

**“What the mind can conceive and believe, and the heart desire, you can achieve.”**  
**Norman Vincent Peale**

**INTER NATIONAL AND BILATERAL**

**FASTER VISAS FOR MINORITIES FROM THREE NATIONS**

The Home Ministry has liberalized the process of granting long-term visas (LTVs) to minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

The issue came on light because of harassment caused to Pakistani Hindu migrants for visa extension, visa transfer and grant of citizenship.

The Ministry has reduced the time limit for security clearance of applications from 45 days to 21 days.

After an application comes to the central system, it is forwarded to three agencies for verification- State government, the Intelligence Bureau, and the MHA.

Once, the replies from all three agencies are fed in the system, the application is automatically processed.

As per the Home Ministry, since 2011, nearly 30,000 Pakistanis had been granted LTVs. Presently, 1,500 such applications are still pending.

As per the state governments report, the LTVs are precursors to citizenship.

The Visa facility, first introduced in 2011 for persecuted Hindus from Pakistan.

The LTVs granted to Pakistan's Hindu from 2011 to 2014 stood at approx 14,000.

In 2015, the government granted concessions to Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Afghanistan nationals belonging to the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Christian and Jain communities who entered India on or before Dec 31.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2015, proposes citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh who came to India before 2014 has hit a hurdle.

There has been strong resistance to Bill in Assam as it seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslims from Bangladesh.

The Bill will pave way for granting citizenship to illegal Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh in Assam in violation of the Assam Accord, 1985.

As per the official figures, around 2 lakh Hindu and Sikh refugees from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan living in India.

There are around 400 Pakistani Hindu refugees' settlements in cities like Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Jaipur.

Hindu refugees from Bangladesh mostly live in West Bengal and the northeastern States.

**INDIA, IRAN PLEDGE TO MAINTAIN TRADE LEVELS**

India and Iran signed pacts on President Rouhani's visit.

**Important facts:**

Despite U.S. Sanctions to “zero” out oil imports and end engagement with Iran, India and Iran signed pacts during President Hassan Roushani's visit.

**Both the nations focused on the following areas:**

Enhancing connectivity

Strengthening cooperation in trade and economic issues.

People-to-people exchanges

Both sides also discussed issues that have arisen over the Joint Comprehensive Plan for action(JCPOA).

Recently, the U.S. pulled out of the 6 nations JCPOA and reimposed sanctions on Iran.

**NATIONAL**

**COUNTER-DRONE STRATEGY FOR AIRPORTS READY**

**Guidelines for drones:**

The government is set to unveil a framework to regulate unmanned aircraft systems in the country.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation had released draft rules for unmanned aircraft systems in November last year and proposed to ban their operation within 5 km radius of an airport and 50 km from an international border.

Aviation security **watchdog BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security)** has finalised a strategy to neutralise drones near airports.

The strategy deals with drones operating near aerodromes as the body is mandated to ensure aviation security.

The Ministry of Home Affairs may prepare a separate plan to deal with drone attacks in sensitive zones such as Parliament.

A “soft kill” approach instead of a hard kill approach has been suggested because destroying a drone with a payload of explosives or biochemical will result in an attack and serve the purpose of their handlers.

The best approach is to entrap the drones and not destroy them.

#### **BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security):**

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security is an attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation of India.

BCAS is the regulatory authority for civil aviation security in India. It is headed by an officer of the rank of Director General of Police and is designated as Commissioner of Security (Civil Aviation).

Commissioner of security (CA) is the appropriate authority for implementation of Annexure 17 to **Chicago convention of International civil aviation organization (ICAO)**.

Commissioner of security (CA) is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the National Civil Aviation Security Programme.

The main responsibility of BCAS are laying down standards and measures in respect of security of civil flights at International and domestic airports in India.

#### **EV'S HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO FUEL INDIA'S GROWTH**

A recent report by the World Health Organization revealed that 14 of the 20 most polluted cities in the world are in India.

As per the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's estimates, the sector emitted about 188 MT of CO<sub>2</sub> till 2010; road transport alone contributed to 87% of the emissions. India's current oil import dependency is about 80%.

#### **Global Efforts for Evs:**

Globally, there have been various efforts (including financial/non-financial incentives to end users) to promote EVs.

Many countries have rallied towards the EV30@30 campaign, which aims for 30% sales share of EVs by 2030.

The Netherlands, Ireland and Norway are leading the way, aiming to achieve 100% EV sales in passenger light duty vehicles and buses by 2030.

#### **Indian Initiatives:**

In India, initiatives such as the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) and Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) are concerted efforts towards building an EV market.

The procurement of over 500 electric buses by various state transport utilities is a testament to India's commitment.

India is also taking steps towards building a sustainable EV ecosystem.

The department of heavy industry, Bureau of Indian Standards, and the Automotive Research Association of India are working towards establishing various technical standards for design and manufacturing of EVs and electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) or charging infrastructure.

In a welcome step, the Indian Space Research Organization has expressed willingness to transfer its in-house technology non-exclusively to qualified production agencies.

Further, the Central Electro Chemical Research Institute (Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu) and RAASI

Solar Power Pvt. Ltd are expected to jointly start in-house lithium-ion battery manufacturing soon.

These industries form the bedrock for manufacturing electronics for EVs; policies should bridge gaps that are hindering their growth.

Despite these bottlenecks, there is merit in being ambitious about EVs.

#### **DARK CLOUDS OVER THE RTI**

The government has struck another blow against transparency and accountability. The legislative agenda of the monsoon session of Parliament says: "To amend The Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005".

The RTI Act has been under constant threat of amendments. At least two major attempts to amend the Act have been met with such strong popular resistance that the government of the day has had to back off.

Any amendment to the law should have been discussed before it went to the cabinet, as in the "pre-legislative consultation policy" of the government of India.

Bureaucratic jargon such as "consideration" is a euphemism for pushing the amendment through without due consideration of parliamentary processes.

There have been steps to steamroller legislative measures (in the garb of money Bills) that have destabilized access to information such as Aadhaar and electoral bonds.

Applications for information about amendments made under the RTI Act have been stonewalled and information denied.

Amendments to the RTI rules that were put up for public feedback have reportedly been withdrawn after objections.

There have been reports that the proposed amendments seek to change the status of the information commissions.

The spirit of the RTI law lies in not just the filing of an RTI application and getting an answer. It actually mandates the replacement

of a prevailing culture of secrecy with a culture of transparency.

Under Section 4(2) of the RTI Act, which has been poorly implemented, it says: "It shall be a constant Endeavour of every public authority to provide as much information suomotu to the public at regular intervals so that the public have minimum resort to the use of this Act to obtain information".

#### **MAKE LYNCHING A SEPARATE OFFENCE: SC**

Asking whether the people of India have lost their tolerance for each other, the Supreme Court on Tuesday condemned the recent spate of lynchings as "horrendous acts of mobocracy" and told Parliament to make lynching a separate offence.

The 45-page judgment, by a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, wonders whether the "populace of a great Republic like ours has lost the values of tolerance to sustain a diverse culture?"

According to Chief Justice Misra "The recent litany of spiralling mob violence, their horror, the grim and gruesome scenes of lynchings are made worse by the apathy of the bystanders, numbness of mute spectators, inertia of the police and, finally, the grandstanding of the incident by the perpetrators of the crimes on social media,".

It said the primary obligation of the government is to protect all individuals irrespective of race, caste, class or religion.

"Crime knows no religion and neither the perpetrator nor the victim can be viewed through the lens of race, caste, class or religion," the court observed.

It directed several preventive, remedial and punitive measures to deal with lynching and mob violence. It ordered the Centre and the States to implement the measures and file compliance reports within the next four weeks. Lynchings cannot become the order of the day, the court said.

The judgment refers to submissions by senior advocate Indira Jaising, for petitioner Tehseen Poonawalla, about self-styled vigilantes

brazenly targeting Dalits and minority community members in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi.

#### ARMY TO RESUME M777 TRIALS

The Army will resume the trials of the U.S. made M777 ultra light howitzer in the Pokhran firing range.

The Army had received four guns for the trials.

The trials will be conducted by the U.S. government and India will be an observer.

Local ammunition will be used.

In 2016, India signed a deal with the U.S. government under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme for 145 M777 guns.

Of the 145 guns, 25 will be imported while the remaining 120 will be assembled in the country in partnership with Mahindra group.

M777 gun delivery programme: Is a 155 mm, 39 calibre towed artillery gun made of titanium and aluminum alloys.

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