

“It’s only after you’ve stepped outside your comfort zone that you begin to change, grow, and transform.” Roy T. Bennett

INTERNATIONAL

NAM MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj has embarked on a three-day official visit to Azerbaijan’s capital city Baku to participate in Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministerial Conference.

The NAM Mid-Term Ministerial Conference will be held in Baku on 5-6 April under the theme of “Promoting international peace and security for sustainable development”.

During the visit, EAM will hold bilateral consultations with her Azerbaijani counterpart. The two sides will discuss bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest.

India and Azerbaijan enjoy warm and friendly relations based on historical and cultural ties.

They have growing bilateral cooperation in many areas including energy, transportation, and capacity building.

INDIA AND NEPAL TO JOINTLY LAY 900 MW HYDROPOWER PROJECT

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart KP Sharma Oli will jointly lay the foundation stone of the 900 MW Arun III hydropower project.

The foundation stone of the hydroelectricity project will be laid in Sankhuwasabha district of eastern Nepal.

The power project has been developed by Sutej Jala Vidhyut Nigam (SJVN), an Indian state-run utility.

This is the largest hydroelectric project undertaken by the India government in Nepal and it gained momentum after NDA came to power in 2014.

India will provide a total of \$ 1.5 billion for the project which is being constructed on the build, operate, own and transfer (BOOT) model.

NATIONAL

ARTICLE 370 NOT A TEMPORARY PROVISION, SAYS SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court has said that Article 370 of the Constitution which gives special status to Jammu and Kashmir is not a temporary provision

The apex court said that in its earlier verdict of 2017 in the SARFAESI case, it has been already held that Article 370 was “not a temporary provision”

Article 370 of the Indian constitution is an article that gives autonomous status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir

The article is drafted in Part XXI of the Constitution: Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions

Article 35A:

Other matters pending before the apex court relate to Article 35 A of the Constitution

Article 35A of the Indian Constitution is an article that empowers the Jammu and Kashmir state’s legislature to define “permanent residents” of the state and provide special rights and privileges to those permanent residents.

SUPREME COURT REFUSES TO STAY SC/ST ACT CHANGES, SAYS NO DILUTION HAS BEEN DONE

The SC has refused to keep in abeyance its earlier order preventing automatic arrests on complaints filed under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

SC said, “It is concerned about innocent people being put behind bars. Can the liberty of a person be taken away without due procedure? There has to be some form of verification”

SC has also said that the court was not trying to stand in the way of the rights of members of the scheduled caste/tribes and was concentrating on protecting false implication of an innocent person

On March 20, the Supreme Court banned automatic arrests and registration of criminal cases under the SC/ST Act, triggering widespread criticism and outcry from the dalit community.

The apex court said public servants can't be prosecuted without the approval of the appointing authority, and private citizens too should be arrested only after an inquiry under the law.

It further ruled that preliminary inquiry in a case under the Act would be conducted by the Deputy Superintendent of Police to ensure the allegations are not frivolous.

The amendment in the law was a bid to protect honest public servants discharging bona fide duties from being blackmailed with false cases under the Act.

Government's view

The centre, in its petition said the order "adversely affects a substantial portion of the population of India being SC/ST members"

Government said that the SC order was also "contrary to the legislative policy of the Parliament" as reflected in the SC/ST Act.

The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act:

The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is popularly known as POA, the SC/ST Act, the Prevention of Atrocities Act, or simply the Atrocities Act. The SC/ST Act was enacted on September 9, 1989. The rules for the Act were notified on March 31, 1995.

The SC/ST Act lists 22 offences relating to various patterns or behaviors inflicting criminal offences and breaking the self-respect and esteem of the scheduled castes and tribes community. This includes denial of economic, democratic and social rights, discrimination, exploitation and abuse of the legal process.

According to the SC/ST Act, the protection is provided from social disabilities such as denial of access to certain places and to use customary passage, personal atrocities like forceful drinking or eating of inedible food sexual exploitation, injury etc and atrocities

affecting properties, malicious prosecution, political disabilities and economic exploitation.

For speedy trial, Section 14 of the SC/ST Act provides for a Court of Session to be a Special Court to try offences under this Act in each district.

The prime objective of the SC/ST Act is to deliver justice to marginalized section through proactive efforts, giving them a life of dignity, self-esteem and a life without fear, violence or suppression from the dominant castes.

ONE CANDIDATE, ONE SEAT

The Election Commission has told the Supreme Court that it supports the proposal to allow one candidate to contest from only one constituency in an election. The EC expressed this view in an affidavit it filed in the petition over the matter.

The Supreme Court had in December 2017 issued notices seeking replies from the Election Commission and the Centre on the issue. At the time, the Supreme Court had said the practice of one candidate contesting multiple seats was a drain on the exchequer since it necessitated by polls.

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging Section 33(7) of the Representation of the People Act of 1951 that allows a person to contest elections to Parliament and state assemblies from two constituencies and sought an end to the practice.

Political parties across the country field senior leaders from more than one seat in a bid to ensure victory. If they win from multiple seats, these leaders are then required to vacate other seats and continue to hold only one. This means a general election is usually followed closely by a bye-election to the seats that have been vacated.

Section 33(7) of RPA:

Section 33(7) of the Representation of People's Act permits a candidate to contest any election (Parliamentary, State Assembly, Biennial Council, or bye-elections) from up to two constituencies. The provision was

introduced in 1996 prior to which there was no bar on the number of constituencies from which a candidate could contest.

One person, one vote & one candidate, one constituency is the dictum of democracy. However, as per the law, as it stands today, a person can contest the election for the same office from two constituencies simultaneously. When a candidate contests from two seats, it is imperative that he has to vacate one of the two seats if he wins both. This, apart from the consequent unavoidable financial burden on the public exchequer, government manpower and other resources for holding bye-election is also an injustice to the voters of the constituency which the candidate is quitting from.

The ECI has alternatively suggested that if existing provisions are retained then the candidate contesting from two seats should bear the cost of the bye-election to the seat that the contestant decides to vacate in the event of his/her winning both seats. The amount in such an event could be Rs 5 lakh for assembly election and Rs 10 lakh for parliament election.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RANKING FRAMEWORK (NIRF) INDIA RANKINGS 2018

The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) India Rankings 2018 have been announced. NIRF Indian Rankings 2018 was the third edition of the rankings that were introduced in the year 2016.

NIRF:

The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country.

The parameters for ranking broadly cover "Teaching, Learning and Resources," "Research and Professional Practices," "Graduation Outcomes," "Outreach and Inclusivity," and "Perception".

The 2018 rankings include nine different categories-overall, universities, engineering, colleges, management, pharmacy, medical, architecture, and law. Out of which sections

like medical, architecture and law have been introduced this year.

The Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru and Delhi's Miranda House are India's best university and college this year.

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi, Nalsar University of Law in Hyderabad and Indian Institute of Technology in Kharagpur ranked number 1 in their respective categories.

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras was declared the best engineering college.

Delhi University's Miranda House topped the college category this year as well.

Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad occupied the top position among management institutions this year also.

Ranking promotes competition among the Universities and drive them to strive for excellence. The rankings assume significance as performance of institutions has been linked with "Institutions of Eminence" scheme.

Institutions of Eminence scheme:

The institutes of eminence scheme under the Union human resource development (HRD) ministry aims to project Indian institutes to global recognition.

The 20 selected institutes will enjoy complete academic and administrative autonomy.

The government will run 10 of these and they will receive special funding.

The selection shall be made through challenge method mode by the Empowered Expert Committee constituted for the purpose.

Only higher education institutions currently placed in the top 500 of global rankings or top 50 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) are eligible to apply for the eminence tag.

The private Institutions of Eminence can also come up as Greenfield ventures provided the sponsoring organization submits a convincing perspective plan for 15 years.

HRD MINISTRY CONSTITUTES A COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE CONDUCTING OF CLASS X AND CLASS XII EXAMINATION

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has constituted a High Powered Committee to examine the entire system of conducting Class X and Class XII examination conducted by the CBSE with a view to prevent leakages.

Shri Vinay Sheel Oberoi, Retd. Secretary (Higher Education), MHRD will be the Chairperson of the 7 member High Power Committee.

The terms of reference of the Committee are as under:

- (a) To revisit all aspects related to the security checks built into the system for ensuring that the Question papers reach the examinees without tampering.
- (b) To examine and assess all areas of potential weakness in the present system of transporting question papers from the printing presses to the examinees.
- (c) To suggest ways in which the system can be made more secure with the use of technology and minimization of human intervention.

SCIENCE&TECH

ICARUS

NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has discovered the farthest individual star ever seen — an enormous blue stellar body nicknamed ICARUS located over halfway across the universe.

The star, harboured in a very distant spiral galaxy, is so far away that its light has taken nine billion years to reach Earth. It appears to us as it did when the universe was about 30% of its current age.

The star, located in a distant spiral galaxy, is at least 100 times further away than any other star previously observed, with the exception of things like the huge supernova explosions that mark the death of certain stars.

The scientists took advantage of a phenomenon called “**gravitational lensing**” to spot the star. It involves the bending of light

by massive galaxy clusters in the line of sight, which magnifies more distant celestial objects. This makes dim, faraway objects that otherwise would be undetectable, like an individual star, visible.

These observations by astronomers from NASA provide a rare and detailed look at how stars evolve, especially the most luminous stars. Detecting the amplification of a single and pinpoint background star has provided a unique opportunity to test the nature of dark matter in the cluster.
