

Can't compare Sri Lankan refugees and Rohingya'

Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, who fled the war in the island nation in the 1980s, stood on a "different footing" from the Rohingyas who seek shelter from persecution in native Myanmar. Any comparison between the two is misconceived, the Centre has told the Supreme Court.

- The Centre was responding to comparisons made by the Rohingya in the Supreme Court between their plight and the "relief facilities" given to the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees.
- The Rohingyas have sought the same aid and the benevolence India had shown the Sri Lankan Tamils.

But the government said to the Supreme Court said there was no "comparable parity" between the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees and Rohingyas.

- It explained that India reached out to the Sri Lankan Tamils on the basis of two Indo-Sri Lankan Agreements signed in 1964 and 1979.
- India had agreed to repatriate and grant Indian citizenship to six lakh persons of Indian origin "together with their natural increase by 1981-82."

The government denied the charge that the Rohingyas were met with stun grenades and chilli powder at the Indian border.

- It said the Border Security Force performed its duties in challenging circumstances.

The Supreme Court cannot direct the government to "ensure that foreigners enter the territory of India," it said. The law mandates that a foreigner entering India should have a passport.

Nod for new vehicle scrap policy

The much-awaited vehicle scrap policy was given 'in-principle' approval at a high-level meeting at the PMO to pave the way for mandatory disposal of commercial vehicles (CV) that are more than 20 years old from April 1, 2020.

Pak. failed to act against terrorists: U.S.

Why in News?

Pakistan has failed to take decisive actions against terror groups as sought by the Trump administration, said the White House.

It warned Islamabad that the U.S. is prepared to take actions on its own to safeguard its personnel in Afghanistan.

It is already known that U.S. President Donald Trump had announced his South Asia Policy in August last year, criticising Pakistan for providing safe havens to terror groups carrying out attacks in Afghanistan.

According to the White House, Six months after the announcement of the South Asia Policy by President Donald Trump, Pakistan has failed to take the kind of decisive actions that the U.S. is seeking.

The Trump Administration, for the first time, has really restored clarity on the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

GST refunds

Why in News

The government sought to debunk reports carrying unverified estimates of pending GST refunds.

It termed these figures “highly speculative and mostly inaccurate.”

According to the government, so far ₹10,000 crore of refunds had been sanctioned by the Central Board of Excise and Customs and the States.

“It is a fact that while a number of exporters have not been able to get the export refunds, so far others have been granted refunds,” Govt. added.

Steps taken

In order to overcome the causes of the delay in sanctioning of refunds, government has taken various steps.

They include amendments in the rules, changes in the business procedures of common portal and customs automated system to address the systemic issues.

Export promotion schemes

Why in News?

In a reply to the USA's petition against India in World Trade Organisation, India told that the programmes such as the Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme offered by India for exporters are not subsidies.

'Not reimbursed'

These are given mainly to equalise the costs incurred by the industry with the international costs.

Industries face high logistics costs and State levies and these are not reimbursed. Schemes such as the Merchandise Exports From India are to offset these costs.

The Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme is for adoption of better technology.

The total textile exports this financial year was expected to be about \$40 billion. This was almost the same as last year. There were several reasons that are affecting exports such as contraction of international demand.

Ptilomera nagalanda Jehamalar and Chandra

Why in News

Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered a new species of water strider from Nagaland.

The species, named Ptilomera nagalanda Jehamalar and Chandra, was found in the river Intanki, Peren district.

Water striders are a group of insects adapted to life on the surface of water, using surface tension to their advantage.

Species description

Orange with black stripes on the dorsal side and a pale yellowish brown ventral part of the body, this particular species has long slender legs and measures about 11.79 mm.

The presence of black stripes on the dorsal side differentiates this species from other known species of the subgenus *Ptilomera*.

The discovery was published in the science journal *Zootaxa*.

So far, only five species of water striders under the subgenus *Ptilomera* were known in India.

These includes *Ptilomera agriodes* found in peninsular India, *Ptilomera assamensis* found in northeastern India, *Ptilomera laticaudata*, northern and northeastern India, *Ptilomera occidentalis* from Uttarakhand and *Ptilomera tigrina* found in the Andaman islands.

Other than being a good indicator of water quality, water striders also play an important role in the food chain by feeding on mosquito larvae.

There are nearly 100 species of water striders found in India across different water bodies.

In fast streams

What is unique about *Ptilomera* is that they are only found in rocky, fast flowing streams and rivers that are not exposed to a lot of sunlight.

Ptilomera has hair on the middle legs that help the insects resist the strong current of streams.

Water striders have three pairs of legs.

STATE-TELANGANA

Govt. to adopt wait-and-watch approach on NHPS

The State government has decided to adopt a wait-and-watch approach on the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS), a government-funded health protection scheme announced by the Central government in the budget for the year 2018-19.

- The NHPS, dubbed as Modicare by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, is aimed at providing 100 million families with medical coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.
- The scheme would target up to 500 million individuals from financially vulnerable households.

The State government has announced its resolve to implement a comprehensive health insurance scheme for farmers, Rythu Bhima Pathakam, extending a cover of Rs 5 lakh in the latest budget, the govt has unveiled plans for health screening of all the population, irrespective of their caste and financial status, and the government has accordingly allocated Rs 500 crore for the scheme in the budget.

Interestingly, the West Bengal government has refused to join the health plan on the ground that it was already implementing Swasthya Sathi, a comprehensive health scheme covering over 50 lakh people.

- The Karnataka government, on its part, has announced its decision to roll out a universal health coverage scheme bringing all the government health schemes under one umbrella immediately after the Centre announced the NHPS.
- The officials of Health Department said a team of the Central government headed by the Union Health Secretary visited the State recently to study the details pertaining to Arogya Sri and its implementation. The government was yet to receive any communication related to Modicare.

The government was open to study the implications of the proposed scheme which involves contribution from the State before taking a call on the issue.

Comprehensive Drug Monitoring System - CDMS

Why in News?

The State government is contemplating implementing the Comprehensive Drug Monitoring System (CDMS).

Benefits –

It is to facilitate better inventory and supply chain management by manufacturers /wholesalers/ retailers/doctors to keep a tab on the medicine being supplied in the State.

Once in place, it expected to prevent entry of spurious drugs in the State.

According to the government had identified that the spurious drugs were flowing in to the State from Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

Problem areas

Narasaraopet, Guntur, Nandyal, Vijayawada and Allagadda were a few places where the spurious drugs were seized.