

January 3rd news:

International:

US blocks \$255 million military aid to Pakistan

The United States has suspended its USD 255 million military aid to Pakistan for now, the White House has confirmed, saying the fate of such assistance will depend on Islamabad's response to terrorism on its soil. The confirmation comes on the same day when US President Donald Trump accused Pakistan of giving nothing to the US but "lies and deceit" and providing "safe haven" to terrorists in return for USD 33 billion aid over the last 15 years.

The United States does not plan to spend the USD 255 million in FY 2016 in Foreign Military Financing for Pakistan at this time," a senior administration official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The US administration continues to review Pakistan's level of cooperation, the official said. Earlier in the day, US President Donald Trump, in his first tweet of the New Year, blasted the Pakistan leadership by saying that they have given America "nothing but lies and deceit" despite having received more than USD 33 billion in last 15 years.

National:

Online portal 'NARI' inaugurated

Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi inaugurated an **online portal NARI** in New Delhi for the empowerment of women.

The portal will provide women with easy access to information on government schemes and initiatives for women.

The portal summarises over 350 government schemes and other important information. It provides links to the Ministries, Departments and autonomous bodies offering these schemes as well as easy access to online applications and grievance redressal.

Economy:

Parliament passes Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code Amendment Bill

The Parliament on 2nd January gave its nod to amendments to the insolvency and bankruptcy code that aims to keep defaulting promoters out of the resolution process of insolvent companies.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) (Amendment) Bill 2017 was passed by Rajya Sabha amid concerns that the changes could bar genuine domestic investors from the insolvency resolution process, adversely affect micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and lead to large scale litigation.

The bill, which replaces an ordinance, was passed by the Lok Sabha last week. The amendments will be notified after the President gives his assent.

The IBC ordinance sought to bar wilful defaulters, defaulters whose dues had been classified as non-performing assets (NPAs) for more than a year, and all related entities of these firms from participating in the resolution process.

The bill, however, allows defaulting promoters to be part of the debt resolution process, provided they repay dues in a month to make their loan account operational and the resolution happens within the overall time frame specified in the code.

This will help promoters who had submitted resolution plans before the ordinance barred them from taking part in the resolution process of companies.

The bill also allows asset reconstruction companies, alternative investment funds (AIFs) such as private equity funds and banks to participate in the bidding process.

Many of these entities acquire distressed assets and the classification of these assets as NPAs would have disqualified them from the bidding process. Similarly, banks opting to convert their debt into equity under the Reserve Bank of India's scheme for sustainable structuring of stressed assets would have inadvertently become promoters of these insolvent companies and thereby been barred from the resolution process.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was enacted in 2016 to find a time-bound resolution for ailing and sick firms, either through closure or revival, while protecting the interests of creditors. A successful completion of the resolution process was expected to aid in reducing rising bad loans in the banking system.

The bill has also sought to bring any individual who was in control of the NPA under the ambit of the insolvency code. It lays out that the individual insolvency law will be implemented in phases. It also allows guarantors of insolvent firms to bid for other firms under the insolvency process.

Parliament passes NABARD (Amendment) Bill

Parliament has passed the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Amendment) Bill, 2017 with the Rajya Sabha approving it on 2nd January. The Bill seeks to amend the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act, 1981. The Bill allows the central government to increase the authorised capital of the Bank from 5 thousand crore rupees to 30 thousand crore rupees.

The capital can be increased further by the government in consultation with the RBI. Currently, the Central government is holding 99.6 per cent share of the bank and the rest is with RBI.

Sports:

Sathiyam becomes India's highest-ranked player in latest ITTF rankings

G Sathiyan has become India's highest- ranked player in the latest International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) rankings. He surpasses his compatriot the legendary Sharath Kamal. Sathiyan, who was nowhere near the top-100 bracket until a few months ago, is the leader on 2nd January at world No. 49, pushing Kamal to the second spot at 51.

Obituary

Anwar Jalalpuri: Prominent Urdu poet Anwar Jalalpur, who translated Bhagwad Geeta into Urdu, passed away in Lucknow on 2nd January. Jalalpur wrote 'Rahraw se Rahnuma tak', 'Urdu Shayri Mein Geetanjali' and 'Urdu Shayri mein Geeta'. He was the recipient of Uttar Pradesh's Yash Bharti award.