



STATECRAFT WEEKLY

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India's Envisage in Indian Ocean Region - Maritime Passage Exercises (PASSEX)

- Krishna Kataria

The Indian Navy (IN) undertook a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in the East Indian Ocean Region (IOR) from 23 to 24 September 2020. Air Warfare Destroyer HMAS Hobart, Stealth Frigate from the Australian Side and Indian Naval Ships INS Sahyadri and Missile Corvette INS Karmuk are engaged in this Maritime Exercises. In addition to this, In July 2020 Indian naval ships conducted a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the United States Navy's USS Nimitz carrier strike group near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This signifies how India envisages upon one vital International Security factor Strategically promoting Collective Maritime Competence within IOR.



Europe's Last Dictator Standing

- Radha Varadarajan



After six weeks of anti-cockroach revolution, and amidst strong international condemnation, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko assumed his sixth term of office on Wednesday (Sept 23, 2020) in a secret swearing-in ceremony at Minsk that was attended by hundreds of government officials and politicians.

This comes after a nationwide call for the authoritarian leader to step down from power. Lukashenko has run Belarus, an ex-Soviet nation of 9.5 million, with an iron fist for 26 years. Official results of the country's August 9 presidential election had him winning 80 percent of the vote. His strongest opponent, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, got 10 percent.

Backward Classes Welfare Association protests against Telangana Gov.

- Anushka Sharma

The National Backwards Classes Welfare Association staged a protest against the Telangana government to fill 40,000 vacant posts in public schools which have been lying vacant for the past 10-25 years. R Krishnaiah, NBCWA president, alleged that the state government was negligent of education while there are about seven lakh unemployed BEd graduates and teaching-trained candidates who were not provided the promised opportunity by TRS.

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Legislation versus Ground Reality: the Agricultural Reform Bills 2020

- Sajusha Ashok

Both Houses of the Indian Parliament passed three agricultural reform bills during the recently concluded Monsoon session of the Parliament. The government claims that the bills will enable farmers to sell their produce directly to institutional buyers, instead of through wholesale markets and make contract farming simpler. It has, however, received considerable backlash from farmers' organisations and opposition parties for rushing through the legislation without appropriate scrutiny. They also contend that small farmers who are reliant on wholesale markets for timely payments, will be left with little bargaining power.

Delhi Riots Probe: Umar Khalid's arrest

- Aditi Agarwal

A Delhi court on September 24th sent a former JNU student Umar Khalid in judicial custody till October 22nd. He is under arrest under the UAPA charges in the case related to the Northeast Delhi riots in February this year. According to the police, an FIR was registered against Khalid on March 6th, based on information from an informer to sub-inspector Arvind Kumar of the narcotics unit of the crime branch. The Informer stated that the riots in February were part of a pre-planned conspiracy allegedly hatched by Khalid, Danish, and two other people. Umar Khalid was first arrested by the police on September 13th. Khalid fervently claims that he is being implicated in a narrative based investigation and not a fact-based investigation.

FCRA Bill - Development Sector in Trouble?

- Rohit M. Nair

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill which was passed in the RS this week has been called "a death blow" to NGOs by the Voluntary Action Network India (VANI). The prohibition of foreign fund transfer from one FCRA-approved organization to another and cap on the use of FCRA funds for administrative expenditure is likely to impact smaller organizations, particularly those involved in research, advocacy, and training.

Resolution to 15-year-old "tele- miscommunication"

- Vandhana Ramesh



On September 1st, the Supreme Court laid to rest the contentions surrounding the payment of AGR dues by telecom companies, albeit in murky waters. The combined liabilities of Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea stand at over Rs 90,000 crore. These dues must be paid over a 10 year period beginning in March 2021, the SC said. No clarifications were received on whether spectrum sharing agreements with currently insolvent companies - such as Reliance - can be sold, and the issue was left for NCLT to decide. Despite the hit to share prices of both Airtel and the newly rebranded Vi, it is expected that the market will clear its long-existing uncertainty over the fates of the telecom giants.



United States isolated against Iran?

- Abhishek Sudke



In a rhetorical exchange from the US State Department, Secretary of State-Mike Pompeo has claimed that the United States is re-imposing United Nations sanctions against Iran. While the US has moved to reimpose sanctions against 27 individuals and entities, none of the countries that negotiated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, popularly known as the Iran Nuclear Deal have moved in favor of reimposing the sanctions as part of the snapback mechanism enshrined in the JCPOA. The Trump administration faced another international embarrassment after the UN Secretary-General and the majority of the UN Security Council insisted that the United States does not have the legal authority to take steps under the banner of the United Nations.