

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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TOPIC: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Rights champions in Belarus, Russia, Ukraine get Nobel

Reuters

OSLO

A trio of human rights watchdogs from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday, a highly symbolic choice of laureates drawn from three nations at the centre of the war in Ukraine.

The honour went to detained activist Ales Bialiatski of Belarus, Russian

rights group Memorial and Ukraine's Center for Civil Liberties. "They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power," the head of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen, told reporters.

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TOPIC: VULNERABLE SECTIONS

Panel to study SC status of Dalits post conversion

Three-member commission to be headed by ex-CJI K.G. Balakrishnan has been asked to submit report in two years; development comes even as Supreme Court is hearing petitions on the issue

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The Union government has now formed a three-member Commission of Inquiry headed by former Chief Justice of India, Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, to examine whether the Scheduled Caste (SC) status can be accorded to Dalits who have over the years converted to religions other than Sikhism or Buddhism.

The notification for the formation of the commission was issued on Thursday, days before the Supreme Court on October 11 is expected to hear the Centre's present position on a batch of petitions seeking the inclusion of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims and the removal

Hanging questions

A look at the present status of the law, the past amendments and the Centre's argument in the case:

What does the law say now?

The 1950 law provides for only those belonging to Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist communities to be categorised as SCs

How were Sikhs and Buddhists included?

The Kalelkar panel report (1955) and the high-powered panel report (1983) were the basis for amending the Order to include Dalit Sikhs and Dalit Buddhists as SCs in 1956 and 1990 respectively



Centre's argument

The religions included as SCs under the law are branches of Hinduism. Dalits who converted to Islam or Christianity "cannot claim to be backward" since untouchability is a feature of Hindu religion and its branches alone

The three-member Commission is headed by ex-CJI K.G. Balakrishnan

of religion as criterion for inclusion as SCs.

Currently, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 provides for only those belonging to Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist communities to be categorised as

SCs. When enacted, the Order only allowed for Hindu communities to be classified as SCs based on the social disabilities and discrimination they faced due to untouchability. It was amended in 1956 to in-

clude Sikh communities and again in 1990 to include Buddhist communities as SCs.

The three-member commission will also comprise Professor Sushma Yadav, member, UGC, and retired IAS officer Ravinder Kumar Jain, and has been given a two-year deadline to submit a report on the issue – starting from the day Justice Balakrishnan takes charge of the commission.

The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment has said the commission's inquiry will also look into the changes an SC person goes through after converting to another religion and its implications on the question of including them as SCs.

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TOPIC: INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

'India can lead G20 on education, climate and debt sustainability'

World Bank President David Malpass points to India's involvement in restructuring debts in Sri Lanka and it being a major creditor to African nations, calls the country a leader in education

Sriram Lakshman
WASHINGTON DC

Debt sustainability, education and climate action are three areas of potential for India when it takes on the presidency of the Group of Twenty (G20) in December this year, according to World Bank President David Malpass.

"There's a potential focus on debt," Mr. Malpass told reporters on a Friday morning briefing call ahead of the World Bank IMF Annual Meetings here in Washington.

"I think the world is at a point where there can be progress made for a more effective common framework," he said, highlighting the fact that India is a creditor for Sri Lanka and also some of the "heavily indebted countries of Africa". India has provided some \$4 billion in assistance to Sri Lanka this year and is involved with restructuring its debt.

"So as G20 Chair [sic] India has an opportunity there," Mr Malpass said.



World Bank President David Malpass. AFP

His comments on debt sustainability being a priority echo remarks made by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during his United Nations and U.S. visit that concluded last week.

"I've spoken with Prime Minister Modi about that and ...he... and India is aware of there being debt distress in countries near it as well, so it's very relevant to India," Mr. Malpass said.

The World Bank's president said there had been a very concerning increase in education poverty - with 70% of children in develop-

ing countries unable to read the basic texts - and that India could play a leadership role in education. He went on to describe the backsliding in education caused by COVID-19 school closures, including children losing interest because they could not keep up with their grade/class, and decline in educational spending.

"For India's G20, this is a big opportunity. India's been a leader in education," Mr Malpass said, adding that climate too would be a major focus, as ad-

vanced and developing countries work on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate issues

You'll see the importance of [climate change] adaptation for many of the countries in terms of saving lives on the ground. That'll be a focus of [the November 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference in] Sharm el Sheikh and it's also incredibly important for India and for the G 20 as a whole," Mr Malpass said.

In terms of his assessment of the Indian economy Mr Malpass said India had suffered from rising interest rates and inflation, globally, as well as climate events . However, expansion of the social safety net during the COVID pandemic was a mitigating factor as was digitization (which increases the effectiveness of the net) , Mr Malpass said.

The World Bank, on Thursday, had downgraded India's growth estimate for FY22-23 by 1 percentage point to 6.5%.

G 20

The G20 is an informal group of 19 countries and the European Union, with representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The G20 membership comprises a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies. Together, the G20 members represent more than 80% of world GDP, 75% of international trade and 60% of the world population.

The work of G20 is divided into two tracks:

The finance track comprises all meetings with G20 finance ministers and central bank governors and their deputies. Meeting several times throughout the year they focus on monetary and fiscal issues, financial regulations, etc.

The Sherpa track focuses on broader issues such as political engagement, anti-corruption, development, energy, etc.

The members of the G20 are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.

Spain as a permanent, non-member invitee, also attends leader summits.

The G20 Presidency rotates annually according to a system that ensures a regional balance over time.

For the selection of presidency, the 19 countries are divided into 5 groups, each having no more than 4 countries. The presidency rotates between each group. Every year the G20 selects a country from another group to be president.

India is in Group 2 which also has Russia, South Africa, and Turkey.

TOPIC: JUDICIARY

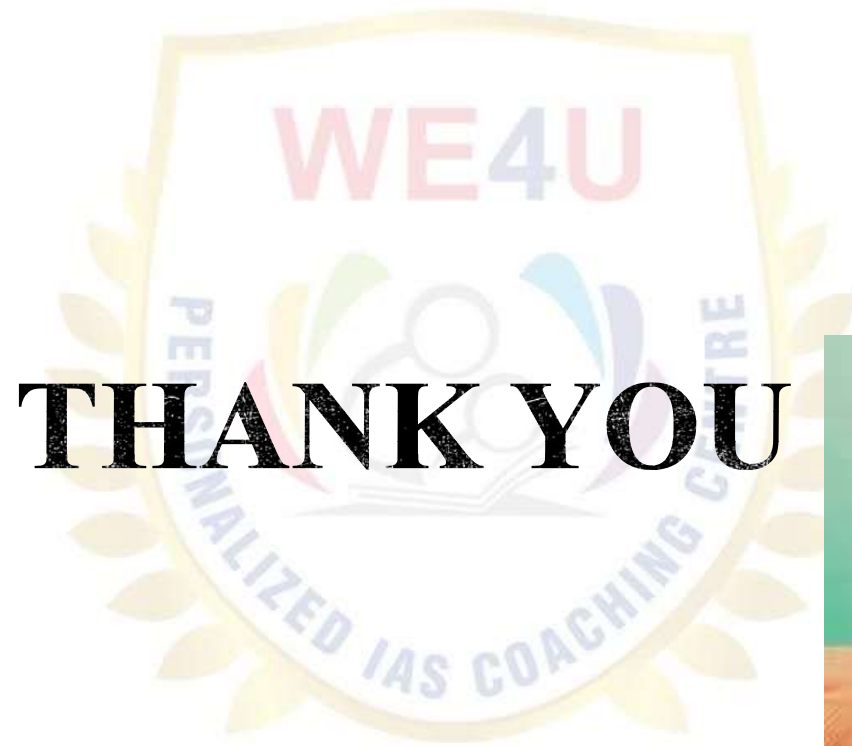
Centre seeks CJI's recommendation on appointment of his successor

Appointment of CJI: `

The President of India appoints the CJI and the other SC judges.

As far as the CJI is concerned, the outgoing CJI recommends his successor.

In practice, it has been strictly by seniority ever since the supersession controversy of the 1970s.



THANK YOU

