

DAILY PT POINTERS

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Ahead of PM's Paris trip, Rafale, Scorpene deals reach final leg

Modi has been invited to visit AI summit in France on February 10 and 11; government-to-government deals estimated at \$10 billion likely to be placed for approval before Cabinet Committee on Security in the next couple of weeks, sources say

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Two large defence deals between India and France are being finalised, amid expectations that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Paris in February for the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit to be hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron.

The deals, together estimated at over \$10 billion, will include the purchase of 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, and three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines. The two deals are expected to be put before the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) for approval in the next couple of weeks, sources said.

Shopping list
As Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to be in Paris in February, India is looking to seal arms deals

WHAT THE COUNTRY WANTS?

- 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Navy's aircraft carriers
- Three more Scorpene-class conventional submarines
- The two deals are expected to be put before the Cabinet Committee on Security for approval soon

It is just matter of completing the formalities of the acquisition process and we expect that if not this month, next month, hopefully, this [Scorpene submarines] and Rafale-M deals should be signed

Navy chief Admiral **DINESH K. TRIPATHI** in December

India needs the naval version of the Rafale for INS Vikrant

"The expectation is that PM Modi will visit Paris to attend the AI Summit and will also have a bilateral component. So both sides are working to tie up the two deals which are in the

final stages of conclusion," an informed source said. This was also independently confirmed by other sources.

The French President's office has already an

nounced that Mr. Modi has been invited for the Artificial Intelligence Summit on February 10 and 11. France says the meet will focus on actions to ensure that the global AI sector can drive beneficial outcomes.

Final stage

In response to a question at his annual press conference last month, Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi said that both deals are in the final stage and could be completed next month. "It is just a matter of completing the formalities of the acquisition process and we expect that if not this month, next month, hopefully, this [Scorpene submarine] and the Rafale-M deal should be signed," he had said.

On the Rafale-M deal, the Navy chief had said it

was "one level short of taking it to the CCS (Cabinet Committee on Security)" for clearance, which will be followed by the signing of the contract. As it is a government-to-government deal, it is expected to be implemented quickly.

The deal for three Scorpene submarines is a repeat order to the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, which is building them in partnership with the Naval Group of France. Of the six submarines from the earlier contract, five have been inducted.

The last one, *Vagsheer*, is set to be commissioned on January 15 in Mumbai, in the presence of Mr. Modi, along with two other frontline platforms.

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Four-lane Banihal bypass opens in J&K's Ramban

The 2.35-km stretch, strategically located on NH-44, will boost 'national security logistics' and tourism, significantly reduce travel time for vehicles headed to Kashmir Valley, says Nitin Gadkari

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Union Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Sunday described the completion of the Banihal bypass in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district as a milestone in strengthening "national security logistics" and enhancing "tourism prospects of the region".

Taking to X, Mr. Gadkari announced the completion of the four-lane 2.35-km stretch to Banihal town, built at a cost of ₹224.44 crore. Strategically located on the Ramban-Banihal section of National Highway 44, it effectively addresses the persistent bottlenecks caused by roadside markets and shops, Mr. Gadkari said.

He said two-lane traffic will be allowed initially and four-lane traffic permitted after "junction development" within 15 days.

The Minister said this critical infrastructure ensured unhindered traffic flow, significantly reducing



Smooth ride: The newly constructed four-lane 2.35-km bypass to Banihal town in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district on Sunday. ANI

the Kashmir Valley. "Beyond improving regional connectivity, the bypass strengthens national security logistics and enhances tourism prospects in the region," he said.

NH-44 is a major highway in India. The longest in the country, it stretches from Srinagar in the north to Kanniyakumari in the south.

The Centre has em-

weather road connecting the Kashmir Valley with the rest of the country. Travel time on the 290-km-long Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, which is part of NH-44, has reduced from nine hours to around six hours after significant upgrades such as tunnels.

However, the highway passing through the tough mountains of Ramban district posed a major

the Banihal area. Multiple tunnels, including the critical Marog-Digdol and Digdol-Khuni-Nallah, are in the final stages to ensure seamless traffic on the highway. The upgrade of the 32-km stretch between Ramban and Banihal which is under way, will reduce travel time between Srinagar and Jammu, making the Kashmir Valley very easy to reach. National

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President, PM to attend Jan 9-10 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas event in Bhubaneswar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 5

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 18th edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention, a key initiative of the government to connect and engage with the Indian diaspora, in Bhubaneswar on January 9. President of Trinidad and Tobago, Christine Carla Kangaloo, the chief guest, will address the gathering virtually.

President Droupadi Murmu will deliver the valedictory address on January 10 and confer the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, which recognises individuals and organisations that have made significant contributions in fields such as social work, humanitarian efforts, and enhancing India's global standing. As many as 27 individuals and organisations will be honoured this year, from countries

like the US, Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, Moldova, Myanmar, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated on January 9 to mark Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa to India in 1915.

In a statement Sunday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said ahead of the January 9-10 convention, the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be observed on January 8. Overall, the three-day event will see participation by a large number of overseas Indians, including top businessmen, entrepreneurs and economists from over 50 countries, the MEA said.

This year's theme is "Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat", aimed at celebrating the bond between India and its overseas Indian community, the MEA statement said.

The convention, the MEA said, will also offer an opportunity for dialogue between the

EXPLAINED E Growing strength

THE INDIAN diaspora is now over 35.4-million strong, with 19.5 million Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and 15.8 million NRIs. The US and the UAE are home to the largest groups of diaspora, with over 2 million PIOs in the US and more than 3.5 million NRIs in the UAE. These communities continue to play a crucial role in India's economy, besides solidifying ties with these nations.

Indian government and its overseas citizens, allowing for discussions on policies affecting the diaspora – visa regulations, investment opportunities, and

community welfare. It will also showcase India's potential as a hub for investment, innovation, and collaboration, encouraging overseas Indians to contribute to the nation's development.

Coming just days ahead of the first anniversary of the inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the PM will also inaugurate an exhibition at the venue, titled 'Vishwaroop Ram – The Universal Legacy of Ramayana'.

There would be another exhibition on the diaspora's contribution to technology and Viksit Bharat, and a third on the spread and evolution of the Indian diaspora, which will showcase rare documents of people who migrated from Mandvi in Gujarat to Muscat in Oman.

The PBD convention will have five thematic plenary sessions including one on 'Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers: Stories of Migrant Skills'.

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi remembered the courageous Rani Velu Nachiyar on her birth anniversary today. Shri Modi remarked that she waged a heroic fight against colonial rule, showing unparalleled valour and strategic brilliance.
- Born in 1730, Rani Velu Nachiyar was the first queen of India who fought against British rule. She is known as "Veeramangai" (brave woman) by the Tamils. After her husband was assassinated, she spent eight years under the protection of Hyder Ali and prepared her army and planned to confront the British with her allies.
- Rani Velu Nachiyar defeated the British in 1780 with the help of her army and allies and regained her empire. Her battle is considered an important chapter in India's freedom struggle.

Indian Express-Economy(GSIII)-Page 13

PEOPLE RESEARCH ON INDIA'S CONSUMER ECONOMY WORKING PAPER

'Income disparity reduced in FY23; top 10% still holds large share of national income'

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 5

AFTER WORSENING in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21, income inequality in India has reduced in 2022-23, suggesting effective post-pandemic recovery measures, a working paper released by the People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE) showed. However, there is "entrenched concentration of wealth among the top income earners" which coupled with the struggles of the bottom 10 per cent, signals the need for sustained, inclusive economic strategies, the paper said.

While economic growth has been achieved, income inequality has seen periods of both improvement and deterioration. The Gini index improved from 0.463 post-independence to 0.367 in 2015-16 but worsened to 0.506 by 2020-21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and then improved again to 0.410 in 2022-23.

The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption among individuals or households within

THE GINI INDEX

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an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality.

While the decline in the Gini index from 0.506 in 2020-21 to 0.410 in 2022-23 suggests improvement in income disparities, the paper flagged the concentration of wealth among the top income earners. Investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, along with social safety nets and progressive taxation, are pivotal for ensuring that the benefits of growth are equitably distributed, the paper said.

Social welfare schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

GINI INDEX measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution

(MGNREGA), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and financial inclusion initiatives have led to a slight increase in the income share of the bottom 50 per cent. The bottom 50 per cent, which includes labourers, traders, small business owners, and small and marginal farmers, saw their share of total household income rise from 15.84 per cent in 2020-21 to 22.82 per cent in 2022-23, even as it stayed lower than 24.07 per cent share in 2015-16.

The income share of the middle 40 per cent rose to 46.6 per cent in 2022-23 from 43.9 per cent earlier. However, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21 exacerbated existing inequalities, with the income share of the top 10 per cent rising to 38.6 per cent in

2020-21 from 29.7 per cent in 2015-16 due to digitisation and boom in sectors like technology and e-commerce during the pandemic even as the bottom 50 per cent struggled with job losses and economic instability, it said.

"Despite a slight decrease to 30.6 per cent in 2022-23, the top 10 per cent still hold a significant portion of national income. For the bottom 10 per cent, the pandemic period saw their share drop to 1.1 per cent in 2020-21, the lowest point in the dataset, before a slight recovery to 2.4 per cent in 2022-23. The top 1 per cent saw significant growth in their income share during this period, peaking at 9.0 per cent in 2020-21 before slightly declining to 7.3 per cent in 2022-23," it said. India's economic journey reflects a "sea-saw" pattern of inequality, with periods of progress often countered by external disruptions or policy shortcomings, the paper said. "The post-pandemic improvements offer a hopeful sign, but sustaining this progress requires vigilance, adaptive policymaking, and a commitment to reducing disparities across all segments of society," it said.

- **Income inequality in India** has steadily declined over the years with the support of **government initiatives** and **social welfare programmes**
- The income share of top 10% of the population, which was 1.82 times higher than the bottom 50% in 2004-05, declined to 1.34 times in 2022-23.
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and various other financial inclusion initiatives have played a key role in uplifting the bottom 50% of the population, as per the paper titled 'Evolution of Income Inequality in India Since Independence: Results from India's Household Income Surveys'.

Indian Express-Governance(GSII)-Page 14

Why 1978 'anti-conversion' law in Arunachal could now be enforced

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 5

THE ARUNACHAL PRADESH government is working to bring a 1978 law against "forceful" conversion out of cold storage by framing rules for its implementation, 46 years after it was enacted.

What is the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act?

The law, enacted by the then Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh's first Legislative Assembly, prohibits religious conversion "by use of force or inducement or by fraudulent means". It entails punishment of imprisonment for up to two years and a fine of up to Rs 10,000 for the offence of "converting or attempting to convert" forcefully "from one religious faith to another faith."

The Act also requires that every act of conversion be reported to the Deputy Commissioner of the district concerned, and

punishes the person conducting the conversion for failure to do so. Since it was enacted in 1978, successive governments have not framed the rules for its implementation, because of which it lay dormant for nearly five decades.

Why was the Act introduced?

Arunachal Pradesh is home to a number of different small ethnic communities with an array of different beliefs and practices. The Monpas and Sherdukpens of West Arunachal Pradesh bordering Tibet and Bhutan practise Mahayana Buddhism, while the Khampits and Singphos in Eastern Arunachal practise Theravada Buddhism.

Many other tribes engage in polytheistic nature and ancestor worship. Of these, the worship of Donyi Polo in particular – practised by the Tani group of tribes comprising the Nyishis, Adis, Apatanis, Galos, Misings and Tagins – has taken an institutionalised form over the years.

Unlike other hilly North Eastern states

like Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, Christianity entered Arunachal only in the 1950s.

This was not just due to the difficult terrain, but also the colonial policy of isolating the "frontier regions", which included restrictions on the entry of missionaries. These restrictions continued after Independence via the Inner Line system.

Missionary efforts in the foothill areas of Assam led to inroads in the 1950s. The first church in Arunachal was set up in 1957 at Rayang village in the present-day district of East Siang, close to Assam's Dhemajidistrict. In the coming decades, census data indicated a steady growth in the number of people identifying as Christians – from 0.79% of the population in 1971 to 4.32% in 1981.

Communities such as the Padam, Adi, Nocte and Nyishi, located near the foothill regions, in particular witnessed massive change, which triggered "debates about the

various ways in which missionaries proselytise, the socio-cultural changes that conversion brought to the respective tribes, and what level of threat conversion poses to indigenous religions" in the state Assembly, sociologists Bhaswati Borgohain and Melkory Diodum wrote in "Religious Nationalism, Christianisation and Institutionalisation of Indigenous Faiths in Contemporary Arunachal Pradesh, India" (2023). MLAs demanded "protection of their indigenous religions and cultures".

Why has the Act remained dormant?

The Act was contested in Arunachal and beyond even before it received Presidential assent. The Arunachal Christian Forum was formed the year after it was enacted, its current president Tarh Miri says, to push for the repeal of the Act. It continues to lead the push against the Act, which Miri called an "anti-Christian law" that can be "misused by the district administration or police".

The number of Christians in Arunachal has grown rapidly over the years. Christians constituted 30.26% of the population in the last census of 2011, making Christianity the largest religion in the state. It is because of these numbers and vocal opposition by Christian groups that "no Chief Minister has moved to implement [the Act] so far," Miri said.

He added, however, that there are now chances of "interference by external forces", referring to the BJP government in the state, and the RSS and its affiliates, who view the state's "indigenous faiths" as part of "Sanatana Dharma".

Why is the Act back now?

In 2022, advocate Tambo Tamin, who is a former general secretary of the Indigenous Faiths and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP), had filed a PIL in the Itanagar Bench of the Gauhati High Court appealing for the court to intervene over the "failure" of the state government to frame

rules for the Act.

On September 30 this year, after the Advocate General of Arunachal Pradesh took the court that the finalisation of the draft rules would take another six months, the court closed the petition stating that "we expect the concerned authorities to be mindful of their obligations and the draft rules would be finalised within a period of six months from today."

Maya Murtem, General Secretary of the IFCSAP, said that the implementation of the Act would be an "armour... with the rate at which conversions are happening" in the state. "Many of the people who have converted are moving away from their traditional practices, calling them 'alien' and 'evil'. So this Act is urgent to preserve our culture," she said.

Murtem said that the activities of the RSS and its affiliates in the state are not seen with similar concern. "The RSS doesn't convert us but they have guided us in institutionalising and documenting our faith," she said.

The Arunachal Pradesh government is working to bring a 1978 law against "forceful" conversion out of cold storage by framing rules for its implementation, 46 years after it was enacted.

- Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act: Enacted in 1978 to prohibit religious conversion by force, inducement, or fraudulent means.

Punishes offenders with up to two years imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 10,000.

Requires reporting of all conversions to the Deputy Commissioner.

Has remained dormant due to lack of implementation rules for nearly five decades

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



PIB-Economy (GSIII)

Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying



Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh to Inaugurate Northeastern States Meet on Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) in Guwahati, Tomorrow

Rs. 50 Crore Worth of Fisheries Projects to be Launched at Northeastern Region Meet under PMMSY

Organic Fisheries Cluster to Be Notified in Sikkim's Soreng District for Sustainable Aquaculture

Posted On: 05 JAN 2025 3:00PM by PIB Delhi

- : The Department of Fisheries is organizing a meeting on January 6, 2024, in Guwahati, Assam, to review the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

Sector Importance: The Indian fisheries and aquaculture sector provides livelihoods to around 3 crore fishers and farmers. Significant growth has been observed since the establishment of the Ministry and Department of Fisheries in 2019, with an investment of Rs 38,572 crore since 2015.

Northeastern Region (NER): Known for its rich aquatic biodiversity and vast water resources, NER is a global hotspot for fish diversity, with about 422 reported fish species. Government investments of ₹2,114.73 crore under Blue Revolution and PMMSY since 2014-15 have driven growth.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-Places(GSI)

Ecuador Declares State Of Emergency In Seven Provinces



Ecuador



Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa has declared a 60-day state of emergency in seven provinces and three municipalities amid escalating internal unrest and armed conflict.

- It is a country located on the northwestern edge of South America.
- Situated on the Equator.
- Quito - the national capital .
- It is bordered by Colombia,by Peru, and by the Pacific Ocean to the west.
- It is one of the most environmentally diverse countries in the world, and it has contributed notably to the environmental sciences.