

The Supreme Court Collegium stood firm by its resolve to have the government appoint openly gay lawyer Saurabh Kirpal as Delhi High Court judge, saying every individual is "entitled to maintain their own dignity and individuality based on sexual orientation." The three-member collegium of Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Sanjay Kishan Kaul and K.M. Joseph took the rare decision to publish the full extent of the government's objections to Mr. Kirpal, based on his sexuality and his "passionate" advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights.

The Supreme Court Collegium has backed the right to free speech of two lawyers recommended for appointment as judges in the Madras and Bombay High Courts. "Expression of views by a candidate does not disentitle him to hold a constitutional office," the collegium said.

Nano fertilizers produced byIFFCO and dairy products from Amul will be among the first few products that are expected to be exported by the first ever National Export Cooperative Society that was approved by the Union Cabinet on January 11. The society's registration will be complete in the next few days and the first consignment will be exported in three months, a senior government official said on Thursday.

Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO), Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited (KRIBHCO), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED), Guajrat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), better known as Amul, and National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) will be the promoters of the society and contribute ₹100 crore each. The society will have an authorised share capital of ₹2,000 crore with the area of operation all over the country. It will have its registered office in Delhi.

52,000 number of nomadic Lambani families in north Karnataka, to be given a land title deed as part of the 'Hakku Patra' (land title deed) distribution drive. Prime Minister Narendra Modi distributed 'Hakku Patra' to couples during the drive's launch. This will secure the future of thousands of people.

20.99 kilometres per day, the pace of national highway (NH) construction in India, in the current financial year, according to Ministry of Road Transport and Highways data. The pace of construction that touched a record high of 37 kilometres a day in 2020-21, came down to 28.64 km a day in 2021-22.

\$1.1 billion, the amount of two loans for Pakistan delayed to be approved by the World Bank until the next fiscal year, according to The Express Tribune. The Bank's decision to withhold approval of the second RISE-II loan worth \$450 million and the second Programme for Affordable Energy (PACE-II) loan worth \$600 million will be a major blow to cash-strapped Pakistan.

\$21.9 billion, the investments in space start-ups in 2022, less than half of the \$45.7 billion funded in 2021. Last year marked the toughest period for space start-ups since the economic crisis in 2008. Investments in space start-ups dried up as venture capital backers sought safer avenues.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, a global figurehead of progressive politics, shocked the country on Thursday by announcing she would resign from office in a

NEW QUALITY CONTROL ORDERS (QCOS) FACE PUSHBACK FROM WTO MEMBERS AND DOMESTIC MANUFACTURERS

1. India's step to introduce a draft of QCO to curb Chinese import surge and boost exports to western markets is facing objections at WTO. Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is planning to issue 50 QCOs for products such as aluminium, copper items etc. QCOs are issued by various Ministries/Departments of Government of India in exercise of powers conferred by section 16 of Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Act, 2016.
2. QCO aims to ensure compliance of products to compulsory Indian Standards in public interest, protection of human, animal or plant health, prevention of unfair trade practices, etc. Items, under these orders, cannot be produced, sold/traded, imported, and stocked unless they bear BIS mark.
3. **QCO benefits:** Better quality products to consumers, helps in becoming India to be part of global supply chain through quality manufacturing.
4. **Concerns raised-**WTO members: Can be misused as trade restrictive measures and delay grant of permission for imports from specific countries. Domestic Manufacturers: Gives rise to supply-chain constraints, unreliability of Indian companies and diversion of export orders due to limited time given to industry to comply with Standards. Example, QCO on viscose staple fibres gave the industry only 30 days to comply.

THIRD MEETING OF STEERING COMMITTEE OF KEN-BETWA LINK PROJECT (SC-KBLP) HELD

1. SC- KBLP meeting highlighted that Greater Panna Landscape (GPL) council is being constituted for implementation of Landscape Management Plan (LMP) and Environment Management Plan (EMP) of project. Earlier, Integrated LMP for GPL was released by Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) in 2022.
2. It was prepared in respect of KBLP. It provides for better habitat protection, and management of flagship species such as Tigers, Vultures, and Gharial. KBLP is the first project under National Perspective Plan (NPP) for interlinking of rivers. It envisages to transfer water from Ken River to Betwa river. They both are tributaries of Yamuna. It lies in Bundelkhand, a drought-prone region, which spreads across 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP).
3. **Benefits of KBLP:** Provide water for irrigation, drinking purpose; solve droughts issue in Bundelkhand region, produce hydropower etc.
4. **Concerns of KBLP:** Lead to submergence of about 7.6% of total Panna Tiger Reserve area (critical tiger habitat); threats to faunal and floral diversity; loss of two million trees etc. In addition, two wildlife sanctuaries namely Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary and Rani Durgawati Wildlife Sanctuary of MP and one, Ranipur Wildlife Sanctuary of UP have been approved by state government for bringing them under project Tiger.
5. NPP was prepared in 1980 by the then Ministry of Irrigation (now MoJS), to transfer water from water surplus basins to water-deficit basins. Based on NPP, National Water Development Agency (NWDA) identified 30 river links: 16 under Peninsular component (including KBLP) and 14 under Himalayan Component.

CENTRE PROPOSES CHANGES TO INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE (IBC), 2016

1. IBC is a time-bound, market mechanism for reorganization and insolvency resolution of corporate loans in financial stress. It is implemented by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI). To strengthen its functioning, Ministry of Corporate Affairs has proposed below changes in IBC, 2016.
2. **Proposed changes in technology-**Developing an e-platform to handle multiple processes under IBC such as case management, delivery of notices etc. with minimum human interface. Financial Creditors to ascertain default or dispute occurrence at Information Utilities before CIRP application. Adjudicating Authority (AA) to mandatorily admit application and initiate CIRP (if default is established), appoint Interim Resolution Professional on IBBI recommendation and it can impose penalties on IBC violations.
3. **Proposed changes in Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)** applications admission-Financial Creditors to ascertain default or dispute occurrence at Information Utilities before CIRP application. Adjudicating Authority (AA) to mandatorily admit application and initiate CIRP (if default is established), appoint Interim Resolution Professional on IBBI recommendation and it can impose penalties on IBC violations.
4. **Proposed changes in Insolvency Resolution Process -**Redesigning Fast-track corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (FIRP). Expanding

matter of weeks. The 42 year old — who steered the country through natural disasters, the COVID pandemic, and its worst ever terror attack — said she no longer had “enough in the tank”. “I am human. We give as much as we can for as long as we can and then it’s time. And for me, it’s time,” she said at a meeting of members of her Labour Party. Ms. Ardern said she would step down no later than February 7.

The price of rice had fallen in the last week, said Union Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra, countering the Kerala government’s stand that the prices had increased after the Centre’s decision to discontinue the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). Talking to reporters here on Thursday, Mr. Chopra also said the Centre would assess the domestic production and demand for sugar, before taking a decision to increase the sugar export quota.

The Army has begun the process for selection of women officers for command postings in the rank of Colonel, which has so far been the domain of male officers. According to sources, a Special No. 3 Selection Board is being conducted for promotion of women officers from the rank of Lieutenant Colonel to Colonel from January 9 to 22. This flows from the Supreme Court judgment in 2021 upholding an earlier judgment granting permanent commission and command postings to women officers in all arms and services other than combat.

The number of girls who are out of school continued to decline across age groups in 2022 from the 2018 figures, according to the Annual School Education Report (ASER), 2022 of the non-governmental organisation Pratham. This lays to rest fears that economic stress on families during COVID-19 will force them to withdraw girls from schools and push them into early marriages. In 2022, the all-India figure for girls in the 11-14 age group not enrolled in school stood at 2% as against 4.1% in 2018. In other words, the proportion of girls in this age band who were out of school dropped by half. This figure is around 4% only in Uttar Pradesh and is lower in all other States.

The first fuselage for the Indian Army’s contract for six AH-64E Apache attack helicopters has rolled out of the Tata Boeing Aerospace Ltd. (TBAL) facility in Hyderabad, the joint venture between Tata Advanced Systems Ltd. and the aircraft manufacturer Boeing. The first Apache is scheduled to be delivered to the Army in February 2024.

Pre-packaged Insolvency Resolution Framework (PRIRP) applicability to a broader range of companies in addition to MSMEs. Limiting real estate cases outcomes to default projects only. Appointment of administrator in specific CIRP by Central government etc.

5. **Proposed changes in Liquidation Process**-Recasting liquidation process to enable Committee of Creditors (CoC) to request AA for direct dissolution, if liquidation is not feasible. Eliminating duplication of activities between CIRP and Liquidation Process. CoC to supervise and support liquidator’s functioning, and take all decisions in liquidation by simple majority etc.
6. **Proposed changes in other areas**-IBBI to register and regulate a special class of valuers for rendering all valuation-related services.

INDIA FAST-TRACKS ARUNACHAL DAMS, EXPEDITES STALLED PROJECTS FEARING WATER WAR BY CHINA

1. In response to Chinese dams being built in north-east, India has initiated its biggest hydroelectric project in Upper Subansiri in Arunachal Pradesh (AR) to reduce the adverse effects of Chinese dam. Also, India is moving three stalled hydro projects in AP for possible allocation to National Hydroelectric Power Corporation after recommendations of evaluation committee and in-principal permission by Ministry of Power.
2. China plans to construct 60,000MW hydropower project on Yarlung Zangbo (Brahmaputra) at Medog on border with AR. After construction, China plans to divert Brahmaputra water from the project to its northern arid region. Three more projects i.e., 640 MW project at Dagu, 710 MW project at Bayu & 800 MW project at Zhongyu is in advance stage of planning.
3. Concerns associated with increasing Chinese Infrastructure-Impact lower riparian states, particularly India including environmental consequences. Diversion of water could strain India's agricultural need in northeast region. Use of water infrastructure as a form of territorial demarcation and control. Causes flood like situation in Assam and AR.
4. **Brahmaputra River**-It originates from Kailash ranges of Himalayas. After flowing through Tibet, it enters India through AP and flows through Assam and Bangladesh before joining Bay of Bengal. It accounts for around 30 percent of India's freshwater resources and 40 percent of its whole hydropower potential. Tributaries: Subansiri, Borgong, Dhansiri (North) Manas, etc on North bank; and Noadehing, Buridehing, Desang, Dikhow, Bhogdoi etc on South Bank.

HYDERABAD TO HOST INDIA’S FIRST FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (IR) CENTRE ON HEALTHCARE, LIFE SCIENCES

1. Centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) will be set up in collaboration with World Economic Forum (WEF), an autonomous organization (HQ: Geneva, Switzerland). C4IR will be the 18th centre in WEF’s fourth IR network, spanning four continents, and it will focus on life sciences and healthcare.
2. Fourth IR, also known as Industry 4.0, is a collective term for converging technologies which blurs the distinction between physical, digital and biological realms. Industry 4.0 builds upon Industry 3.0 which was largely based on use of electronics and information technology.
3. **Significance of Industry 4.0:** Impacting advances in Science and Technology as well as processes of businesses, Industry 4.0 brings multiple possibilities such as: Personalized and affordable healthcare, integrating MSMEs in global value chains, Ease of living, ensuring long-term gains in efficiency and productivity etc. Concerns: Job Loss (due to automation), Increased inequalities, Privacy and Security concerns etc.
4. **India Initiatives**-To tap Industry 4.0 benefits a number of large-scale initiatives to harness digital technologies are taken such as Unified Payments Interface, Aadhar, E-shram portal, e-NAM, Direct Benefit Transfer, Start-up India etc.



“If you moving towards your goal that is clear, bright and shining; then the dark shadows will always fall behind”

DR. KHAN
(KSG)