

Parliamentary panel agrees to withdraw key amendments : Six facts you need to know about land bill

Parliamentary panel on land bill has agreed to withdraw six key amendments, including the one dealing with consent clause.

In a climbdown, BJP has agreed to bring back the key provisions of UPA's land law including the ones on consent clause and social impact assessment and drop controversial amendments brought by the Narendra Modi Government in December last year through an ordinance.

Sources said all the 11 BJP members in the Joint Committee of Parliament on land bill on Monday moved amendments seeking to bring back social impact assessment and consent clause.

With BJP retracting from its previous position, there is likelihood that the panel headed by BJP MP S.S. Ahluwalia will come out with a consensus report by August 7.

"It's as good as our own Act of 2013," a Congress member of the committee said after the meeting expressing total agreement with the amendments moved by the ruling BJP.

Trinamool Congress members Derek 'O Brien and Kalyan Banerjee walked out of the meeting stating that the amendments were circulated this morning and they had little time to study.

Six of the amendments were discussed today on which there was a consensus.

Out of the total 15 amendments in the NDA bill, nine were substantial in nature that have been opposed by Congress and a number of Opposition parties.

Out of these nine, six including the provisions dealing with consent clause, social impact assessment, replacing the term private company with private entity were discussed on Monday and a consensus has emerged on them, Congress members claimed.

Six facts you need to know about land bill

1 The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Amendment) Bill, 2015 seeks to Amend the Act of 2013 (LARR Act, 2013).

2 The Bill creates five special categories of land use: 1.

defence, 2. rural infrastructure, 3. affordable housing, 4. industrial corridors, and 5. infrastructure projects including Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects where the central government owns the land

3 The Bill exempts the five categories from provisions of the LARR Act, 2013 which requires the consent of 80 per cent of land owners to be obtained for private projects and that of 70 per cent of land owners for PPP projects.

4 The Bill allows exemption for projects in these five categories from requiring Social Impact Assessment be done to identify those affected and from the restrictions on the acquisition of irrigated multi-cropped land imposed by LARR Act 2013.

5 The Bill brings provisions for compensation, rehabilitation, and resettlement under other related Acts such as the National Highways Act and the Railways Act in consonance with the LARR Act.

6 The Bill changes acquisition of land for private companies mentioned in LARR Act, 2013 to acquisition for 'private entities'. A private entity could include companies, corporations and nonprofit organisations.

Contestation in Delhi (Hindu Editorial, Polity)

After a brief respite, hostilities between Delhi's Lieutenant Governor Najeeb Jung and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal have resumed. The issue this time is the appointment of the chairperson of the Delhi Commission for Women. Two days after the Aam Aadmi Party government appointed Swati Maliwal, the Lieutenant Governor annulled the appointment, saying it had not been "properly processed". In a letter to the Chief Minister, he also made the ludicrous claim that he was "the government of Delhi". Mr. Jung's latest exercise in overreach comes more than a month after he and Mr. Kejriwal met Home Minister Rajnath Singh and promised to resolve the issues between them amicably. It was then thought that both sides

had realised that their game of one-upmanship was damaging the images of both, and affecting the interests of the people of Delhi. Yet, it seems little has changed. By continuing to interfere with the day-to-day affairs of the Delhi government in a brazen manner, Mr. Jung is disrespecting the massive mandate with which the people of Delhi returned the AAP to power; neither is he helping to dispel the notion that he is a puppet acting at the behest of the Central government.

There is now a broader context to the whole confrontation. Soon after taking office, Ms. Maliwal sought an appointment with the Lt. Governor to discuss a brutal incident in Delhi in which a 19-year-old girl was stabbed to death by two youths. Following that incident, the AAP has, by means of a series of emotive radio and television advertisements, ramped up its demand for more control over the Delhi Police. Ms. Maliwal's appointment to a body that was previously seen as ineffectual is also part of a wider narrative in which the AAP is battling to ensure that the security of women in the national capital is taken more seriously than at present. By blocking the move on bureaucratic grounds, Mr. Jung, and the Union Home Ministry by extension, appear in extremely bad light. Thanks to the AAP's continuous campaigning on the issue, and the associated drama of their now-regular tussles with the Lieutenant Governor, the issue of full statehood for Delhi has become an important topic of debate. Most Delhi-ites want the issue resolved, if only so that they can have an effective government again, rather than one that is forced to switch to agitation mode periodically. Chief Ministers and Lieutenant Governors here have worked together amicably earlier within the limitations of their positions, but given the current lack of cooperation on both sides it appears that the only way out of the impasse is a proper consideration of the demand for full statehood for Delhi, or a clearer interpretation of the rules that define power-sharing between the state administration and the Central government.

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NITI Aayog sets up expert panel on promoting innovation (IE, Polity)

NITI Aayog has constituted an expert panel to suggest ways to promote innovation and entrepreneur friendly ecosystem for pushing job growth, Parliament was informed today.

The group will also workout the detailed contours of Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and Self-Employment & Talent Utilisation (SETU), Planning Minister Rao Inderjit Singh said in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

“NITI Aayog has constituted an Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Prof Tarun Khanna, Director, South Asia Institute, Harvard University and Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor, Harvard Business School, USA,” he added.

According to the term of reference for the panel, it is set up to review the existing initiatives aimed at promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in India, especially those efforts that result in widespread job growth and the creation of globally competitive enterprises.

It will make short- and medium-term recommendations for actionable policy initiatives aimed at creating an innovation and entrepreneur friendly ecosystem including such elements as creation of world class innovation hubs and digital SMEs and innovation driven entrepreneurship in such sectors as education and health.

Besides it will also address any other related issues with innovation and job creation.

The Expert Committee is expected to submit its report in August.

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Congress isolated, most parties agree on GST Bill [Polity , Economy]

Even as political support for the Constitutional Amendment Bill for the goods and services tax (GST) seemed to grow, the Rajya Sabha select committee has mostly concurred with the Bill as proposed by the

Modi government, sources privy to the matter told FE.

The House panel, which is to finalise its report on Monday, is learnt to have endorsed the 1% tax on interstate trade proposed for the initial two years of the GST regime to give relief to manufacturing states.

The ruling coalition partners and many others including the Trinamool Congress largely supported the current version of the Bill as passed by the Lok Sabha and did not agree with the Congress party's proposals to include petroleum products in the GST from the start itself and cap the tax rate at 18% in the Constitution itself. The Congress may give a dissent note.

In parallel, the Centre has sought to give a sense of urgency to the executive processes to meet the April 1, 2016, deadline to launch the new tax. The finance ministry, sources said, has mooted a converged list of items to be exempted from GST for the central and state components of GST to keep administration simple. As far as area-based exemptions are concerned, they would be retained until the end dates already announced, while these, being incompatible with the GST, won't be extended.

The central government is also set to choose an IT company for building the necessary infrastructure.

Navin Kumar, chairman of GST Network, a joint venture between the federal and state governments, said that five bids for building the necessary IT infrastructure for GST have been received and that the partner would be identified by end of next month. While Kumar did not specify the names of the bidders, sources said TCS, Wipro, Infosys, Tech Mahindra and Microsoft have expressed interest in the project.

The Centre and the empowered committee of state finance ministers will work together to expedite the preparation of the draft central and state level GST statutes.

VS Krishnan, member, service tax and GST, said here at an interaction organised by industry chamber Ficci that there was a general consensus that the list of exemptions at the central and state levels needed to converge. At present, about 99 items are exempted by states from levy

of VAT, while 219 items are exempted from central excise duty.

“When the lists of products that are exempted from central excise duty and state level VAT are converged, fewer items in the current list of excise exemptions would get the duty benefit,” said R. Muralidharan, senior director, Deloitte.

Krishnan said the broad policy of the central government was to phase out area-based tax exemptions, but in cases where incentives are committed in order to attract investments, the benefit would be “grandfathered”, implying that these would be allowed for the full promised extent.

“Wherever sunset clauses (end dates for benefits) are mentioned in law, we will have to honour them,” he said. These would include the area-based tax exemptions given to businesses in the northeast and in hill states. The official also said that states could determine their exemptions within the flexibility the new indirect tax regime would offer.

Senior officials said that the central government was fully prepared to meet the April 1, 2016, deadline for GST, but political observers remain sceptical about getting the Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill passed in the Rajya Sabha in the forthcoming session of Parliament beginning July 21. The Bill was passed earlier in Lok Sabha but was referred to a select panel of the Rajya Sabha led by the [BJP's](#) Bhupender Yadav. The panel has to present the report by July 24.

Congress, the main opposition party in the Upper House, is learned to be preparing a dissent note on the Bill, saying it cannot support a Bill that was not “simple and comprehensive”. Trinamool Congress has in the meantime offered to support the Bill.

The Congress wants an 18% ceiling for GST to be specified in the Constitution itself, besides dropping the provision for 1% tax that states could levy on exports for two years.

Registration of new traders on the IT network of GST would commence from January 31 and traders currently registered with state tax departments would be migrated to the new system.

Manipur's dilemma (Hindu Editorial)

The fear of every state with a predominant indigenous population was summed up thus by the Naga leader A.Z. Phizo: "Nagaland cannot accept the Indian excess population [as] our country is too small." Many of the recent exclusivist outbursts in the northeastern States, including in Manipur, can be attributed to such a fear of losing ancestral land to "outsiders". Manipur's crisis intensified four months ago when its Congress-majority Legislative Assembly passed the Manipur Regulation of Visitors, Tenant and Migrant Workers' Bill, 2015. It was opposed widely, including by women's and students' groups, and even by a section of the ruling party. Eventually the Opposition became more united in demanding the withdrawal of the Bill, which failed to address their key concern of protecting the land rights of the original inhabitants. On July 14, the Bill was withdrawn by the Manipur government in a nod to the protesters' demands. The united Opposition rather underscored the long-standing demand for the imposition of an Inner Line Permit system, as in a few other northeastern States. The ILP regime, introduced by the British to protect tribal populations from encroachment into their areas, but later used to advance commercial interests, involves a system akin to the issue of visas to Indian citizens to enter a State of the Union.

The dilemma of the Indian state over the ILP is understandable. Can the Union afford to introduce a quasi-visa to its citizens to enter one State from another State? The question could be complex for a central party that advocates the removal of all speed-breakers when it comes to citizens' access to travel and work in her own country. The dilemma of Manipur is perhaps even more severe. The 2001 Census indicated the size of the migrant community was nearly as much as that of the dominant ethnic Meiteis, thus bolstering the demand

from Manipur's erudite civil society to impose curbs on inward movement. But there has also been out-migration of the indigenous people. The demand is sought to be substantiated by citing many examples that indicate how Manipuris are losing land to "extractive" non-Manipuri industries. The leasing out of "one-sixth of the total area" of Manipur for oil exploration and drilling to international oil majors, unthinkable in the other States, is one of many such examples. In this backdrop, a half-baked Bill was passed, that exacerbated the insecurity. The demand, though, is more legitimately a consequence of the hill-valley divide in the State and the congestion in the valley rather than any huge influx of outsiders. The situation is thus complex but not out-of-control. But the State should ensure that alien-investor-driven development does not disrobe its people. After all, they are supposed to benefit from the growth generated out of its own domestic resources.

Keywords: Inner Line Permit, Visitors Tenant and Migrant Workers' Bill 2015, Northeaster states