

7 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



TAKING STOCK

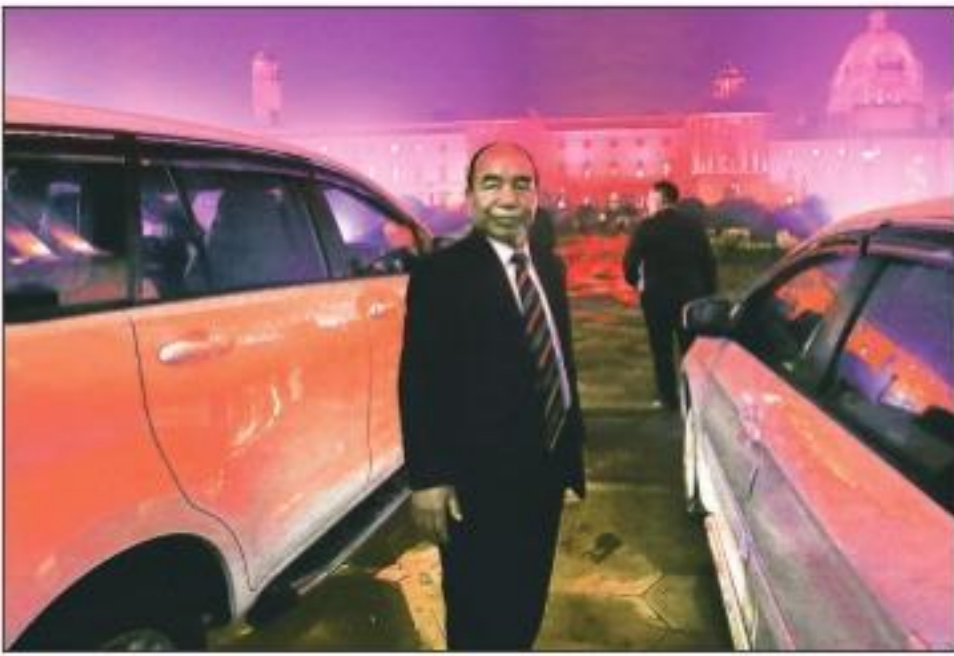
STARTING THURSDAY, the Ministry of Finance, led by Nirmala Sitharaman, started a campaign to highlight how Budget promises have been kept. The ministry wrote on Twitter: “Taking India to new heights: building a healthier and more inclusive society”, along with an update on how 27,000 of the 1,53,000 health and wellness centres are up and running. The campaign will continue till January 29, with various ministries’ works being highlighted.

IN FOCUS

AHEAD OF the election of the new BJP national president, a number of state units elected their presidents on Thursday. Being the state in-charge of Uttarakhand and West Bengal, national joint general secretary organisation Shivprakash should have been present during the election in both places. However, he chose to be in Kolkata. This was despite the presence of a battery of senior leaders at the election of Dilip Ghosh. Apart from Shivprakash, BJP general secretary in-charge of West Bengal Kaishav Vijayvargiya and general secretary P Muralidhar Rao were there. So was national executive member Arvind Menon, who has been stationed in the state for coordination work. The pictures of Ghosh’s election announcement were a clear indication of the party’s intense work in the state.

FIRST STOP

EVEN AS the inconclusive COP25 came to a close late last year, countries across the world have started preparing for COP26 in Glasgow at the end of this year. And as Glasgow kicks off preparations and pursues countries to meet their climate change goal, the first stop the Glasgow delegation made on its global tour was India. COP26 president Claire Perry met Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar on Thursday along with her delegation. Javadekar chaired a second meeting with a delegation of Commonwealth countries to chalk out ways these countries can cooperate further to meet climate goals this year.



Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga and (right) Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb after meeting Home Minister Amit Shah at North Block in New Delhi on Thursday. *Anil Sharma*



Agreement to settle Bru refugees in Tripura inked

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

THE CENTRE, the governments of Tripura and Mizoram and representatives of Bru tribe signed a new agreement on Thursday to settle the 22-year-old refugee crisis of the community. The over 30,000-strong community that settled in Tripura in the 90s after fleeing ethnic violence in Mizoram will now remain in Tripura, according to the new pact.

In 2018, the government signed an agreement with the stakeholders concerned to send all Bru refugees living in camps in Tripura to Mizoram and settle them there. However, despite a government package providing assistance for relocation, only 328 families chose to go to Mizoram.

Under the new agreement, a package of Rs 600 crore has been earmarked for a period of two years to help settle the refugees in Tripura. This will include free plots of land, Rs 1.5 lakh assistance to build a house, Rs 4 lakh as fixed deposit for each family, free ration for two years and Rs 5,000 per month as assistance.

The agreement was signed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Mizoram Chief Minister Pu

EXPLAINED

Why Brus refused to go to Mizoram

OF THE 37,000-odd Bru people who had fled from Mizoram to Tripura in 1997, only about 5,000 went back to Mizoram over the several phases of repatriation. Last year, some leaders of the community signed an agreement with the Centre and governments of Mizoram and Tripura. This pact paved the way for their resettlement in Mizoram. Most residents of the relief camps in Tripura rejected the terms of the agreement, terming them insufficient. They also said the pact does not guarantee their safety in Mizoram.

Zoramthanga, Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Deb and representatives of the Bru community, who are called Reang in Tripura.

“Because of tension in 1997 in Mizoram, over 30,000 Bru refugees were displaced and had been living in pitiable condition in camps. The July 3 (2018) agreement could not fructify. So, lastly it was decided that all Reang families will stay in Tripura itself. All Bru organisations have agreed and the two (state) governments have also agreed. Each family will be given 40/30 plot apart from other assistance. After 23 years, this

problem is going to be solved. This is a permanent solution. I believe both governments will work together for their development as will the government of India,” Home Minister Shah said. Shah added that the development was in line with the Narendra Modi government’s resolve to solve all Northeast problems. “Reang were living in inhuman conditions. There was no drainage, no water and no healthcare. Now they will be able to live with dignity. I promise that this agreement will reach its logical conclusion,” Shah said, adding that the Bru people will become Tripura’s cit-

izens and have voting rights there. “If someone, however, wants to go to Mizoram, he/she can go,” he added.

Assam Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who accompanied Shah and was part of the negotiations as the convener of North East Democratic Alliance, said the government was planning cluster housing for the refugees and land needed for settling them would be acquired by the Tripura government.

“We have addressed grievances of the people. Once they settle down, a lot of welfare programmes will reach them,” he said, adding that Brus who have already gone to Mizoram cannot return.

Zoramthanga said the decision had been arrived at after a long discussion. “Our problem is permanently solved now,” he said.

Tripura CM Deb said, “For so many years, they were living as refugees in their own country. People tried but a solution could not be found. This is the first time two states have come together to solve this.”

Tripura royal scion Kirit Pradyot Deb Barman, who was present for the signing of the agreement, said he was giving 35 acres of land for settlement of the Bru refugees.

Will fight Bihar polls under Nitish, BJP-JD(U) tie unbreakable: Shah

SANTOSH SINGH
VAISHALI, JANUARY 16

BJP PRESIDENT and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that the NDA would contest the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections under the leadership of Chief Minister and JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar, and the RJD should not be under any illusion because the NDA is united.

Addressing a gathering at Vaishaligarh, Shah also said that those opposing the new citizenship law were “anti-Dalit” and “looking only at their vote banks”.

He blamed the Congress and TMC for violence in the wake of protests against the CAA, and asked the audience to give a missed call on a phone number to express solidarity with the new law amid slogans like ‘Bharat mata ki jai’. The minister said that human rights champions should know that the beneficiaries of CAA would be Dalits and people whose rights were taken away.

Shah also said that those raising anti-national slogans in JNU should be in jail. “Should they not be sent to jail? The (Arvind) Kejriwal government is not making recommendations of filing cases against those shouting anti-national slogans,” he said.

Regarding the future course of the NDA, he said, “We will fight the Bihar election under Nitish Kumar. The BJP-JD(U) tie is unbreakable. No one should think of making a dent in it. Lalujii (Prasad) must not nurse any dream (of breaking the NDA)... There used to be theft of fodder for cows, now we are working for protection of cows.”

Exhorting people to go to door to door to clear misconceptions about the CAA, the minister said that even Mahatma Gandhi had spoken against India shielding religious minorities. “Jawaharlal Nehru also said as much. If the Congress cannot lis-



Amit Shah in Vaishali on Thursday. *Pappi Sharma*

ten to Gandhi, they can at least listen to their leaders. The Ashok Gehlot government had spoken about protecting religious minorities. If they (Congress) do so, it is alright. If we do so, we are deemed communal,” said Shah.

Pointing out that former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and RJD chief Lalu Prasad had been vehemently opposing CAA, he said, “They should also tell us who were responsible for Partition on religious lines... Most religious minorities are Dalits and poor.”

Lauding the Narendra Modi government for abrogating Article 370, he said, “Should Ram temple not be built in Ayodhya? Within four months, we will start work on construction of a sky-touching temple at Ayodhya.”

Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi said: “RJD has been doing vote bank politics. The more the people oppose CAA, the more Modi and Shah will get stronger... Our country has made Muslims President of India, Sonia Gandhi a Christian president of AIICC... Are there such examples in Pakistan?”

Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said India would never discriminate on religious lines, but it cannot be allowed to become a dharamshala (shelter) for everyone.

Chhattisgarh House ratifies Bill to extend SC/ST quota

GARGI VERMA
RAIPUR, JANUARY 16

The Chhattisgarh Assembly on Thursday ratified the Constitution (126th) Amendment Bill. The amendment proposes to extend quota to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Lok Sabha and state Assemblies by 10 years.

In the Chhattisgarh Assembly’s first session of 2020, the Bill was unanimously passed. However, the Opposition, comprising of the BJP and the Ajit Jogi-led Janta Congress Chhattisgarh, staged a walkout at the beginning of the session.

The BJP leaders had opposed the session’s length, claiming that it is too small and accusing the government of hurrying through an important session.

In the second half of the session, the Bill was moved by state law minister Mohammed Akbar and passed unanimously.

AICC GEN SECY BACKS BAGHEL GOVT MOVE

NIA Act has undergone drastic change after amendment: Punia

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

A DAY after the Congress government in Chhattisgarh approached the Supreme Court to challenge the Constitutional validity of National Investigation Act, 2008, enacted by the then UPA government, the party’s central leadership on Thursday said the Bhupesh Baghel government had taken a “lead in the right way”. He said it was “high time” all other state governments “unite” and approach the apex court against the law.

Asked about a Congress dispensation challenging an Act enacted by the Congress-led UPA government, AICC general secretary in-charge of Chhattisgarh P L Punia told *The Indian Express* that the NIA Act has undergone a “drastic change” after it was amended last year. “It is no more the same Act. After the amend-

ment by the NDA government, it no longer remains the same NIA. It has undergone a drastic change. That is why it has been challenged and rightly challenged.”

Punia pointed out that the Congress had opposed the amendments in both Houses of Parliament, arguing that it was an attempt to make India a police state. “Earlier, the provision was that the state government was supposed to be consulted. It was mandatory to consult the Director General of Police...,” he said.

“After the amendment of the NIA Act, NIA has been converted into a parallel investigating agency, as a parallel police structure. This has never been the intention of the law passed for creation of NIA by the UPA government. And now after the amendment by the Modi government, it has lost relevance and it has gone against the federal structure of the Constitution. I think it is high-time all state

governments must unite and approach the Supreme Court. The Chhattisgarh government has taken a lead in the right way and challenged this step taken by the NDA government,” Punia said.

While Punia said the NDA government had introduced drastic changes to the Act, the original Act of 2008 gave the NIA powers to supersede the state police in the investigation and trial of terror-related offences.

The Chhattisgarh government’s petition too has challenged the original Act and not the amended law. Citing Article 131, the Chhattisgarh government has contended that the NIA Act is ultra vires the Constitution and beyond the legislative competence of Parliament since it empowers the Centre to create an agency for “investigation” which, notwithstanding the NIA, is carried out by the State Police, a subject matter of the State under Entry 2, List II, Schedule 7.

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION INDIA REGION CONFERENCE

Om Birla to lawmakers: Raise issues strongly, but with parliamentary dignity

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 16

AS THE two-day Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference of India Region began at the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Thursday, one of the major concerns raised was the increasing disruptions caused by public representatives while raising issues in Legislatures. In his inaugural address, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said that while members should raise their issues strongly and with emotions, they should do so with discipline and with parliamentary dignity.

“At this time, we have a responsibility that we follow parliamentary traditions and rules, and the fundamental questions of the people could be raised through the Parliament,” Birla said while addressing speakers, deputy speakers and officers



The conference at the UP Assembly. *Vishal Srivastav*

from different state Assemblies such as including Assam, Gujarat and Bihar. Leader of Opposition Ram Govind Chaudhary was also present.

“Our respected members should try to raise their issues strongly, emotionally but with control and discipline and by following parliamentary dignity

and with decency,” the Speaker said.

Birla added that the role of public representative is very significant in a democracy as he acts as a bridge between the government and the public. He said the polling percentage in elections has been increasing since Independence, which is a sign of

BJP received Rs 3,650 cr during Lok Sabha polls

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 16

THE BJP received Rs 3,650.76 crore in 75 days from the day of the announcement of Lok Sabha elections on March 10 to its completion on May 23 — an average of roughly Rs 48 crore every day.

This is 18 times more than what the party made during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. In 2014, the party had received Rs 192 crore from the announcement of the Lok Sabha elections on March 5 till the completion of polls on May 16. This comes to an average of Rs 2.6 crore a day.

The party has declared this in its expenditure filing report to the Election Commission (EC). All of the above income came in through cheques and drafts, according to the expenditure statement.

The BJP spent over Rs 1,264 crores on the Lok Sabha elections, which is less than half its income during the same period. This included expenditure of over Rs 325 crore on media publicity (print, electronic, bulk SMS, cable, websites, TV channels). In comparison, the BJP spent Rs 714 crore on the 2014 general elections.

In 2019, the largest expenditure on a candidate was on the BJP’s prime ministerial candidate — Narendra Modi. The party spent Rs 50 lakh on his campaign. The Congress party, on the other hand, received Rs 807 crore from the day of the announcement to completion. The party spent Rs 820 crore.

BJP came back to power last year with a greater majority. The BJP, which won 116 seats in the 2009 general elections, now has 303 seats in the Lower House.

BJP, Jana Sena join hands again

Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh): Old allies Jana Sena and BJP came together once again and announced an alliance on Thursday, seeking to emerge as the “third alternative” in Andhra Pradesh.

The reunion of the two parties, which comes after a separation of three years due to what they termed “communication gap”, may alter the political scenario in the state, where the local body elections are round the corner.

Describing it as a “historic and important development”, Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan and state BJP president Kanna Lakshmi Narayana announced the alliance at a press conference following a four-hour meeting of leaders of the two parties in Vijayawada on Thursday. They exuded confidence that the partnership would clinch power in the state in 2024. **PTI**



NEERAJ TIWARI
MUMBAI, JANUARY 16

THE MUMBAI Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) is in negotiations with the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) for monetisation of a part of its anticipated fare from two under-construction metro routes in suburban Mumbai. According to officials, the CPPIB could pay the MMRDA, up-front, a sum of about Rs 6,000 crore to Rs 8,000 crore if the plan materialises. Metropolitan Commissioner



MMRDA Commissioner R A Rajeev said fare on two routes could be monetised

give the MMRDA that money up front,” Rajeev said. The anticipated fare along with anticipated revisions multiplied by the ridership for the 30-year concession period will help determine

the NPV (net present value). The CPPIB would then collect all fares during the concession period.

“Some risk is borne by us and some by the company,” Rajeev said, adding that beyond a cer-