



Daily Current Affairs Dated On 15-Feb-2019

to isolate the country at the international level after Thursday's [car bomb attack](#) in which at least 37 CRPF men were killed in the Kashmir Valley.

Details:

- Ministry of External Affairs would announce the diplomatic steps to be taken against Pakistan.
- A notification would be issued by the Commerce Ministry withdrawing the MFN status.

What is MFN status?

- In international economic relations and international politics, "**most favoured nation**" (**MFN**) is a status or level of treatment accorded by one [state](#) to another in [international trade](#).
- The term means the country which is the recipient of this treatment must nominally receive equal trade advantages as the "most favoured nation" by the country granting such treatment. (Trade advantages include low [tariffs](#) or high [import quotas](#).)
- In effect, a country that has been accorded MFN status may not be treated less advantageously than any other country with MFN status by the promising country.
- The members of the [World Trade Organization](#) (WTO) agree to accord MFN status to each other. Exceptions allow for preferential treatment of [developing countries](#), regional [free trade areas](#) and [customs unions](#).
- Together with the principle of [national treatment](#), MFN is one of the cornerstones of WTO [trade law](#).

Benefits:

- "Most favoured nation" relationships extend *reciprocal* bilateral relationships following both [GATT](#) and WTO norms of reciprocity and non-discrimination.
- In bilateral reciprocal relationships a particular privilege granted by one party only extends to other parties who reciprocate that privilege, while in a multilateral reciprocal relationship the same privilege would be extended to the group that negotiated a particular privilege.



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- The *non-discriminatory* component of the GATT/WTO applies a *reciprocally* negotiated privilege to all members of the GATT/WTO without respect to their status in negotiating the privilege.
- Most Favoured Nation status is given to an international trade partner to ensure non-discriminatory trade between all partner countries of the WTO.

Defence Cooperation:

Why in news?

India concluded defence cooperation and security protection agreements with Germany and Sweden during the ongoing visit of Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman there.

Details of Agreement:

- **The agreement will enable both the countries to share classified information with each other.**
- India and Sweden have had a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the area of defence since 2009.
- Earlier in Germany on February 12 to 13, Ms. Sitharaman met her counterpart Dr. Ursula von der Leyen and signed an implementing arrangement on enhanced defence and defence industry cooperation to strengthen military to military engagement as well as defence industry and research and development linkages.
- Both Germany and Sweden are important suppliers of defence equipment to India and their companies are currently in the race for multi-billion tenders to supply submarines and fighter aircraft.

International Court of Justice:

Why in News?

Pakistan is committed to implementing the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case, a senior Pakistani official said as the country's delegation left for the Hague on Friday for the oral proceedings in the case that will commence at the world court from February 18.



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Background:

- Indian national Jadhav, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.
- India moved the ICJ in May the same year against the verdict.
- A 10-member bench of the ICJ on May 18, 2017, had restrained Pakistan from executing Jadhav till adjudication of the case.
- "The oral proceedings on the International Court of Justice are commencing on February 18.
- India will present its case before the court.
- Pakistan claims that its security forces arrested Jadhav from the restive Balochistan province on March 3, 2016 after he reportedly entered from Iran.
- However, India maintains that Jadhav was kidnapped from Iran where he had business interests after retiring from the Navy. Jadhav's sentencing had evoked a sharp reaction in India.
- India had approached the ICJ for "egregious" violation of the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963, by Pakistan in Jadhav's case.

What is Vienna Convention on Consular Relations?

- The **Vienna Convention on Consular Relations** of 1963 is an international [treaty](#) that defines a framework for [consularrelations](#) between independent states.
- A consul normally operates out of an embassy in another country, and performs two functions:

- (1) protecting in the host country the interests of their countrymen, and
- (2) furthering the commercial and economic relations between the two states.

- The treaty provides for [consular immunity](#).
- The treaty has been ratified by 179 states

About ICJ:

- The **International Court of Justice** (abbreviated **ICJ**) is the principal judicial organ of the [United Nations](#) (UN).



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- It settles legal disputes between member [states](#) and gives advisory opinions to authorized UN organs and specialized agencies.
- It comprises a panel of 15 judges elected by the [General Assembly](#) and [Security Council](#) for nine-year terms.
- It is seated in the [Peace Palace](#) in [The Hague](#), [Netherlands](#).

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National Minimum Wage:

Why in News?

An expert panel has recommended that a need-based national minimum wage for workers across the country be set at ₹375 per day, or ₹9,750 per month.

Salient Points of report:

- In a report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Employment on Thursday, an Expert Committee on Determining the Methodology for Fixation of the National Minimum Wage has also recommended different national minimum wages for "different geographical regions of the country to suit the local realities and as per socio-economic and labour market contexts."
- These regional wage recommendations range from ₹342 per day in some States including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal to ₹447/day for States such as Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab.
- While the Minimum Wages Act was enacted in 1948, it stipulates different wages according to occupation and State; there is no national minimum wage.
- In 2016, then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley hiked minimum wages for unskilled non-agricultural workers by 42% to ₹350 per day.
- The Code on Wages Bill, 2017, had proposed a national minimum wage and five regional minimum wages.



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- However, it was referred to a parliamentary standing committee which, in its December 2018 report, said State governments must be consulted before any national minimum wage is set by the Centre.

NASA Mars Rover:

Why in News?

Opportunity, a remarkably durable NASA rover designed to roll along the surface of Mars for three months, has stopped communicating with Earth after 15 years of service, officials said on Wednesday, ending a mission that astounded the U.S. space agency.

Engineers lost contact with the solar-powered vehicle on June 10 during a dust storm that encircled Mars. Since then, NASA officials made numerous attempts to reach the six-wheeled rover, which is about the size of a golf cart.

Reasons for Damage:

- Opportunity's equipment may have been compromised by the storm, which struck while the rover was at a site called Perseverance Valley and blotted out sunlight needed by the robot's solar panels, officials said.

About the Vehicle:

- The vehicle was built to drive six-tenths of a mile (1 km), but ended up covering 28 miles (45 km) and lasting longer on Mars than any other robot sent to the surface of the Red Planet.

History of Mission:

- As Opportunity explored craters on Mars, it gathered evidence to demonstrate the planet in the ancient past was wet and warm enough to possibly sustain life, NASA said.



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- That included the discovery of white veins of the mineral gypsum, an indication of water moving through underground fractures.
- Opportunity landed on Mars in January 2004, a few weeks after its rover twin, Spirit.
- Spirit ended its mission in 2010 after becoming stuck in soft soil.
- The Opportunity mission cost more than \$1 billion, with about 300 JPL staff members dedicated to the project soon after it landed, John Callas, project manager for Mars Exploration Rovers, said by phone.
- The team had dwindled to 30 by the time Opportunity went silent.
- Another NASA rover called Curiosity, which arrived on Mars in 2012, continues its work on the Martian surface, collecting soil samples to analyze them for signs of organic compounds.
- And NASA's InSight spacecraft, the first robotic lander designed to study the deep interior of a distant world, touched down safely on the surface of Mars in November, with instruments to detect planetary seismic rumblings never measured anywhere but Earth.
- InSight and the next Mars rover mission, scheduled for 2020, are both seen as precursors for eventual human exploration of Mars, an objective NASA