



News Juice⁺

(Analysis of News & Editorials from The Hindu, Indian Express, PIB & others along with News Background)

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1. Centre vs student activists: All you need to know about the JNU sedition case (Relevant for GS Prelims, GS Mains Paper II; Polity & Governance)

In a move that is believed to be politically motivated, student body leaders of Jawaharlal Nehru University have been charged with sedition for leading a procession and allegedly raising anti-India slogans on the varsity campus in February 2016.

The Delhi police filed a 1200-page charge sheet naming former JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar, Umar Khalid, Anirban Bhattacharya, and others. Their offences include sedition, rioting, criminal conspiracy despite the Supreme Court's stance that comments lacking the tendency to incite violence cannot be treated as sedition.

The case

The sedition case was lodged against the left-wing student politicians in 2016 following complaints by BJP MP Maheish Girri and the ABVP, holding Kanhaiya Kumar and others culpable for inciting the crowd and raising anti-India slogans. The alleged event is believed to have taken place during a student meeting on February 9, to commemorate the anniversary of the hanging of Kashmiri separatist Afzal Guru. Some of the contentious slogans allegedly raised at the rally include "Bharat ki barbadi" and "Pakistan zindabad".

The presence of Kashmiris, especially those who were not students of or affiliated to JNU, added new dimensions to the case. Of the seven Kashmiris, only Khalid Bashir Bhat and Mujeeb Hussain were studying at JNU at that time.

The evidence

A senior special cell officer told that all the accused have been named in the charge-sheet on the basis of video evidence and eye-witness statements. In March 2016, however, a magistrate report based on a probe into the event ruled that anti-India slogans were not raised and the video, which formed the basis of the first information report, was doctored to this effect.

Response

Questioning the timing of the charge-sheet, several of the accused have responded to the move, denying all allegations and calling it a politically motivated. In a joint statement, Khalid and Bhattacharya said that a "chargesheet should ideally be filed within 90 days after the FIR and not 90 days before the next election".

Why it matters

The apex court on several occasions has ruled out strongly worded comments (lacking intent to incite violence) or pro-Khalistan slogans from the purview of sedition. Last year, while hearing similar charges levelled against 5 grass roots activists, the Supreme Court had said, "Dissent is the safety valve of democracy. If you don't allow dissent, the pressure valve of democracy will burst."

Criticising the government does not amount to sedition and people have a right to express dissent and criticise the government without facing legal consequences. Instances like this put the need for a higher threshold to prosecute people for sedition, in perspective.

(Adapted from Qrius)

2. Justices Dinesh Maheshwari, Sanjiv Khanna elevated to Supreme Court (Relevant for GS Mains Paper II; Polity & Governance)

The government on January 16 notified the appointment of Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Delhi High Court judge, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, as Supreme Court judges.

There is a controversy around the Supreme Court Collegium's recommendation of Justice Khanna on January 10, 2019.

What is the controversy regarding Justice Khanna appointment

The Collegium led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi unanimously recommended Justice Khanna's name along with Justice Maheshwari's, despite objections raised by sitting apex court judge, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul.

Justice Kaul had complained about how Justice Khanna's elevation would be at the cost of overlooking the seniority of other High Court chief justices and judges. Justice Khanna was ranked 33 in the High Court judges' seniority list. Justice Kaul's objection was part of the Collegium file sent to the Law Ministry for approval.

What is the view of Collegium?

The Collegium records that it found Justices Maheshwari and Khanna "more deserving and suitable in all respects than other Chief Justices and senior puisne judges of the High Courts".

A former Delhi High Court judge, Justice Kailash Gambhir, has written to the President, saying the "earth-shattering" decision to recommend Justice Khanna by superseding 32 senior judges amounts to "casting aspersions on their intellect, merit and integrity."

(Adapted from The Hindu)

3. Fact Check: After Theresa May's turbulent January, what now in Brexit? (Relevant for GS Prelims, GS Mains Paper II; IOBR)

The UK Parliament rejected the Brexit deal proposed by Theresa May. What are the range of possible scenarios now?

Parliament in London was debating a no-confidence motion against the government Wednesday evening (India time), a fallout of Prime Minister Theresa May's crushing defeat the previous day on her plan for Britain's exit from the European Union. It was unlikely the

motion, tabled by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, would be passed, British media were reporting — even so, with the clock ticking down to 2300 GMT on March 29, the time and date set for Brexit, it remained unclear what the next step in this extraordinarily confusing situation would be. The Guardian, the BBC, The New York Times, and newswires such as The Associated Press and Reuters were reporting a range of possible scenarios.

Scenario 1: MPs takes charge

* This could, in theory, see Labour call for another referendum, a “people’s vote” that an increasing number of pundits have been advocating. However, May and her top colleagues have been steadfast that there would be no second plebiscite, and Corbyn himself has been opposed to the idea. Even if he were to give in, this action does not, as of now, have support of the majority in Parliament.

* May could try to negotiate with Labour, and perhaps agree to its plan for a customs union with the EU. How her own MPs would take it is uncertain. It’s also not certain that this alone would secure the support of Labour.

* A group of MPs wants to take the wheel themselves. While a majority wants to avoid a Brexit without a deal, how will they go about executing this option?

Scenario 2: May goes back to EU

* The PM could either ask the EU for a sweetener to take back to the Commons in a renewed bid to get her plan through, or seek a postponement of Brexit. The problem is Brussels has already made clear that the deal would not be renegotiated, and even if it were to soften, May is unlikely to be able to guarantee that the sweetener she seeks would be bought by Parliament in the UK. Again, under Article 50 of the EU treaty, all 27 member countries must sign off on any change in the two-year negotiating period. This difficult unanimity might have a chance if the UK has a second referendum perhaps, or is able to offer the EU states a serious plan.

Scenario 3: May’s long shots

* There are two desperate, unlikely-to-succeed moves she can attempt. One, despite winning the no-confidence vote, she could still call for an election in the hope she would get a bigger majority that would help pass her deal. But then, she gambled on exactly this last year and suffered a setback instead — this time, she could even be defeated.

The other Hail Mary she could throw is a referendum — asking the people to choose between her plan and staying in the EU. But Parliament will have to consent to this.

Scenario 4: Leave without deal

* If Parliament remains unable to find a way out of the crisis, this could actually happen — and chaos could follow. There is reason for optimism that it would not come to this — a large majority in Parliament is against leaving without a deal. But MPs are yet to determine how they would go about stopping it.

(Adapted from Indian Express)

4. TV choices, a la carte: How the new TRAI regulatory framework will pan out (Relevant for GS Prelims, GS Mains Paper II; Polity & Governance)

What does TRAI's new regulation say?

The new regulatory framework by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), which comes into effect from February 1, will apply to all direct-to-home (DTH) and local cable operators. Under these rules, customers can choose which channels they wish to watch rather than pick from pre-decided packs offered by service providers. Accordingly, consumers will only need to pay for channels they want to view.

Why was this change needed?

According to TRAI, post-digitisation of cable TV networks in March 2017, there was an urgent need to improve transparency as many stakeholders were not giving choices to consumers. The new regulatory framework has been introduced after a consultative process that lasted more than one-and-a-half years.

Do the new rules benefit consumers?

The new framework makes it mandatory for the service provider to offer every channel on an a la carte basis. Additionally, the MRP of the channels needs to be displayed on the TV screen through the Electronic Program Guide. Along with giving customers a la carte choice, broadcasters and distributors can offer bouquets of channels. However, the price of the bouquet is also to be published transparently. Given that the MRP of the channels will be displayed to users, the distributor will not be able to charge more than what has been declared by a broadcaster. This is likely to bring down the monthly cable/DTH bill.

How much will consumers need to pay?

The framework puts in place a network capacity fee with an upper ceiling of ₹130 for 100 channels. Any subscriber who opts for more than 100 channels can choose additional channels in each slab of 25 channels with a maximum price of ₹20 per slab. A high definition channel will be treated as two standard definition (SD) channels for the purpose of determining the network capacity fee.

According to TRAI, less than 15% of consumers are likely to opt for more than 100 channels. The regulator has put out some examples of the probable packs in different markets on its website. For the Tamil-speaking market, one package costs ₹294 a month, including taxes for 100 SD channels. This pack includes 23 paid channels, 52 free-to-air channels and 25 Doordarshan channels. In addition to a ₹130 network capacity fee for 100 channels, the consumer will have to pay MRP for the 23 paid channels (amounting to ₹119) and the GST (₹45). Depending on the number and price of the paid channels, the bill may go up.

What if subscription charges are paid ahead?

In case a subscriber has paid advance charges for a scheme with a future lock-in period like an annual plan, the distributor will continue to provide services for the committed period without any increase in price or charges and without altering the other terms of

subscription. Distributors cannot make any changes that may lead to a disadvantage to the subscriber in such cases, the regulator has said. However, if the subscriber wants to switch over to a new package after February 1, the proportional balance amount of the existing package as on the date of switchover may be adjusted for the new package prices.

(Adapted from The Hindu)

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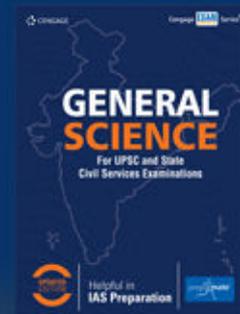
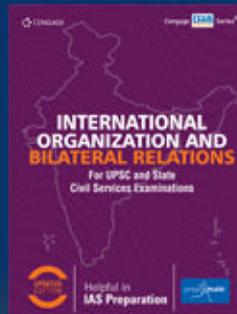
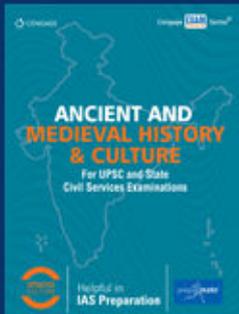
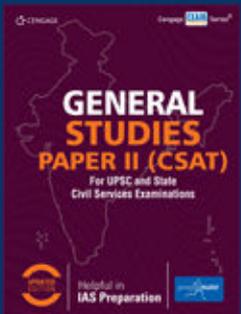
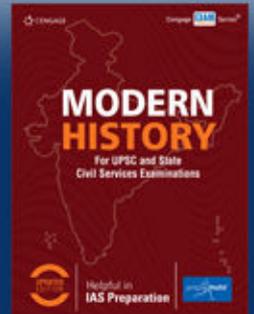
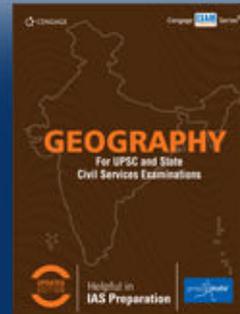
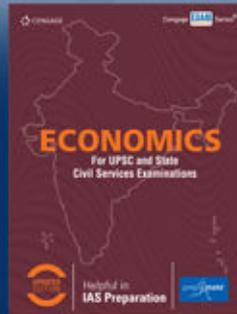
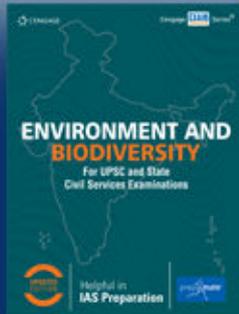
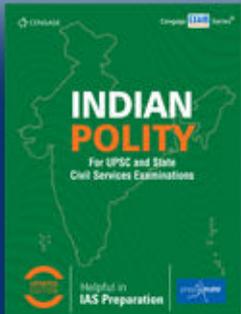
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