of restoring communication but there are limitations too. He recalled ISRO's experience of recovering a spacecraft that went out of contact in geostationary orbit but said the Chandrayaan-2's lander case was different.

A vital aspect is the positioning of antennas, he said.

RSS flags NRC's 'flaws', backs reservation

'A large number of the 19 lakh people excluded from the Assam register were Hindus'

MOHAMMED IQBAL
PUSHKAR

Raising questions on the final list of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on Monday said its "shortcomings" should be removed and all Bangladeshi immigrants who had found a place in it on the basis of forged documents should be excluded.

At its annual coordination meeting in this pilgrim town in Rajasthan, senior members of the RSS and its affiliate groups expressed concern over the exclusion of "genuine citizens", majority of them from the Hindu community, from the NRC. A large number of the 19 lakh people excluded from the register were Hindus, the RSS office-bearers said.

While asking the government to rectify the NRC list before moving forward, the RSS affirmed that cultural assimilation in the border areas of northeastern and western States had led to

Straight talk

A look at the stance of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on various issues



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat attending the annual coordination meeting in Pushkar, Rajasthan. P T I

RESERVATION

- Reservation should continue as long as its beneficiaries feel it is required
- Temples, cremation grounds and reservoirs should be open for all and not restricted to any specific caste

NRC

- Concerned over "genuine citizens", majority of them from the Hindu community, being left out of the National Register of Citizens in Assam
- Cultural assimilation in border areas of northeastern and western States has led to "forcible conversion" of people to Christianity and Islam

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

- House arrest of mainstream political leaders "perfectly justified" as it is in national interest
- Dilution of Article 370 will pave the way for development in J&K

MUSLIMS

- Muslims should come forward to get rid of suspicion often created about the education imparted in madrasas

The U.P. gov't. had last year made it mandatory for madrasas to celebrate Independence Day by hoisting the tricolour and singing national anthem. Nobody should have objection to such orders

DATTATREYA HOSABALE, RSS joint general secretary

"forcible conversion" of people to Christianity and Islam.

RSS *Sah-Sarakaryawah* Dattatreya Hosabale told presspersons on the final day of the coordination meeting that though the NRC was a "very complex issue" because of a large number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh settled in Assam, the government had to comply with the Supreme Court's direction to complete the exer-

cise in a stipulated time.

Ram Madhav, Bharatiya Janata Party general secretary in charge of party affairs in the northeastern States, spoke at the conclave about the NRC exercise carried out in Assam. BJP working president J.P. Nadda and top functionaries of the RSS, led by its chief Mohan Bhagwat, attended the three-day meeting.

Mr. Hosabale said the RSS

believed that reservation in employment and education should continue as long as there were disparities in society. "It is for the beneficiaries to decide how long the quota system should continue... It is mandated by the Constitution," he said.

Laying emphasis on Hindutva and cultural nationalism, the RSS leader said the temples, cremation grounds and water reservoirs should

be accessible equally to all castes of the Hindu community. However, reservation was not on the meeting's agenda and it did not come up for deliberations.

According to sources, Mr. Nadda made a presentation on the Centre's decision to revoke the special status to Jammu and Kashmir and apprised the participants of the situation in the Kashmir Valley. The Ram temple construction in Ayodhya and national security, with the resolve to identify "internal elements" creating trouble, also came up for discussions.

Mr. Hosabale said the nationalist Muslims should come forward to get rid of suspicion often created about the education imparted in madrasas. "The Uttar Pradesh government had last year made it mandatory for madrasas to celebrate Independence Day by hoisting the tricolour and singing national anthem. Nobody should have objection to such orders."

Parties meet EC over loss of national status

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission met representatives of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the Trinamool Congress and the Communist Party of India (CPI) on Monday hearing their arguments on why their status as national parties should not be revoked.

"As per the current rules performance in two consecutive general elections are to be counted. The EC sent us a notice based on 2014 and 2019 results. But we got the national status only in 2016 so how can they count 2014 elections?" Trinamool's Lok Sabha MP Kalyan Banerjee told *The Hindu*.

The NCP asked the Election Commission to wait till the Assembly poll to be held in Maharashtra in October before passing any order.

The CPI argued that political history should also be taken into account before taking any decision.

Northeast fragmented, says R.N. Ravi

'In post-colonial era, several economically unviable States were created'

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi has said that interdependence of ethnic communities in the northeast was disrupted by the deliberate policies of the British administration and several economically unviable States were created to satisfy and appease the forces asserting mutual differences and exclusivity.

Mr. Ravi made the remarks at the 68th plenary session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Guwahati on Sunday. Home Minister Amit Shah chaired the meeting attended by the Governors, Chief Ministers and officials of the eight northeastern States.

Mr. Ravi, who is also leading the Naga peace talks, said that northeast India, all through the centuries, has been a region of geo-cultural and geo-economic unity and celebrated its rich cultural diversity through peaceful coexistence of innumerable ethnic communities. "The



For stronger ties: Union Home Minister Amit Shah attends the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) conclave in Guwahati on Monday. RITU RAJ KONWAR

post-colonial northeast witnessed multiple political fragmentation of the regions. The traditional forces of unity were weakened. Several economically unviable States were created to satisfy and appease the forces asserting mutual differences and exclusivity," Mr. Ravi said.

Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga said the government needed to act "Northeast" before acting "East" as the "Look East" policy had been in existence

for more than two decades but had had no impact on the region's economy.

"If 'Act East' policy is to be made into reality, State governments in the northeast should be sufficiently involved both at the level of policy formulation and implementation. Mizoram has a long international boundary with Myanmar and Bangladesh. The people of the State have relationship with the people across the border in formal and informal forms... These practices

need to be institutionalised for socio-economic upliftment of the local population," Mr. Zoramthanga said.

Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio said when many countries, including India were moving towards 5G connectivity, northeastern States, particularly Nagaland, were struggling to access even basic internet connectivity. He added that without high speed internet facilities, the State has been struggling to implement Direct Benefits Transfer schemes.

No harsh remarks on lower courts: SC

Top court warns HCs against using strong language against subordinate judiciary

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A judgment may be right or wrong, but higher court judges cannot indulge in passing scathing remarks about trial judges merely because they do not agree with their point of view, the Supreme Court has cautioned the High Courts.

In a recent judgment, an Supreme Court Bench of Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Bose chastised the courts for using strong language against the subordinate judiciary in their judgments.

"We follow a system where the judgment of a



The Supreme Court expunged the remarks made by the Allahabad High Court.

court is subject to judicial scrutiny by higher courts. The judgment may be right or wrong, but the higher courts should not pass scathing remarks against the presiding officer of the lower

courts only because they do not agree with the point of view of the trial court."

The verdict came on a plea filed by a judicial officer presiding over a Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal.

The officer intervened in the spat between two lawyers in a case on which one of them should collect the fee when the case was compromised.

In appeal, the Allahabad High Court made disparaging comments in its judgment against the judicial officer.

The Supreme Court referred to judicial precedents which said the High Court

may condemn a judicial officer if the latter's actions were based on a corrupt motive. But such remarks cannot be made "light-heartedly" because the lower court judge has no way in law to vindicate his position.

"Our legal system acknowledges the fallibility of the judges and hence provides for appeals and revisions. A judge tries to discharge his duties to the best of his capacity. While doing so, sometimes, he is likely to err," the judgment quoted from a decision of the apex court. It went on to expunge the remarks made by the High Court.

Don't arrest officials: Chidambaram

Govt. officers have done no wrong in the INX Media case, says former Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Monday said no official should be arrested in the INX Media case as "no officer has done anything wrong".

The former Minister, who was sent to judicial custody in Tihar jail last Thursday for alleged corruption in the INX Media while he was the Finance Minister, asked his family to post his message on Twitter.

In a series of tweets, he said people often asked him why he alone was arrested in



P. Chidambaram

the INX Media case when government approvals were given by several officials.

"I have requested my fa-

mily to tweet on my behalf the following: People have asked me 'If the dozen officers who processed and recommended the case to you have not been arrested, why have you been arrested? Only because you have put the last signature?'" said a tweet from Mr Chidambaram's official handle.

"No answer" "I have no answer," he said, and added, "No officer has done anything wrong. I do not want anyone to be arrested".

The investigative agen-

cies, including the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), have alleged that Mr. Chidambaram had allowed foreign investments into INX Media through the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) after receiving a bribe.

However, Mr. Chidambaram's legal team had argued that FIPB approvals to the media company had been given after their proposal had been examined by FIPB officials who were secretaries to various departments in the government.

Tahilramani episode echoes 1981 resignation

M.M. Ismail quit in similar situation

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Madras High Court Chief Justice V. K. Tahilramani's decision to resign in the face of a Supreme Court Collegium recommendation to transfer her to the Meghalaya High Court finds a distant echo with the choice made by another Madras High Court Chief Justice, nearly 40 years ago, to "sacrifice" his career and bow out with a sense of self-respect.

On January 19, 1981, the President issued an order to transfer then Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, M.M. Ismail, to the Kerala High Court.

Lawyers, including advocate Lily Thomas, rushed to court against the transfer. The petitions, among several others, came up before a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court for hearing. This judges transfer case came to be famously known as the "First Judges' Case" after it was reconsidered in the "Second Judges' Case", which introduced the collegium system.

Though he was made a respondent in Ms. Thomas's petition, Justice Ismail filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court conveying his decision not to question the legality or validity of the transfer. But Justice Ismail did not go unnoticed by the Supreme Court judges.

"I cannot help commending the conduct of Justice Is-

IN BRIEF



Modi, Oli to inaugurate cross-border pipeline

NEW DELHI Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepal counterpart K.P. Sharma Oli will inaugurate the ₹325-crore Motihari-Amlekhgunj pipeline on Tuesday via video conference. "The first supply will be of diesel and it comes a month after we carried out a test-supply of energy last month," said a diplomatic source associated with the project. The pipeline was taken up during Mr. Modi's visit to Nepal in 2014 and the deal was inked in 2015.

Jyotiraditya Scindia to meet Sonia Gandhi today

BHOPAL Amid simmering factionalism within the Congress in Madhya Pradesh, Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia is expected to meet party president Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi on Tuesday, over the next Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president. Mr. Scindia, whose supporters are rooting for him for the post, has previously stated that the decision of the top leadership, whatever it may be, will be final and he will accept it.

Congress appoints two new spokespersons

NEW DELHI The Congress on Monday appointed former President Pranab Mukherjee's daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee and former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar's son Anshul Kumar as national spokespersons. Congress President Sonia Gandhi has approved their appointment, party's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said in a statement.

Congress alleges mining scam by Centre

NEW DELHI The Congress on Monday alleged that the Centre had caused a loss of ₹4 lakh crore to the government exchequer by bypassing the auction route and renewing licences of existing mining companies for a 50-year period. Addressing a press conference, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera questioned why the Centre had not replied to a notice from the Supreme Court on the issue "where the petitioner alleged that the granting of licences were linked to political donations".



V. K. Tahilramani

mail, who actually resigned and chose to quit his office instead of pursuing the matter further in the larger interest of the purity of administration of justice. The life of a judge is that of a hermit and he must inculcate a spirit of self-sacrifice and should take his profession in this holy spirit," Justice S.M. Fazal Ali wrote in his judgment in the *Judges Transfer Case*.

Justice R.S. Pathak reproduced extracts from the affidavit filed by Justice Ismail, saying he had no interest in people advocating his case.

"...I decided not to proceed to Kerala to take charge as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Kerala; not to challenge the legality or the validity of the order of the President so transferring me in any Court of Law; and (3) to proceed on leave preparatory to premature retirement by resigning my office... I have nothing to submit to this Honourable Court in this writ petition and I do not want anyone to litigate for or against me," he wrote to the Supreme Court Bench.