

# Under fire, NITI Aayog says was told to look at GDP back series data

Agency  
New Delhi, Dec. 3

Facing Criticism over the NITI Aayog's presence at the release of the GDP back series data by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) last week, Aayog Vice-Chairman Rajiv Kumar said his department was asked to "have a look" at the data before it was released. He also said the government was open to making any improvements if factual and methodological errors were pointed out in the calculation of data. Many economists have questioned the NITI Aayog's role in the release of the statistical exercise of CSO, which comes under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). "Everybody knows that until not too long ago, the Department of Statistics was part of the Planning Commission. There have always been close links between the two, simply because we use data so extensively and we work together. For example, the task force on employment statistics was chaired by my predecessor. Its recommendations are now being implemented by the CSO. In this case also, when they were about to release the back series, they asked us to have a look," Kumar said in an interview with The Indian Express. "NITI organised two roundtables... wherein the experts gave valuable suggestions. NITI provided the platform and subsequently, the CSO requested participation in the release. Both MoSPI and NITI are components of the Government of India, so why would it be political? Where is the issue? I think Dr Pronab Sen having raised that issue is totally unnecessary. Back series is not just a 'technistic' exercise, it's an issue with

many dimensions and it affects the whole macro economy," he said. Sen, former chief statistician of India, had criticised the Aayog's involvement in presenting the data alongside the CSO. The Department of Statistics came into being as a part of the Ministry of Planning in 1973. In 1999, the Department of Statistics and Department of Programme Implementation were merged and an independent Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation was formed. The NDA government formed the National Institution for Transforming India, also called NITI Aayog, through a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015, in place of the Planning Commission which was dissolved. Kumar said the new numbers are "not just simply factual and correct" but a significant improvement, and are more in sync with the System of National Accounts of the UN of 2008. "There is no reason for anybody to cast any aspersions on it. The CSO staff are not a political set of people, they are professionals. Now they have brought out a GDP number (July-September quarter) which is lower... if they were politically driven, this would have been higher than the previous quarter," he said. The back series data released last Wednesday trimmed the growth numbers for the UPA government's nine years (2005-06 to 2013-14), with the Indian economy growing at an average 6.7% in four years of the UPA's first term (2005-06 to 2008-09) as well as the UPA's second term (2009-10 to 2013-14) — lower than the earlier estimates of 8.1% and 7.0% (2004-05 base) respectively.

These growth rates compare with an average 7.4% growth rate (2011-12 base year) seen during the first four years of the present NDA government. The earlier back series estimates were presented by a Committee on Real Sector Statistics appointed by the National Statistical Commission (NSC). Kumar said "the Committee on Real Sector Statistics was not supposed to estimate back series" and "there was no question of the government accepting" their estimates. He said the committee did not adopt the System of National Accounts, 2008 that is now recommended by the United Nations. "MoSPI has done other improvements, as a result of which the results are as different as they are, and I can vouch for their professional integrity. Ten leading statisticians/economists of the country have reviewed and vetted this methodology. Therefore, to cast any aspersions on the CSO is simply not the right thing to do," Kumar said. The issue led to a political debate, with former Finance Minister P Chidambaram calling the revised GDP numbers a "bad joke" and a "hatchet job". Responding to Chidambaram's criticism, Kumar said: "Look at the data, go into the details, tell us our mistakes, we will accept them. If you base your criticism on some technical reasons, it gives us a chance to improve it, but to just call names and cast aspersions on an organisation's integrity is the worst thing that you can do... Such base revisions are always done, it's done in every country of the world." He said the downward revision in growth rates happened because the new series estimated the growth rate of the tertiary sector better, as these were overestimated in the previous series.

# Ex-Bangladesh PM barred from contesting this month's election



By : Siam Sarower Jamil  
Dhaka, Dec. 3

Returning officers of Bangladesh on Sunday cancelled 786 nomination papers, out of total 3,065, submitted by contestants in 300 constituencies to contest the 11th parliamentary elections. Former prime minister and jailed opposition leader Khaleda Zia is one of them. She has been declared ineligible to contest this month's national elections over two graft convictions. According to the fact sheet of the Election Commission Secretariat, a total of 2,279 nomination papers were declared valid while 786 invalid during the scrutiny by 66 returning officers across the country. However, the aspirants whose nomination papers were cancelled can file appeals with the Election Commission by December 5. "If anyone becomes aggrieved with the decisions of the returning officers, he/she will have to lodge appeal with the appeal authority of the EC within three days after the scrutiny," said EC joint secretary Farhad

Ahammad Khan. Subsequently, the EC will dispose of the appeals following hearing within the next three days — December 6-8, he said. The last date for the withdrawal of candidature is December 9 and the electoral symbols will be allocated on December 10. Some 3,065 aspirants submitted nomination papers in the country's 300 constituencies within the deadline that expired on November 30 to take part in the national election slated for December 30. Of the total 3,065 aspirants, 281 AL probable candidates submitted nomination papers in 264 constituencies, while 696 BNP contestants in 295 parliamentary seats, 233 Jatiya Party aspirants in 210 constituencies. Besides, 498 independent aspirants also submitted nomination papers. BNP fielded more than one candidate in most of the constituencies while AL in 17 and Jatiya Party in 23 constituencies. But the parties will have to confirm their final candidatures before the withdrawal of candidature in these parliamentary seats.

# Minor Dalit girl sexually harassed in UP

Agency  
Muzaffarnagar, Dec 3

A minor Dalit girl was allegedly sexually harassed by a 22-year-old man at Sikhreda village here, police said Monday. A case has been registered against Sodan Singh under relevant sections of IPC, POCSO Act and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, SHO

Pervesh Kumar said. According to a complaint, the accused took the 8-year-old girl to a sugarcane field and attempted to rape her on Sunday. The girl, however, bit the man's hand and escaped. We are trying to trace the accused, police said. Meanwhile, angry Dalits reached the police station and demanded immediate arrest of the culprit.

# Pleasant morning in city

Agency  
New Delhi, Dec 3

Delhiites woke up to a pleasant Monday morning, with the minimum temperature settling at 8.6 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of the year. The Safdarjung observatory recorded a low of 8.6 degrees Celsius while the Palam observatory recorded a minimum temperature of 10.5 degrees Celsius, a notch above the season's average. Humidity was recorded at

90 per cent at 8.30 am. The weatherman has predicted mainly clear skies with the possibility of them partly cloudy towards the afternoon or evening. There is a likelihood of mist/shallow fog in the morning on Tuesday. The maximum temperature is likely to hover around 28 degrees Celsius. On Sunday, the maximum temperature was recorded at 28.1 degrees Celsius while the minimum settled at 9 degrees Celsius.

# Free Medical Camp by Assam Rifles

IT News  
Imphal, Dec. 3

Tulihal Battalion of HQ 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (South) organised a free medical camp at City Higher Secondary School in Mayang Imphal. The medical camp witnessed attendance by over 400 locals from the area. The locals were provided with free medical treatment, consultation on various diseases and health related issues as well as free medicines were distributed to the needy patients. The camp also witnessed great gesture by five doctors namely Dr. Mohammad Firoz Khan (cardiac specialist), Dr. Salim Khan, Dr. Y Opendro, Dr. Yaiwang, Dr. Sadananda, Dr. Sundaram, Regimental Medical Officer(RMO) of Tulihal Battalion along with a



team of nurses from Mayang Imphal Primary Health Centre (PHC) who volunteered to assist the medical team of the Battalion. During the camp, Dr Mohammad Firoz Khan (cardiac specialist) carried out ECG and also provided consultancy to the patients on cardiac issues. In order to support the noble efforts of the Assam Rifles, Deputy

Speaker of Manipur Th Robindro Singh not only graced the occasion by his presence but also provided additional medicines for the medical camp. The people of the area conveyed their heartfelt gratitude to the Assam Rifles for their sincere endeavour and requested for more such camps in the near future for the benefit of the entire community.

# Assam Rifles conducts Friendly Football Match

IT News  
Imphal, Dec. 3

Thoubal Battalion of 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (South) conducted a friendly Football Match at Thoubal Company Operating Base. The match was played between the teams of Salai Football Club and troops of Assam Rifles. The match was aimed at further strengthening relations between Security Forces and local populace as well to inculcate sportsman spirit among people. Both the teams participated with great zeal



and enthusiasm, showing great sportsmanship during the course of the match. It also provided a forum for the youth of the area for an interaction

with the troops. The youth expressed their gratitude and appreciated the efforts of Assam Rifles to promote sports in the area.

# World Aids Day observed by Assam Rifles

IT News  
Imphal, Dec. 3

The World AIDS Day was observed by Thoubal Battalion of 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (South) by organising an educational drive on HIV/ AIDS at Charangpat village of Thoubal District. The educational drive

incorporated an enlightening lecture by the Unit Medical Officer on HIV/AIDS which was later followed by an interaction with all the participants. The event witnessed participation by over 50 villagers from the area including ladies and children. The participants were educated on causes and

symptoms of HIV/AIDS and also acquainted with various health schemes launched by the Government. The villagers gracefully acknowledged efforts by the Assam Rifles for regularly undertaking such educational drives and thereby contribute in creating a healthier society.

# China agrees to 'reduce and remove' tariffs on US cars: Trump

Agency  
Washington, Dec 3

China has agreed to scale back tariffs on imported US cars, President Donald Trump said Sunday, one day after agreeing with Xi Jinping to a ceasefire in the trade war between the world's top two economies. Asia stocks had rallied on the news that Washington and Beijing would not impose any new tariffs during a three-month grace period, during which the two sides are meant to finalise a more detailed agreement. "China has agreed to reduce and remove tariffs on cars coming into China from the U.S. Currently the tariff is 40 percent," Trump said on Twitter. On Saturday, Trump and Xi agreed to put a stop to their

tit-for-tat tariffs row, which had roiled world markets for months. The Republican president called their agreement — which Washington hopes will help close a yawning trade gap with the Asian giant and help protect US intellectual property — an "incredible" deal. Trump agreed to hold off on his threat to slap 25 per cent tariffs on USD 200 billion worth of Chinese goods from January 1, leaving them at the current 10 per cent rate. In return, China is to purchase "very substantial" amount of agricultural, energy, industrial and other product from the US. The US president did not send any subsequent tweets Sunday explaining which auto tariffs would be

removed, and which would be reduced. In July, China reduced auto import duties from 25 per cent to 15 per cent, a boon for international carmakers keen to grow sales in the world's largest auto market. But as trade tensions ratcheted up with the US this summer, Beijing retaliated by slapping vehicles imported from the US with an extra 25 per cent tariff, bringing the total tariff rate to 40 per cent. Many US automakers build their cars in China, but for some the tariff hikes have hit sales. US company Tesla saw its sales drop with the higher prices this fall and recently said it would absorb some of the higher tariff costs and no longer pass them on to consumers.

# India's first engineless train touches 180kmph in tests

Agency  
New Delhi, Dec. 3

India's first locomotive-less train, known as Train 18, breached the 180 kmph speed limit during a test run on Sunday, a senior railway official said here. When this Rs 100-crore indigenously designed train is made operational, it will become the country's fastest train. "Train 18 breached the 180 kmph speed limit in the Kota-Sawai Madhopur section. The major trials are now over, with just some more remaining. Based on the reports, fine tuning would be done if needed. As of now no major technical problem has cropped up," S Mani,

General Manager of Integral Coach Factory (ICF) that has manufactured the train, said. "We expect Train 18 to commence its commercial run from January 2019. Normally the trials take three months. But now it is happening faster than expected," Mani added. If all things go well, Train 18 will replace the current Shatabdi Express - a day train. Train 18 is capable of touching 200 kmph provided the rest of Indian Railways' system such as tracks and signals permit, officials said. The ICF will roll out one more Train 18 this fiscal and four by the next fiscal. On October 29, the high-tech, energy-efficient,

self-propelled (engine-less) train was flagged off here by Railway Board Chairman Ashwani Lohani. With 16 coaches, the train will have the same passenger carrying capacity as that of the Shatabdi Express. It has aerodynamically designed driver cabins at both ends for quicker turn-around at destinations. The train sports an advanced regenerative braking system which saves power. The fully air-conditioned train offers better passenger comfort and safety, as all equipment are fixed under the carriage, so that more space is available on board, officials said.