

### Sheila Dikshit a burden on Congress: Lovely



**NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /-** A day after joining the BJP former Delhi Congress President Arvind Singh Lovely today hit out at his one-time mentor and former chief minister Sheila Dikshit, dubbing her as a "burden" on the Congress. Lovely joined the BJP, along with Delhi Youth Congress president Amit Malik, in the presence of the party's national president Amit Shah yesterday.

Dikshit had termed the development as "betrayal" by Lovely. Lovely said that he chose to be a "traitor" by joining the BJP which fights for the cause of soldiers, instead of being a burden on the Congress like Dikshit. "Sheila is completely dissociated from the Congress campaign for ICMC polls and has turned out to be a burden, while I chose to join the BJP that has been holding soldiers' interests high."

Lovely said at a press conference. He also hit out at Delhi Congress chief Ajay Maken, alleging that he loved "comfort" over hard work. "Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari spends nights in slums, whereas Maken campaigns in Lodi Garden so that he could quickly go back home. He should give a thought to what he is doing," he said. Lovely said 10 Congress leaders including party vice president Sukhbeer Sharma joined the BJP. Lovely rubbished chief Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala's comment that he is an "opportunist", and said he joined the BJP because of his admiration for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. "The BJP is giving a new direction to the country and evolving a new definition of politics under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah," he said. There are many in the Congress who also believe this and are considering joining the BJP, he said. "Amit Malik and I showed the courage. Let us see when do others follow suit," Lovely said. Several senior Congress leaders are "disgusted" with the decision of candidates for the civic polls, Lovely said and alleged that tickets were "sold" to the aspirants. He also appreciated the BJP decision to field fresh faces in the election. The BJP will win the April 23 MCD polls with a "huge" majority, he said. (PTI)

### Punjab Cabinet nod to fee regulation rules

**CHANDIGARH, APRIL 19 /-** Private schools in Punjab will not be able to increase fees by more than 8 per cent annually as the state Cabinet today gave its nod to the rules for regulation of fee of unaided educational institutions. The rules lay a cap on the annual fee hike by private schools at 8 per cent of the previous year's fee. Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal said adding that he applied to all other funds charged by the school as well. The move is aimed at curbing the excessive fees being charged by private schools across the state, an official spokesperson said after a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh. The spokesperson pointed out that the Punjab Regulation of Fee of Unaided Educational Institutions Act, 2016 had already been enacted following directions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The Punjab State Regulation of Fee of Unaided Educational Institutions Rules, 2017 were approved by the cabinet today, he added.

# Political battle can't be shifted to court: Chhattisgarh to SC

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /-** The Chhattisgarh government against Chief Minister Raman Singh in the purchase of an Agusta helicopter for VVIP use. The state government contended that the party which has recently attained the status of a political party, has directly approached the apex court without lodging an FIR and was trying to give a "political colour" to the plea by making allegations against the Chief Minister. A bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra said it would first hear August 20 the plea before making any observations against the Chief Minister. A bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra said it would first hear August 20 the plea before making any observations against the Chief Minister. A bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra said it would first hear August 20 the plea before making any observations against the Chief Minister.

state, that the petition was not maintainable. Rohatgi said that Swaraj Abhiyan, which is seeking an SIT probe into alleged irregularities in the purchase of an Agusta helicopter for VVIP use by the Chhattisgarh government, should have approached the state police first for registration of an FIR in the matter. "Is it the law that for every criminal offence, you come to the Supreme Court? Why have you not gone to register an FIR and if the FIR was not lodged, they could have approached the trial court with a plea under section 156(3) of the CrPC for direction to the police to register an FIR. They have directly come to the Supreme Court," he said. "Just because they have given a colour to the petition that the Chief Minister is illeg-

edly involved so they have come to the Supreme Court directly," he told the bench, that also comprised Justice A M Khanwilkar and M M Shantanagoudar. The Attorney General argued that Swaraj Abhiyan has now been registered as a political party and was also contesting the MCD elections in Delhi and "they are ultimately shifting the political battle here."

Advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for the petitioner, told the bench that the apex court can deal with the matter as the issue whether a political party can file a public interest litigation (PIL) has already been dealt with by the Supreme Court as well as high courts. "There are facts in this case which the Attorney General does not want us to go into as the Chief

Minister is from the party which is in power in the Centre," he said. Bhusan also argued that the apex court, on a number of occasions, has entertained such writ petitions filed by political parties or personalities. Rohatgi countered the submissions, saying "after so many years, this court has to take a holistic look whether this kind of petition can be entertained directly by the Supreme Court."

Why they (petitioner) have not gone to the trial court or the high court? This court is flooded with petitions under Article 32 of the Constitution." The bench said it would deal with preliminary objections raised by the Attorney General "once for all" and fix the matter for further hearing on August 23. Swaraj Abhiyan is led by former

Chhattisgarh government in issuing a pre-decided tender inviting bids for the purchase of specific model of a specific brand of helicopter for VIP movement shows a complete mala fide intention on the part of the respondents to subvert the tendering process and to make sure that a pre-decided seller would be given the contract," the plea has alleged.

"The petitioner is also seeking an inquiry into the alleged offshore accounts of Abhishek Singh (son of Raman Singh, Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh) a few months after the alleged scam in the purchase of Agusta helicopter for VIP use," it has claimed. It has also alleged that so far no genuine attempt has been made to investigate this deal. (PTI)



Punjab Chief Minister Capt. Amrinder Singh holding Cabinet meeting in Chandigarh.

### Amarinder welcomes Centre's decision on red beacons

**CHANDIGARH, APRIL 19 /-** Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh today welcomed the Union Cabinet's decision to get rid of red beacons from all vehicles. "This is a healthy step that will further strengthen the country's democratic fibre. Singh regarded this as a progressive move."

Technical Education Minister Charanjit Singh Channi said it was a positive step which would go a long way in bringing the government closer to the people. The elimination of VIP culture was a key promise in the Congress manifesto for the Punjab Assembly polls and the state government has already set an ex-

ample with its initiatives to do away with red beacons. The chief minister has also directed that plaques and foundation stones be dedicated to the people of Punjab and will not carry the names of any political leaders, including ministers. Amarinder, a few days ago, also refused to accept preferential treatment at the airport while entering, checking-in and boarding a flight, thus sending a loud and clear message that his government was totally opposed to any VIP frill. (PTI)

### Delhi tops internet readiness among states: IAMA

**MUMBAI, APRIL 19 /-** Delhi has emerged as the top state in terms of internet readiness with a strong position in areas like e-infrastructure, e-participation, IT environment, government services, a report by industry body IAMA today said. The report titled 'Index of Internet Readiness of Indian States' published by Nielsen, noted that Delhi takes the first slot among all states and is followed by Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Chandigarh is ranked second in both e-infrastructure and e-participation. Puducherry ranks after Chandigarh on the e-infrastructure index. "We are hopeful that India will leapfrog from the present 15th position to world's top 5th in connectivity, within the next 5-6 years," Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology Secretary Aruna Sundararajan said. "India today is one of the most rapidly digitising economies in the world with the telecom industry leading the change. Things have improved multifold with state governments of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana among others taking proactive steps to improve connectivity and internet reach," Sundararajan said.

Among the northeastern states, Nagaland tops the list, closely followed by Manipur and Tripura, though these states rank low in terms of overall internet readiness. The report found that Karnataka, Delhi and Maharashtra are the top three states with the highest number of digital start-ups. It noted that of the total 242 start-up incubators in the country, 61 start-up incubators are in Tamil Nadu.

Class X, and who are not government employees or their children" were eligible for the free smart phone scheme. The registration process for the scheme had begun on October 10. The online registration process was also aimed at establishing Akhilesh's effort to usher in "digital democracy" in the state and bridge the digital divide. In January this year, the online registration for the scheme was stalled in view of an Election Commission order after a complaint was filed by the BJP which said it violated the Model Code of Conduct as the UP Assembly election schedule had already been announced. The Uttar Pradesh government recently scrapped the Samajwadi Pension Scheme of the previous government and ordered a detailed review of its beneficiaries. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who was reviewing various schemes being run by the Social Welfare Department of the

state, asked the officials to review the list of beneficiaries under the pension scheme and find out whether they were deserving candidates fulfilling the eligibility criteria. The officials have been asked to complete the review of beneficiaries in a month's time, a government spokesman said, adding a suggestion was made to rename the scheme as Mukhyamantri Pension Yojna after dropping the word 'Samajwadi'. The scheme provides a pension of Rs 500 per month to families living below the poverty line. (PTI)

### Lay pipeline for supply of recycled water: NGT to Delhi govt

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /-** Voicing concern over wastage of water, the National Green Tribunal has directed the Delhi government to submit a detailed report on the laying of a dedicated pipeline to supply recycled water in South Delhi. A bench headed by Justice Jawad Rahim ordered the AAP government, Delhi Pollution Control Authority (DPA), Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) to convene a meeting in this regard and take immediate steps to prevent water wastage. "Principal Secretary Urban Development of Delhi will be the Chairman of this committee and the other senior-most officer of the department will participate in the meeting. The report shall be filed within two weeks after serving copy on the applicant. The meeting and agreement of the date of meeting is fixed on April 27 and the report shall be filed by 5 p.m. NCT of Delhi is also directed to consider the use STP water for the green belt

also," the bench, also comprising Expert Member Nagin Nanda, said. It directed the Delhi Pollution Control Committee to ensure that the quality of water, which will be provided through the pipeline, was within the prescribed parameters. During the hearing, the DJB counsel told the bench that the DJB was ready to lay the pipeline if the cost is borne by either SDMC or DDA. The direction came during the hearing of a plea filed by Mahesh Chandra Saxena, who claimed to be associated with an NGO working in the field of ground water conservation. He has sought directions to the SDMC to stop construction of rain water harvesting system in a nearby park near the Chattarpur temple in South Delhi and restriction on ground water usage through borewells. The petitioner has also sought directions for the use of recycled treated water from DJB's sewage treatment plant at Qutub Metro Station to avoid wastage of water. (PTI)

### Courts highlights camaraderie between police and accused

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /-** A city court has pulled up the Delhi Police for "wilful inaction" in not taking any step for two years to arrest an accused in an assault case, saying the case cannot be an inference of "camaraderie" between the police and the accused. Special Judge Sanjeev Agarwal directed the Delhi Police Commissioner to conduct an inquiry done in the matter and find out who were the officials responsible for this. The court said the inquiry should be carried out against the erring cops by a DCP rank officer and the report filed within 10 days. When the court came to know that neither non-bailable warrants were obtained, nor any coercive process initiated against the accused under the influence of the in-  
spector in 2015. "Such... leni-

ency only leads to inference of camaraderie between police and the accused," the judge said. The court said it was a matter of "grave concern" that the FIR was lodged in July 2015 and, even after almost two years, no effort was made by the SHO of Sarai Rohilla police station in central Delhi or the investigating officer in the case to arrest the accused. Co-accused Gurvinder Singh was earlier arrested and granted bail by the court. The court observed that the allegation made by the complainant that the accused, while assaulting him, had said he was a friend of the police officials and added that this claim appeared to be correct as there was no record why they would not be arrested for two years. (PTI)

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### Chennai, April 19 /-

**CHENNAI, APRIL 19 /-** The Tamil Nadu government today gave a total financial assistance of Rs 90 lakh to 18 fishermen whose damaged boats, earlier seized by the Sri Lankan navy, became unusable. The fishermen hailing from various districts of Tamil Nadu were attacked by Sri Lankan Navy while fishing, a state government release said. It said that the boats, which were in the custody of Sri Lanka were released through a series of initiatives taken by late Chief Minister Jayalalitha. The Tamil Nadu government had formed teams to repair the 64 boats, which suffered minor damages. "The Government had borne the total cost involved to repair the boats. However, 18 boats that were extensively damaged sunk in the Bay of Bengal," it said. Considering the livelihood of the 18 fishermen who lost their boats, Chief Minister K Palaniswami directed officials to disburse Rs 90 lakh to the families from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund. Palaniswami handed over cheques of Rs 15 lakh each to the families at an event at the Secretariat today, the release added. (PTI)

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