

Sri Lanka declares state of emergency amid violence

Sri Lanka declared an island-wide state of emergency to curb growing anti-Muslim violence in the Central Province.

- The decision, taken at the weekly Cabinet meeting came in response to a series of arson attacks targeting dozens of mosques and Muslim-owned shops and homes in Kandy in the Central Province.
- The emergency will lapse in two weeks unless Parliament votes to extend it, legal experts said.
- This marks the first time in seven years Sri Lanka has resorted to such a measure.
- The island nation was under a state of emergency for nearly three decades during the civil war. The war-time emergency ended in August 2011.
- The current emergency measures give authorities sweeping powers to arrest and detain suspects for long periods, and deploy forces where needed.
- President Maithripala Sirisena said the measures would “redress the unsatisfactory security situation prevailing in certain parts of the country”.
- Earlier, the Sri Lankan government came under severe attack in Parliament for “pandering to extremist forces” in the Sinhala majority community. There have been attacks on minority Muslims in certain regions of the island country.
- **Background**
- The tension between the majority Sinhalese and minority Muslims, who currently account for nearly 9% of the country’s population, has a long history.
- The first major incident of riots in Sri Lanka was in 1915, targeting Muslims. The anti-Muslim sentiment among Sinhalese subsided a bit when

Tamil militancy emerged. And after the war ended in 2009, it seems to have resurfaced.

- **Anti-Muslim violence**
- During the country's civil war years, Muslims suffered violence and displacement when the LTTE forcefully evicted them from the north in the early 1990s.
- Sri Lanka has witnessed several attacks against Muslims since 2012, including two major clashes in the southern towns of Aluthgama and Gintota in 2014 and 2017 respectively.
- More recently, a number of mosques and Muslim-run establishments were attacked by Sinhalese mobs in Ampara last week.
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N. Korea ready for talks with U.S.

North Korea is willing to hold talks with the United States on denuclearisation and will suspend nuclear tests while those talks are under way, the South said after a delegation returned from the North where it met leader Kim Jong-un.

- North and South Korea, still technically at war but enjoying a sharp easing in tension since the Winter Olympics in the South last month, will also hold their first summit in more than a decade next month at the border village of Panmunjom.

North, South Korea to hold landmark summit

- **In News**
- The leaders of North and South Korea will hold a historic summit in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in April.
- This is after Pyongyang expressed willingness to give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for security guarantees.

- The meeting will be the third between the leaders of North and South, but the first to take place in the DMZ after summits in Pyongyang in 2000 and 2007.
- The meeting will take place in Panmunjom, the truce village in the DMZ.
- North Korea is subject to multiple rounds of UN Security Council sanctions over its atomic and ballistic missile programmes, and has long insisted that its “treasured sword” is not up for negotiation.
- These developments are the latest steps in a rapid Olympics-driven rapprochement on the peninsula.
- U.S. President Donald Trump hailed “possible progress” on the North Korea nuclear impasse.
- Later, the United Nations welcomed plans for a summit and said it was ready to help advance talks.

‘ONGC Videsh, Iran’s IDRO Oil sign accord’

- **In News**
- ONGC Videsh has signed a cooperation agreement with Iran’s IDRO Oil to jointly bid for a \$900 million development plan of Susangerd oilfield in southwest Iran.
- ONDC is the overseas arm of government-owned ONGC
- A similar MoU was signed with Russia’s Zarubezhneft.
- According to the IRDO, the aim of the accord with ONGC Videsh was to form a possible consortium.
- The Susangerd field, discovered in 2009, is estimated to hold more than 5 billion barrels of in-place reserves.
- **Joint working group**
- IDRO Oil, Russia’s Zarubezhneft and ONGC Videsh will now set up a joint working group as soon as possible and once they reach a final agreement,

they would begin negotiations with National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for a contract.

- **Approval from Mozambique**
- According to the ONGC Videsh, the Government of Mozambique had given its approval for the development plan for the Golfinho-Atum natural gas field in the Area 1 block in the Rovuma Offshore Basin of Mozambique.

India to join multilateral lender EBRD

- **In News**
- India has got the go-ahead to join the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), after shareholders of the London-based multilateral lender agreed to the country becoming its 69th member.
- **Benefits**
- This enables Indian companies to undertake joint investments in regions in which the EBRD operates.
- While Indian businesses have already cooperated on EBRD projects worth some €982 million, the hope is that the membership would spur further investment by Indian firms in a range of sectors from solar to utilities, providing them access to fast growing markets.
- The membership will see India take up a small stake in the bank. It will also enable Indian citizens to work for the organisation.
- India's stake will also give it a say in the direction of the EBRD's future work.
- This is an important step in the relationship between the EBRD and India.
- India is expected to join EBRD within the first half of the year.
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- **About EBRD**

- The Bank was set up in 1991, based on a proposal by former French President Francois Mitterand.
- Its initial focus was helping central and Eastern European nations reconstruct their economies in the post-Cold War era.
- It remains committed to furthering the development of market-orientated economies and the promotion of private and entrepreneurial initiative.
- The EBRD works with the private sector and also local governments in the provision of services and infrastructure across 38 nations – with projects ranging from transport provision to agribusiness, heating, waste management, to renewable energy.
- Members who receive investments include Mongolia, Turkey, Egypt, Cyprus, Greece and Lebanon, among a total of 38 member states.
- Others including China, Russia, the U.S., U.K., and France are stakeholders, whose companies are able to invest in EBRD projects, but do not receive financing for domestic projects.
- The EBRD's largest shareholder is currently the U.S., while other G7 nations also hold significant stakes.
- In 2017, the EBRD signed a pact with the International Solar Alliance, which was unveiled in 2015 in Paris.

STATE-TELANGANA

City airport ranked world's best in service quality again

For the second year in a row, Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) has bagged the World No.1 slot in the 5-15 million passengers per annum category in ACI-ASQ Passengers Survey 2017.

- In the 2016 survey, the airport was tied at the first spot with China's Tianjin Airport.

The Montreal-based Airports Council International (ACI) awarded Hyderabad airport as the World No.1 in Airport Service Quality (ASQ) based on passenger feedback.

- Hyderabad airport has bagged this award for the fourth time. In 2014, it was the first in India to be awarded the prestigious ACI-The Director General's Roll of Excellence in Airport Service Quality.

Starting from 6.2 million passengers in 2009, Hyderabad airport is aiming at clocking over 18 million passengers by 2018.

STATE-AP

Chandragiri becomes the first 'all-women' railway station in State

In News

The South Central Railway (SCR) management has named the little-known Chandragiri station as the "all-women railway station" in the zone.

Chandragiri became the first station in Andhra Pradesh to get the privileged status, as Begumpet got the tag for Telangana the same day.

From 06-03-2018, women will don all the roles.