

INDIA'S CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS CITIZENSHIP BILL?

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill seeks to provide Indian nationality to six communities — Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jains and Buddhists fleeing persecution from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants in the select categories eligible for citizenship.

WHAT DOES GOVERNMENT SAY?

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh made it clear at the meeting of the BJP parliamentary party on Tuesday that the contentious legislation was the top priority of the government, equating its significance with the decision to turn Article 370 into a dead letter. "Minorities in the neighbouring theocratic countries have been subjected to continuous persecutions, which forced them to seek asylum in India. Giving citizenship to six minorities will be yet another push from the Modi government to the spirit of 'sarva dharma sambhav'," Singh said.

WHAT DOES OPPOSITION SAY?

The legislation has been attacked by opposition parties, minority outfits and others for leaving out Muslims and also on the grounds that it is at odds with the Constitution, which does not differentiate between citizens on the basis of their faith.

PARTIES OPPOSING/SUPPORTING BILL

Congress, Trinamool, DMK, Samajwadi Party, RJD and Left, and even regional parties like BJD have expressed reservations. BJP's Assam ally AGP seemed to have warmed up to the idea of CAB after the government assured changes to the Bill. The government is likely to get the support of regional allies — Akali Dal and JD(U). AIADMK, meanwhile, is likely to take a cautious approach before clarifying its stand on the Bill.

WILL GOVT BE ABLE TO GET BILL PASSED?

While BJP is not likely to face any opposition in Lok Sabha owing to its overwhelming majority in the Lower House,



in Rajya Sabha it is banking on the support of allies like JD(U) and Akali Dal. The opposition, however, is hoping that BJP's allies will not be as enthusiastic about the legislation and "friendly" parties like AIADMK will also be constrained to carefully consider whether to support the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

WHY ARE N-E STATES OPPOSING BILL?

The CAB has sparked resentment in the northeast as it is feared that granting citizenship to foreign refugees will undermine the ethnic communities living in these regions. There are indications that the government is working out a compromise. Formulations like provision of citizenship not leading to residency status in the smaller north-east states were discussed.

WHY HAS AGP TAKEN A U-TURN?

In January last year, BJP's ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) had pulled out of NDA after Lok Sabha passed the earlier version of the Bill, which BJP had introduced in Parliament in 2016. When the Bill lapsed in the Lok Sabha, AGP returned to the alliance. Recently, the AGP has indicated a U-turn on the proposed Bill. "We have to move forward with the reality..." AGP member and Assam minister Atul Bora said.

SOURCE: TIMES OF INDIA ONLINE



Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) activists shout slogans during a demonstration against the government's Citizenship Amendment Bill, in Guwahati, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

CAB likely to be tabled in LS on Dec 9

DINA INDIA ONLINE

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) that seeks to give citizenship to all non-Muslim immigrants facing persecution in the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh is likely to be tabled in Lok Sabha on Monday.

According to sources quoted by ANI, the Business Advisory Committee of the Lower House, which met earlier yesterday, has taken the decision to introduce CAB on December 9.

The Union Cabinet had cleared the Bill during a crucial meeting on Wednesday, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Following Modi cabinet's nod, the citizenship bill is expected to be introduced by the Home Minister in the current winter session on Monday.

N Korea warns Trump

Says it will use 'corresponding' force if attacked

AFP, Seoul

North Korea on Wednesday warned that if the United States used military force against Pyongyang it would take "prompt corresponding actions at any level", in response to comments by US President Donald Trump.

Denuclearisation negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington have been deadlocked since a summit in Hanoi broke up in February, and the renewed threats come as a deadline set by Pyongyang for fresh concessions approaches.

Trump on Tuesday indicated that military action was still possible when he was asked about North Korea on the sidelines of a Nato summit in Britain on Tuesday.

"He definitely likes sending rockets up, doesn't he? That's why I call him 'Rocket Man'," Trump said of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

"We have the most powerful military we've ever had, and we're by far the most powerful country in the world. And, hopefully, we don't have to use it, but if we do, we'll use it. If we have to, we'll do it," Trump added.

Responding on Wednesday Pak Jong Chon, chief of the General Staff of the Korean People's Army said he was "greatly disappointed" by Trump's comments, the official KCNA news agency said.

He added that "the use of armed forces is not the privilege of the US only".

"If the US uses any armed forces against the DPRK, we will also take prompt corresponding actions at any level," he added, using the initials of North Korea's official name.

North Korea has demanded the US offer it fresh concessions by the end of the year — ahead of Kim's New Year speech on January 1, a key political set-piece in the isolated country.

Pyongyang has also issued a series of increasingly assertive comments in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, European members of the United Nations Security Council on Wednesday condemned North Korea's "provocative" ballistic missile launches, and reaffirmed the need to enforce sanctions against the country.

"Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom are deeply concerned by the continued testing of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the missile launches of 28 November," read the statement.

The Europeans noted that Pyongyang "has conducted 13 sets of ballistic missile launches since May and continued to operate its nuclear program.

The statement called "on the international community to comply with the obligation to strictly enforce these sanctions."

Trump indicated that US military action was still possible during UK visit

European UNSC members condemn Pyongyang's ballistic missile launches



An Indonesian woman is whipped in public on charges of engaging in pre-marital relation, in Aceh Timur yesterday. Two Indonesian men and a woman were whipped in Aceh province after they were found guilty of having pre-marital relations, a serious crime under the conservative region's Islamic law.

PHOTO: AFP

'Sold as brides' to China

Report says at least 629 Pakistani girls, women were trafficked over a period of two years

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

More than 600 poor Pakistani girls and women were sold as brides to Chinese men over a period of nearly two years, according to investigations by authorities in the South Asian nation of 200 million people.

A list of 629 girls and women, obtained by The Associated Press, was compiled by Pakistani investigators determined to break up trafficking networks exploiting the country's poor and vulnerable.

The list gives the most concrete figure yet for the number of women caught up in the trafficking schemes since 2018.

But since the time it was put together in June, the investigators' aggressive drive against the networks has largely ground to a halt.

Officials with knowledge of the investigations say this is because of pressure from government officials fearful of hurting Pakistan's lucrative ties to Beijing.

The biggest case against traffickers has fallen apart. In October, a court in Faisalabad acquitted 31 Chinese nationals

charged in connection with trafficking.

Several of the women who had initially been interviewed by police refused to testify because they were either threatened or bribed into silence, according to a court official.

The two spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared retribution for speaking out.

At the same time, the government has sought to curtail investigations, putting "immense pressure" on officials from the Federal Investigation Agency pursuing trafficking networks, said Saleem Iqbal, a Christian activist who has helped parents rescue several young girls from China and prevented others from being sent there.

"Some (FIA officials) were even transferred," Iqbal said in an interview.

Asked about the complaints, Pakistan's interior and foreign ministries refused to comment. Several senior officials familiar with the events said investigations into trafficking have slowed, the investigators are frustrated, and Pakistani media have been pushed to curb their reporting on trafficking.



Indian rape victim set ablaze on way to court

REUTERS, Lucknow

A 23-year-old rape victim was set ablaze by a gang of men, including the alleged rapist, as she made her way to court in the northern India yesterday, police said, stirring public outrage and shame over the scourge of crimes against women.

During the past week, thousands of Indians have protested in several cities following the alleged rape and murder of a 27-year-old vet near the southern city of Hyderabad.

Protesters and parliamentarians are pressing for courts to fast-track rape cases and demanding tougher penalties.

The woman attacked and burned yesterday morning was in a critical condition, according to D.S. Negi, a doctor at the Civil Hospital in Lucknow, the capital of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

She had been on her way to catch a train in Unnao district to attend a hearing when she was doused with kerosene and set on fire, police said.

"As per victim's statement five people were involved in setting her on fire, including the one who was accused in the rape case," Vikrant Vir, a police superintendent in Unnao, told Reuters.

All five men have been detained, Uttar Pradesh police said in a tweet.

Police documents seen by Reuters showed the woman had filed a complaint with Unnao police in March alleging that she had been raped at gun-point on December 12, 2018.

Conflicts over water likely to flare up in coming year

Predicts 'groundbreaking' early warning tool

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, London

Conflicts over water are likely to flare up in Iraq, Mali and India in the coming year, according to the developers of an app launched yesterday which aims to help prevent violence by flagging up potential flashpoints.

They said the "groundbreaking" early warning tool, which has also predicted risks in Iran, Nigeria and Pakistan, could spot the likelihood of conflicts - including water-related violence - up to 12 months in advance.

Climate change, increasing populations, rapid urbanisation, economic growth and expanding agriculture are compounding pressures on the world's limited water supplies.

UN data shows a quarter of the globe is using water faster than natural sources can be replenished.

The tool will enable governments and others, including development and disaster response experts, to intervene early to defuse conflicts, according to the Water, Peace and Security (WPS) partnership which is behind the app.

It said trials suggested an 86% success rate in identifying conflicts with 10 casualties or more.

"This app is very important given the escalation of water-related conflicts across the world," said Jessica Hartog, a climate change expert with International Alert, a WPS partner.

"It will save lives, absolutely, if we see politicians acting on the early warning data it will provide," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The WPS Global Early Warning Tool uses machine learning to pinpoint conflict risks on the basis of more than 80 variables going back 20 years.

Quarter of the globe using water faster than natural sources can be replenished

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH TALIBAN

US to restart talks after Trump's nod

AFP, Kabul

The US negotiator on Afghanistan will shortly resume talks with the Taliban and seek efforts toward a ceasefire, officials said Wednesday, three months after President Donald Trump abruptly halted diplomatic efforts that could end America's longest war.

Zalmay Khalilzad has arrived in Kabul to meet President Ashraf Ghani, a senior Afghan official told AFP, less than a week after Trump visited Afghanistan and gave his blessing for a return to negotiations.

The State Department said that Khalilzad, a veteran US negotiator who was born in Afghanistan, would head to Qatar to meet with the Taliban after his meetings in Kabul.

In a nod to concerns raised by Ghani, the State Department voiced support for a ceasefire — which the Taliban have long rejected and did not figure in a draft accord that Khalilzad earlier reached with the Islamist insurgents.

"Ambassador Khalilzad will rejoin talks with the Taliban to discuss steps that could lead to intra-Afghan negotiations and a peaceful settlement of the war, specifically a reduction in violence that leads to a ceasefire," a State Department statement said.

In September, the United States and the Taliban had appeared on the verge of signing a deal.

NEWS IN brief

Body of peacekeeper found in DR Congo

AFP, Beni

The army in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Wednesday said it had found the body of a peacekeeper near the eastern city of Beni. Although it did not say when the body was found, the military launched "large-scale operations" on October 31 in the Beni area against the many armed militias that have been causing violence in the country's troubled east for nearly a quarter of a century. The nationality of the peacekeeper was not given.

Polish ski resort gas explosion kills 8

AFP, Warsaw

Eight people, including four children, were killed after a gas explosion destroyed a house in a ski resort in the south of Poland late Wednesday, local authorities said. Around 200 rescuers had scoured the debris of the house in Szczyrk yesterday morning to find the bodies. No one else is believed to have been inside when the explosion occurred. "It appears that this is the final toll," local prefect Jaroslaw Wiecezok told reporters, but added that rescuers will continue looking just to make sure.

Typhoon death toll hits 13 in Philippines

AFP, Manila

The number of people killed by Typhoon Kammuri's pounding of the Philippines this week has hit 13, officials said yesterday, as authorities confirmed reports of storm-related deaths. Kammuri's fierce winds toppled trees and flattened flimsy homes across a swathe of the nation's north on Tuesday, and forced a rare 12-hour shutdown of Manila's international airport. Authorities said on Wednesday one person had drowned while three died after being hit by trees and flying objects.

Assault claim is 'politics at its worst'

Says Anwar Ibrahim

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's prime-minister-in-waiting, yesterday denied that he had sexually assaulted a former male aide, describing the accusation as "politics at its worst" days before his ruling party's annual congress.

On Wednesday, a statement issued by Anwar's former aide, Muhammed Yusoff Rawther, accused the former deputy premier of attempting to force him to have sex in September last year.

Reuters could not immediately reach Muhammed Yusoff, but he read out the allegations in a Facebook Live broadcast on Wednesday. His statement was made to a law officer, according to a copy seen by Reuters.

Anwar has spent nearly a decade in jail on two



separate counts of sodomy and for corruption, charges that he and his supporters maintain were aimed at ending his political career.

"I heard about this a month ago. It's not new, attempts to try and influence and bribe or whatever, but this is politics at its worst," Anwar said on Thursday.

"Our congress is in two days, so you should anticipate all these sorts of things." The latest allegations come at a time when Anwar looks to end a feud with Azmin Ali, his deputy in the People's Justice Party (PKR) and a potential challenger for the premiership promised to Anwar by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.