

January 12th news:

International:

China objects to Vietnam's call for Indian investment in South China Sea

China on 11th January objected to Vietnam's invitation to India to invest in oil and natural gas sector in the disputed South China Sea, saying it is firmly opposed to infringement of its rights using development of bilateral ties as an "excuse".

Vietnam's Ambassador to India Ton Sinh Thanh had told that his country would welcome Indian investments in the South China Sea.

India has been asserting that the ONGC's exploration is a commercial operation and not connected with the dispute. China claims almost all of the SCS while Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counter claims.

Oil exploration in the SCS is a sensitive issue in the Vietnam-China relations. There were anti-China riots in Vietnam when China tried to deploy oil rigs in an areas claimed by Vietnam few years ago.

India, which is ramping up ties with Vietnam, calls for freedom of navigation in the SCS through which trillions of dollars of trade happens every year.

Ecuador Gives Assange Citizenship

Ecuador announced on 11th January that it had granted citizenship to Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks co-founder who has been living in a tiny room in the South American country's London embassy since seeking political asylum in 2012.

Mr. Assange sought refuge in the embassy in June 2012 after Sweden sought to have him arrested in connection with allegations of rape and assault in that country.

Sweden is no longer seeking his extradition, but Mr. Assange has refused to leave. He says he fears Britain would extradite him to the United States to face charges relating to his involvement in multiple releases of documents — including the 2010 publication of leaked State Department diplomatic cables — that American officials say have damaged national security.

Trump admin introduces bill to increase Green Cards allotment by 45%

A legislation backed by the Trump administration pushing for merit-based immigration and increasing the allotment of Green Cards by a hefty 45 per cent annually has been introduced in the House of Representatives, a move that could benefit Indian techies if signed into law.

The legislation 'Securing America's Future Act' if passed by Congress and signed into law by US President Donald Trump will end the diversity visa programme and reduce the overall immigration levels from currently averaging 1.05 million to 260,000 a year.

It seeks to increase the allotment of Green Cards by an impressive 45 per cent from the current 120,000 to 175,000 per annum. Indian-American technology professionals, who come to the US mainly on H-1B visas and opt for Green Cards or legal permanent residence status, are expected to be a major beneficiary of the 'Securing America's Futures Act'.

As per unofficial estimate, there are nearly 500,000 Indians waiting in the queue for Green Cards and have to seek annual extensions of their H-1B visas. Many wait for decades to get their Green Cards. The H-1B programme offers temporary US visas that allow companies to hire highly skilled foreign professionals working in areas with shortages of qualified American workers.

Persons in news:

Indu Malhotra: Senior Advocate Indu Malhotra will be the first woman lawyer to be directly elevated from the Bar to the Supreme Court as a judge. Her name was cleared unanimously by the Supreme Court Collegium

The elevation of Malhotra and Joseph, as and when approved by the Centre, will take the strength of judges in the Supreme Court to 27 as against the sanctioned 31.

Malhotra will be the seventh woman judge since Independence to make it to the Supreme Court. At present, Justice R Banumathi, appointed in August 2014, is the lone woman judge in the apex court and will retire in July 2020.