

DAILY PT POINTERS

6th August, 2024



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Hasina quits, flees Bangladesh, lands in India as protests surge

The country's longest-serving PM airlifted out of Dhaka and lands in Hindon Air Force station near Delhi; she seeks asylum in U.K.; an interim govt. will take over, says Army chief; protesters storm the PM's residence after defying a curfew order

Rabiul Alam
DHAKA

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who had been in power for the past 15 years, resigned and fled the country on Monday noon by a helicopter after weeks of deadly unrest in which more than 300 people have been killed.

The country is now set to have an interim government.

Later in the day, Ms. Hasina landed at the Hindon Air Force station near Delhi. Ms. Hasina has requested asylum from the U.K. Her sister Rehana, who holds U.K. citizenship, is accompanying her, sources told *The Hindu*.

In Dhaka, Army Chief Gen. Waker-Uz-Zaman confirmed her resignation



Reign ends: Protesters storm outgoing Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina's palace in Dhaka on Monday. AFP

in an address to the nation. He urged protesters to stop the unrest and pledged to meet their demands and bring justice for those who

were killed.

He said he would talk to the President to form the interim government and had held talks with the

main Opposition parties and civil society members, but not the Awami League, Ms. Hasina's party. The Army chief will also hold a

meeting with protesting student leaders.

"I am taking full responsibility. If the situation gets better, there is no need for an emergency. We hope to go towards a better situation together. The country has suffered a lot, the economy has been hit, and many people have been killed. It is time to stop the violence," said the General.

On Monday, as a part of the 'March to Dhaka' campaign demanding Ms. Hasina's resignation, called by the Students Against Discrimination, thousands started gathering at the main points of Dhaka, defying a curfew order.

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MORE REPORTS

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- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who had been in power for the past 15 years, resigned and fled the country by a helicopter after weeks of deadly unrest in which more than 300 people have been killed.
- The situation went uncontrolled following weeks of demonstrations over a controversial job quota system
- The country is now set to have an interim government.
- India is closely following the fast-paced developments in Dhaka. India's national security adviser (NSA) and senior military officials met the Hasina at the Hindon Airbase.
 - Now Indo-Bangladesh trade 'halted' with the Bangladesh government announcing a three-day trade holiday, excluding essential services, through a notification.

The Hindu-Governance(GSII)-Page 1

L-G can nominate 10 aldermen to Delhi corporation, rules SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday held that the authority of the Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi to nominate 10 persons with special knowledge of municipal administration to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi is a statutory duty attached to his office and he is not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.

The case was reserved for judgment by a Bench of Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Justices P.S. Narasimha and J.B. Pardiwala on May 17, 2023. Justice Narasimha authored the judgment for the Bench.

The Bench held that the power of the L-G is drawn from Section 3(3)(b)(i) of

High-stakes battle

A timeline of the tussle over the right to appoint aldermen

December 2022: AAP comes to power in the MCD

January 2023: L-G issues a notification appointing 10 persons as aldermen in the civic body

March 2023: Delhi government approaches SC, seeks quashing of 'illegal' notification

March 2023: L-G argues he

is Delhi's 'administrator', not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers

May 2023: SC observes that by not acting on the advice of the government, L-G could destabilise elected civic body

August 2024: SC observes that L-G has the statutory power under the DMC Act to appoint 10 aldermen

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AGAINST SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY: AAP; BJP HAILS APEX COURT DECISION
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- The Bench held that the power of the L-G is drawn from Section 3(3)(b)(1) of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957.
- The Bench referred to a Constitution Bench judgment which had laid down that the executive power of the Delhi government would conform to a parliamentary law dealing with subjects in the State and Concurrent Lists of the 7th Schedule of the Constitution.

Do you know?

Article 239AA of the Constitution of India contains special provisions for the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

The Hindu –Governance(GSII)-Page-3

Ladki Bahin Yojana is a beneficiary scheme, not discriminatory: Bombay HC

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday said the Maharashtra government's 'Ladki Bahin Yojana' is a beneficiary scheme for women and cannot be said to be discriminatory.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by city-based Chartered Accountant Naveed Abdul Saeed Mulla, seeking to quash the scheme.

The Bench said in what manner the government has to frame a scheme is out of the "judicial purview". "It is a policy decision, so we cannot interfere unless there is violation of any fundamental rights," the court said.

The Bench dismissed the PIL but said it was not



imposing any cost on the petitioner.

Under the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, which was announced in the State budget, ₹1,500 is slated to be transferred into the bank accounts of eligible women in the age group of 21 to 65 years whose family income is less than ₹2.5 lakh.

The PIL claimed the scheme was politically motivated and was actually a "freebie", introduced by the government to "bribe voters". The petitioner's advocate, Owais Pechkar,

argued that taxpayers' money should not be used for such schemes.

The HC Bench, however, questioned if the court could fix the priorities of schemes for the government. The petitioner has to differentiate between a freebie and a social welfare scheme, it said.

The Bench said as a court it cannot ask the government to introduce one scheme or the other.

Mr. Pechkar claimed the scheme discriminated among women as only those who earned less than ₹2.5 lakh per year were eligible for its benefit.

To this, the HC said, "This is a beneficiary scheme for some women. How is it discrimination? Some woman earning ₹10 lakh and another woman earning ₹2.5 lakh... do they fall under the same class or group?"

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On doorstep delivery of alcohol

What are the arguments for and against online delivery of alcohol? How much of India consumes liquor? Can such a system make it safer for women to access alcohol? How should governments regulate liquor consumption?

EXPLAINER

Parth Sharma
Siddhesh Zadey
Vid Karmakar

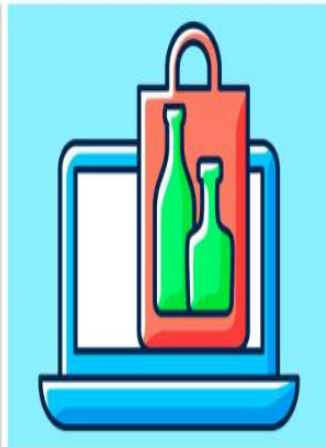
The story so far:

The States of Delhi, Karnataka, Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Kerala are or were mulling plans to allow the doorstep delivery of alcohol through platforms like Swiggy, BigBasket, and Zomato. India has seen a steady rise in alcohol consumption. The recorded per capita consumption has increased from 1.6 litres in 2003-2005 to 2.2 litres in 2010, then to 3.5 litres in 2016-2018. With \$52 billion in revenue, India is the sixth largest alcohol market worldwide. According to a Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment survey in 2019, there were about 16 crore alcohol users in India in the 10-75 year age group in 2018. Medically, the safe limit for alcohol consumption is zero millilitres. Alcohol use causes three lakh deaths in the country every year.

Why doorstep delivery?

There are two main arguments in favour of doorstep delivery of alcohol. First, that excise taxes on alcohol sales can help generate revenue for Central and State governments. Across States, taxes on alcohol sales contribute up to a quarter of all revenue generated for governments. Second, doorstep delivery can help reduce drunk-driving incidents and prevent road traffic crashes and injuries. In India, 6-8% of fatal road traffic fatalities are due to alcohol use.

A third argument is that doorstep deliveries may not threaten the safety of women consumers. There is some evidence from Kerala that shutting bars selling hard liquor reduced on-premise violence against women. Doorstep delivery options might have a similar effect, especially for women who live alone or with other women.



GETTY IMAGES

However, this argument is on a slippery slope: for the majority of India's women, safety cannot be presumed as domestic violence related to alcohol use is rampant. So while doorstep delivery will help women access alcohol without social stigma – a possible advantage in itself – whether it could reduce violence against them is suspect.

What are the arguments against?

Studies to date agree that for India, the costs due to alcohol use exceed economic benefits from alcohol sales. Second, schemes with doorstep delivery of alcohol assume people will change their drinking and socialising behaviours in response to the new option. It is reasonable but requires concrete evidence. There is some evidence that the availability of alcohol on demand can increase consumption, promote binge drinking, and lead to harms related to alcohol use.

Similarly, it is not straightforward to assume doorstep alcohol delivery can reduce drunk driving. There are several other, evidence-based policies that can help deal with that issue including sobriety checkpoints, stringent penalties for repeat offenders, and increasing availability of public transport and other ride-share options.

What are the effects of alcohol consumption?

Alcohol is a carcinogen and causes at least seven types of cancers. Alcohol consumption also increases the risk of injuries, abuse of other substances, mental illnesses, diabetes mellitus, liver disease, diseases of the heart and blood vessels, and chronic kidney diseases. Along with health implications for the user, male alcohol misuse increases the risk and severity of inter-partner violence. Treatment of abuse and injuries due

to alcohol consumption are expected to cost India more than 13 lakh crore between 2011 and 2050. Adding productivity losses raises this to 121.3 lakh crore. The revenue to governments from excise taxes will be only one-fifth of the financial losses. Worldwide, the alcohol industry is known for intense lobbying including efforts to weaken health warning labels. The alcohol industry views low- and middle-income countries as emerging markets. In India, the industry has been known to advocate against alcohol use reduction policies despite evidence of its effectiveness.

What can governments do?

Except for some national policies – including drunk driving laws and health warning labels – alcohol-use policies have been delegated to States, resulting in wide variation in policy framing and implementation. The instruments available to State and Central governments allow them to mitigate harms due to alcohol use through cross-sectoral public health approaches. They include restricting the availability and marketing of alcohol, higher taxes, enforcement of drunk-driving laws, and higher investment in cost-beneficial psychosocial treatments of alcohol use disorders. So if doorstep delivery is to be offered, for example, States can charge the trade-off for consumers from whether they should order in to whether they should drink at all – which they can achieve by setting higher prices and taxes.

In tandem, governments should work with health departments and other organisations to monitor the impact of doorstep delivery on alcohol consumption. Companies offering these services must share accurate data with the government to understand the health and economic burden. The decision should be revised if harms are evident.

Vid Karmakar is the founder and CEO of Cancer Foundation. Parth Sharma is founding editor of Nirvana.org. Siddhesh Zadey is a co-founder of Association for Socially Amenable Research.

THE GIST

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Do you know ?

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Why was a customs duty hike imposed for lab chemicals?

What are the different kinds of chemicals which are imported into the country? How important are these chemicals for scientific research? Is Ethanol also imported into the country?

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

The Finance Ministry has withdrawn a customs duty hike on imported laboratory chemicals, which was proposed post the Budget, after scientists raised a furore.

What are laboratory chemicals?

Imported chemicals, reagents, and enzymes come under the category of laboratory chemicals and are vital to experimental research across nearly every domain of scientific research. They comprise oxidisers, corrosive acids, and compressed gas, that are used by researchers to conduct experiments and even make new products. Outside of research settings, the medical diagnostics industry is run on laboratory chemicals. Closely affiliated to these chemicals are laboratory instruments such as funnels, beakers, test tubes and burners. Because

these chemical compounds have a wide range of properties and are potentially hazardous, they are regulated and their imports scrutinised.

Most of such chemicals are niche products and can be fairly expensive. The Customs Department defines laboratory chemicals as “all chemicals, organic or inorganic, whether or not chemically defined, imported in packings not exceeding 500 gms or 500 millilitres and which can be identified with reference to the purity, markings or other features to show them to be meant for use solely as laboratory chemicals.”

What was the issue?

The Budget documents released on July 23, silently hiked the Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on these chemicals to 150% from the existing 10%. The matter came to light with scientists from reputed, publicly funded research laboratories in India reporting on social media platforms, such as X, on having received emails from

suppliers – typically there are specialised companies that trade in these chemicals – that the chemicals had become expensive. For instance, a batch of products that usually cost ₹1,00,000 before the Budget would now cost ₹2,50,000. There was also a 25% hike on the plastic components imported for laboratory uses. Researchers were flummoxed by the steep increase and some told *The Hindu* that they believed it to be a “misprint.” Several senior scientists wrote to the Ministry of Science and Technology asking for clarity. However an issue of customs duty must ultimately be dealt with by the Ministry of Finance along with the Commerce Ministry.

Why are imported chemicals a must?

India is a major pharmaceutical and chemicals manufacturer and also an exporter of complex chemicals. However, there isn't enough of local demand among Indian research institutions for

companies to make the substantial capital investments required to produce niche chemicals, Dr. Vinod Scaria, a biologist, told *The Hindu*. A key feature of experimental research is trying to replicate results of experiments conducted abroad and this often requires the exact materials used.

How was the issue resolved?

As it emerged, the hiked up rate wasn't a misprint. The customs department did this as it wanted to reign in imports of ethanol that were being brought in as ‘laboratory chemicals’ to avoid the customs duty of 150%. There are broadly two kinds of ethanol. Ethanol, of varying grades, sourced from grain and used in the manufacture of alcohol and, ‘denatured’ ethanol, which is ethanol mixed with additives and unfit for consumption. The latter also comes in grades but is used in laboratories and in commercial applications.

Scientists told *The Hindu* that denatured alcohol is made by several local manufacturers and doesn't usually need to be imported. However, the revised Finance Ministry notification puts in some additional caveats that may still impose some delays in the procurement of such chemicals. It states that while the duty rate would revert back to the original rate, all imported laboratory chemicals need to be accompanied by a letter that says the goods will only be used in a laboratory and for research and not further traded for commercial gains.

THE GIST

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Revocation of Article 370 a ‘watershed moment’: Modi

The Prime Minister says that the move started a new era of progress in the Union Territory; Congress says BJP’s policy on J&K neither respects *Kashmiriyat* nor upholds *Jamhuriyat*

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Marking the fifth anniversary of the reading down of Article 370 of the Constitution, which accorded special status to Jammu and Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the step as a “watershed moment in the nation’s history” that started “a new era of progress” in the Union Territory.

Targeting the Modi government over its claims on the revocation of Article 370, the Congress demanded that the Assembly elections be conducted as per the Supreme Court deadline.

In a post on social media platform X, Mr. Modi said, “I assure the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh that our government will keep working for them and fulfil their aspirations in the coming times”.

He said the move to scrap the provisions meant that the Constitution was implemented at these places in letter and spirit, in line with the vision of the great men and women who had made the Constitution.

“With abrogation came



Tight security: An official standing guard on the fifth anniversary of the removal of special status for J&K, in Srinagar. AP/WIDE WORLD

portunity for women, youth, backward, tribal and marginalised communities, who were deprived of the fruits of development. At the same time, it has ensured that corruption, which plagued Jammu and Kashmir for decades, has been kept at bay,” he added.

Hitting back, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that the BJP’s policy on J&K and Ladakh neither respected *Kashmiriyat* (Kashmiri identity) nor upholds *Jamhuriyat* (democracy).

‘Reality is different’
“The Modi government had claimed that this move

grate Jammu and Kashmir, boost economic development of the region and prevent terrorism and separatism. However, the reality is starkly different,” the Congress chief said.

He claimed that there have been 683 fatal terror attacks, resulting in the martyrdom of 258 security personnel and the loss of 170 civilian lives.

There have been 25 terror attacks in the Jammu region since Mr. Modi took oath as Prime Minister for the third time and these attacks have claimed the lives of 15 soldiers and injured 27 others, Mr. Kharge added.

“Targeted killings of

come a norm in the past few years,” he charged.

Talking about unemployment in J&K, he said it stands at 10%, while 65% of government department posts remained vacant since 2019. And despite the introduction of the New Industrial Policy in 2021, a mere 3% of investments have materialised on the ground and 40% of projects under the PM’s Development Package remain pending, Mr. Kharge said.

“Jammu and Kashmir’s net State domestic product (NSDP) growth rate has declined from 13.28% (April 2015-March 2019) to 8.73% post-2019. The people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh yearn for normalcy, a sentiment they conveyed to Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Yatra,” the Congress chief said.

“We demand that elections are held according to the deadline set by the Supreme Court so that people can elect their own representatives, secure constitutional rights and put a full stop to this mechanism of being ‘ruled by bureaucracy’.” The Indian National Congress stands firmly with the people of these regions, which are an integral part of India,” Mr.

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- The Centre on August 5, 2019 revoked Article 370 of the Constitution which provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian Union.
- The Centre also brought the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act that bifurcated the erstwhile State into two Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-IR(GSII)

India To Host Bay Of Bengal Initiative For Multi-Sectoral Technical And Economic Cooperation – BIMSTEC Business Summit



- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization that was established on 06 June 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Initially known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), the organisation is now known as BIMSTEC and comprises seven Member States with the admission of Myanmar on 22 December 1997, and Bhutan and Nepal in February 2004. On 06 June 1997, representatives of the Governments of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand came together in Bangkok, and signed the 'Declaration on the Establishment of the Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIST-EC)'

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-Defense(GSIII)

First Multinational Air Exercise 'Tarang Shakti 2024' To Begin At Sular In Tamil Nadu



- India will host its first multinational air exercise 'Tarang Shakti 2024' from today in Sular, Tamilnadu. In the exercise, nearly 30 countries will participate, and out of 30, ten countries will join the exercise with their fighter aircraft.
- The exercise is being conducted in two phases, which aims to showcase India's defense prowess and provide a platform for participating militaries to foster interoperability.