Priyanka Vadra discharged from hospital: Ganga Ram Hospital

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ Congress president Sonia Gandhi's daughter Priyanka Vadra was today discharged from a private hospital, where she was admitted a week ago with dengue fever, hospital authorities said. She was admitted to the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) here on August 23 and was recuperating under the care of Dr Arup Basu, Senior Consultant, Department of Chest Medicine. "Priyanka Vadra, who was admitted under the care of Dr Arup Basu, was discharged from the hospital at 4 pm, after recovering from dengue," Dr D S Rana, Chairman, the Board of Management of the SGRH, said.

"She has been advised to take rest at home and avoid physical exertion," he said. Delhi is reeling under the triple sting of vector-borne diseases dengue, chikungunya and malaria, with at least 657 people affected by dengue this season till August 19 in the city, according to a municipal report. A 12-year-old boy had succumbed to dengue on August 1 at the SGRH, the first death due to the vector-borne disease reported in the city this season. The SGRH authorities said 59 cases of dengue have been reported at the facility between July 1 and August 16. Nearly 290 cases of dengue have been reported in the national capital over the last week taking the total number of people affected by the disease to 945 this season, according to the municipal report released. According to the latest municipal report, the number of people affected by malaria this year till August 26 has climbed to 473, while the figure for chikungunya stands at 339. "I don't think that any talks can take place with pre- conditions," Mehrishi said in an interview while replying to a question on whether the Centre was inclined to hold talks with the separatists in Jammu and Kashmir without any conditions. He said there was "no doubt" that Pakistan has been sponsoring terrorism in Kashmir through various ways including funding militants. "Pakistan is sponsoring terrorism, Pakistan is ensuring infiltration to Kashmir and Pakistan is funding terrorism in Kashmir," he said. Asked about the alleged alienation of Kashmiri youths, Mehrishi said alienation is a "concept of Delhi media" and the real issue for Kashmir is terrorism and radicalisation. "Radicalisation and terrorism are the main issues, which we are dealing with. As one chief minister had said 95 per cent people in Kashmir want peace. The youths in Kashmir have the same aspiration, like any youth in rest of India, of good education, good job and a good life," he said. The home secretary said the probe conducted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into the terror funding to Kashmiri separatists has its desired impact and it has been reflected in the activities of separatists and stone throwers. Referring to the ongoing NIA probe on terror funding, he said the agency was carrying out a "free and fair" investigation and it will be taken into its logical conclusion. "Action will be taken against all those who are found guilty as per law," he said.

Asked to comment on the recent violence in Haryana after the conviction of Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, Mehrishi said law and order situation is "live and dynamic situation" where administration and police deal with human beings and only a person in the field can make an assessment about a situation on how to handle it. "It is neither advisable nor possible and it is foolhardy to judge handling of a situation sitting here in Delhi," he said. "No officer wants a deterioration bad of law and order situation in his area. No chief minister wants deterioration of law and order his state," he said. Asked about the recent stand-off between Indian and Chinese forces in Dokalam and Ladakh, the home secretary said the Indo Tibetan Border Police, which comes under the home ministry, is not deployed in Dokalam but in Ladakh only. "But stand-off like situation in Ladakh keep happening. There was no extra ordinary situation," he said. Asked about activities of alleged Hindu terrorism, he said terrorism should not be linked with any religion. "Terrorism is terrorism. It should not be linked with any religion. No religion allows terrorism. Those who indulges in terrorism in the name of religion is only bringing bad name to religion," he said.(PTI)

SC refuses urgent listing of plea for review of NJAC verdict

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ The Supreme Court today refused to accord urgent listing of a plea seeking review of its 2015 verdict striking down the NJAC Act and the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014, leading to the revival of the collegium system of appointment of judges.

The matter was mentioned before a bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices Amitava Roy and A M Khanwilkar. The bench observed that there was no urgency for listing the plea for re-consideration of the verdict delivered by a five-judge Constitution bench. The National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act 2014 would have accorded a major role to the executive in appointing judges to the higher judiciary. The apex court had on October 16, 2015 struck down the ambitious NJAC Act, 2014 to replace the 22-year-old collegium system of judges appointing judges. While four out of the five judges of the constitution bench had held as unconstitutional and void both the NJAC Act and the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act 2014, Justice J Chelameswar had upheld the validity of the constitution amendment law. "The system of appointment of Judges to the Supreme Court and Chief Justices and Judges to the High Courts, and transfer of Chief Justices and Judges of High Courts from one High Court toanother, asexisting priorto the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014 (called the "collegium system"), is declared to be operative," the apex court had said. The NJAC was perceived by some in the legal fraternity as an attempt to interfere with the independence of judiciary.(PTI)

SC quashes order debarring college from admitting students

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ The Centre's decision debarring a Dehradun-based medical college from admitting students for two years was today quashed by the Supreme Court which observed a "cryptic and mechanical order" was passed which cannot stand judicial scrutiny.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra directed the government and the Medical Council of India (MCI) to permit the college to admit up to 150 students till September 5 for the 2017-18 academic session and allot seats in the MBBS course through central counselling as per merit. The bench, also comprising Justices Amitava Roy and A M Khanwilkar, observed in its judgement that despite the apex court asking the competent authority to reconsider the matter, "it opted to pass a cryptic and mechanical order which suffers from the vice of non-application of mind, if not perverse".

The verdict came on the pleas filed by a trust which had moved the court against various orders passed by the competent authority debarring its college from admitting students for two academic sessions, besides authorising MCI to encash bank guarantee of Rs two crore offered by the institute.

No need for multiple statements on sensitive Dokalam issue: Centre

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ Defence minister Arun Jaitley today refused to interpret the significance of resolution of the China-India face-off at Dokalam, saying it was a "sensitive" issue and that the government had already conveyed its position. The external affairs ministry has already articulated the government's stand on the issue, he told reporters at a briefing. "Given the sensitivity of the issue, there is no need to make multiple statements," Jaitley said when asked whether the resolution of the Dokalam standoff was a big achievement for India.

Jaitley, who also announced the government's decision to carry out major reforms in the Army to enhance its combat capability, said the exercise had nothing to do with any specific incident and had been going on since much before Dokalam. He was responding to a question that whether the reform process was undertaken keeping in view the Dokalam incident. Troops of the two countries had been locked in a standoff in Dokalam since June 16 after Indian army personnel stopped the Chinese Army from building a road in the disputed area. On August 28, the MEA had announced that both the countries agreed to an "expeditious disengagement" at the face-off site following diplomatic communications.(PTI)

AG to help SC on Article 35A of Constitution: Home Secy

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ The government's top law officer will help the Supreme Court with regard to the legal aspects of Article 35A of the Constitution under which special rights and privileges are granted to the "permanent residents" of the state, Union Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi said today. "There are 4-5 cases on 35A in the Supreme Court. These are only legal issues. The Attorney General will help the Supreme Court," Mehrishi told PTI here. The Supreme Court last month had asked the Centre to file a reply to a writ petition filed by an NGO seeking that Article 35A be struck down. The petition said the state government, under the guise of Article 35A and Article 370, which grants special status to the state, has been discriminating against non-residents who are debarred from buying properties, getting a government job or voting in the local elections. Article 35A was added to the Constitution by a Presidential order in 1954. Article 370 grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir while Article 35A empowers the state legislature to define the states "permanent residents" and their special rights and privileges.

While the Jammu and Kashmir government contested the petition saying the president had the power to incorporate a new provision in the Constitution by way of an order, the Centre recently expressed its reservations. It filed a reply and requested the three-judge bench to refer the matter to a larger bench as constitutional issues were involved in the case. The issue has generated a huge debate in Kashmir, with several mainstream parties and separatists warning against abrogation of the Article 35A.(PTI)

Jammu: NPSU stages rally, backs revocation of Art 35A

JAMMU, AUG 30 /--/ National Panthers Students Union (NPSU) members today staged a rally demanding immediate revocation of the Constitution's Article 35A that gives special rights to residents of Jammu and Kashmir. Led by state president Thakur Virender Singh, nearly two dozen youths, holding national flags and placards, took out the rally from the National Panthers Party's (NPP) headquarters at Gandhi Nagar here.

The participants raised slogans in support of revocation of Article 35A. The ended near the Tawi Bridge. Before dispersing, Singh said, "We will move the Supreme Court soon to seek immediate revocation of the constitutional provision, which is depriving us of our fundamental rights as citizen of the country." "It is very unfortunate that the separatists and political parties (in Kashmir) have formed a United Front to oppose any attempt to abrogate Article 35A," he said. "Omar Abdullah (National Conference's working president) recently said he will move the apex court to defend Article 35A.

I want to tell him that we too are moving the court and our chief patron Bhim Singh will represent us," Singh said. The people of Jammu and Ladakh have always supported the revocation of the article, and only "Kashmiris are opposing abrogation of this provision", he claimed.(PTI)

Multi-level Marketing Employees Federation of India under the abnner of AITUC, staging a secretariat march to press their various demands, in Thiruvananthapuram.

No talks can take place with pre-conditions: Union Home Secy

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ Talks with separatists in Jammu and Kashmir are a possibility but these have to take place without any conditions, Union home secretary Rajiv Mehrishi said today. Mehrishi, who is demitting office tomorrow, also refused to blame the Haryana government for its alleged failure in handling the law and order situation after the conviction of the Dera Sacha Sauda chief saying it was not proper to judge any situation sitting in Delhi as law and order is a "live and dynamic situation". On the possibility of talks with the separatists, he said home minister Rajnath Singh has made it clear "many, many times" that the central government was open for dialogue in Kashmir. "We want to talk," he said.(PTI)

Deposit Rs 20 cr to settle property dispute: SC to Dilip Kumar

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ The Supreme Court today asked thespian superstar Dilip Kumar to deposit Rs 20 crore with its registry as part payment to a Mumbai-based real estate firm with whom the agreement to develop his prime Pali Hill property ran into rough weather a decade ago. The actor had entered into the agreement with Prajita Developers Pvt Ltd for developing his property, measuring 2412 square yards. The dispute arose later as no construction was raised and the veteran actor wanted back the plot whose possession was with the firm. A bench headed by Justice J Chelameswar asked the Bollywood actor to deposit the amount in the form of demand draft within four weeks and inform the firm. "Upon the receipt of such intimation, Prajita shall withdraw all the security personnel deployed by it and hand over possession of the property in question within a period of seven days from the date of the receipt of the above-mentioned intimation to the appellant in the presence of Commissioner of Police, Mumbai or any other senior police officer subordinate to the Commissioner of Police, Mumbai to be nominated by the Commissioner of Police. "The Commissioner of Police or his nominee shall draw a Panchnama of the fact of the handing over of the property by Prajita to the appellant and file the same in the Registry of this Court within a week from the date of the handing over of the possession.

"Upon the filing of the Panchnama, Prajita shall be at liberty to withdraw the amount of Rs 20 crore deposited by the appellant pursuant to this order," the bench, also comprising Justice S Abdul Nazeer, said. To deal with further claim of the firm that the actor owed it more, the top court appointed former SC judge Justice P Venkatarama Reddy as the arbitrator to decide whether Prajita was entitled for more as damages apart from Rs 20 crore. "The background of the facts and circumstances of the case whether Prajita would be entitled for any damages apart from receiving the above-mentioned amount of Rs 20 crore from the appellant is a matter which requires some examination. We therefore, deem it appropriate to refer the said question for resolution by arbitration between the appellant and Prajita," the bench said. In March 2016, the apex court had granted relief to Dilip Kumar by rejecting a plea to restrain him from creating third party rights over the Pali hill property till the arbitration of the dispute with a private developer. The apex court had, however, said that there was an impending arbitration and the arbitrators will proceed to decide the dispute as and when the arbitration proceedings take place, uninfluenced by any observation. According to the original agreement, the owner as well as the developers had to share 50 per cent each of the residential flats to be built on the land. The Prajita developers had thus obtained the leasehold rights in the property together with the bungalow standing thereon by virtue of lease of September 25, 1953. But the developers had failed to raise any construction. The Bombay High Court had last year rejected the plea of the realty firm.(PTI)

Decision to remove me as RS leader unconstitutional: Sharad

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ Rebel JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav has questioned his party's decision to remove him as its parliamentary party leader in the Rajya Sabha, saying it was against its constitution and insisted that a majority of party members are with him.

Yadav today released his rejoinder, which was also sent to Rajya Sabha Chairman M venkaiah Naidu and JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar, to Lok Sabha member Kaushalendra Kumar's letter to him on August 11, informing him of his removal. "You have no moral or legal authority to issue the aforesaid letter to me and the same is against the provisions of the party's constitution for which appropriate action is being proposed by its office bearers...," Yadav has written. It is not him, but Nitish and Kaushalendra Kumar who have abandoned JD(U)'s basic principles and have voluntarily given up its membership, Yadav said. "It appears that driven by pure political opportunism the faction led by Nitish Kumar has voluntarily left the membership of the Janata Dal (United)," he said.

Yadav noted that his faction had already moved the Election Commission, claiming that a majority of party members is supporting him and its symbol should be allotted to his faction. His close aide Javed Raza, who was recently axed from the post of party's general secretary, said only the party's parliamentary board can take a decision regarding Yadav's removal and parliamentary party cannot take it. The JD(U) had replaced Yadav with Nitish Kumar confidant R C P Singh as its leader in the Rajya Sabha following the veteran leader's opposition to the alliance with the BJP. (PTI)

HC notice to govt, ED on meat exporter Qureshi's arrest

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ The Delhi High Court today sought response of the government and the Enforcement Directorate on businessman Moin Akhtar Qureshi's plea challenging his arrest in a money laundering case.

A bench of justices Siddharth Mridul and Nazmi Waziri issued notice to the government and the ED, asking them to file the reply within five days. The controversial meat exporter, Qureshi, was arrested on August 25 and sent to five-day custody of the ED by a trial court the next day for thorough investigation in the case against him and others. During the hearing, advocate R K Handoo, appearing for Qureshi, contended that he has been illegally detained by the ED. He claimed Qureshi had been directly arrested when he was called for questioning and was not informed about the grounds of arrest. Central government standing counsel Anil Soni, who also appeared for ED, said that there was due compliance of Constitution mandate regarding informing a person about his arrest.

The bench, however, said a person cannot be taken into custody without telling him the grounds and giving him an effective legal aid. "Information is not just to make a person read the grounds of arrest. You have to give him a copy of it," the bench said and asked the Centre and ED to show the official records pertaining to the arrest on the next date of hearing on September 13. The agency had told the trial court that "the witnesses have confirmed in their statements that they have delivered crores of rupees for Qureshi and his associates through his employees and one of the witnesses has stated that nearly Rs 1.75 crore have been exported by the accused from him and his friend in lieu of the help provided to him in a CBI case." It had also alleged that Qureshi was involved in hawala transactions through Delhi hawala operators Parvez Ali of Turkman Gate and M/s South Delhi Money Changer (DAMINI) in Greater Kailash-1, owned by one D S Anand. According to the agency, Qureshi was arrested late night on August 25 here under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after "he was not cooperating in the probe".(PTI)

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan flagging off the fleet of advanced fire fighting vehicles, in Thiruvananthapuram.

Delhi HC unhappy over delay in probe into Sunanda Pushkar's death

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ The Delhi High Court today expressed unhappiness over the delay in the probe into the death of Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's wife Sunanda Pushkar in 2014 and sought to know the status of investigation so far. A bench of Justices G S Sistani and Chander Shekhar referred to the fact that the incident took place in January 2014 and said more than three-and-half years have elapsed and nothing concrete has emerged so far. Pushkar was found dead under mysterious circumstances in a suite of a five-star hotel in south Delhi on the night of January 17, 2014. The court's remarks came after Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Sanjay Jain submitted that Delhi Police was not treating BJP MP Subramanian Swamy's plea as an adversarial one and the investigation was being conducted with "utmost diligence". The ASG also said that the investigation was now at the fag end and a final conclusion will be arrived at soon. He contended that transfer of investigation at this stage to any other agency would only delay the ongoing probe. The law officer, representing the police, told the bench that senior police officers were present in the court and were carrying the complete case diary for its perusal.

The bench then observed that it was not fair to "look into or monitor the investigation", but would "certainly like to know where the investigation stands as of today." "We want to know as to what happened till date. It's almost over three years but nothing concrete has come up as of today," the bench said, adding that "certainly it (the probe) cannot be unending".

It, however, clarified that the monitoring of the probe was not under the domain of the judiciary and the court was not inclined to give any direction to that effect. The bench stated that they did not to pre-empt the outcome of the probe and thus could not comment as to whether either a charge sheet or the closure report would be filed. "We are only concerned about the substantial time taken in concluding the investigation and thus, concerned about the delay," observ Swamy, who has filed a petition seeking a court-monitored CBI-led special investigation (SIT) probe into Pushkar's death, said he was not seeking exclusion of Delhi Police f The BJP leader said various reports have suggested that Pushkar's death was unnatural but delay in getting the scientific report was an attempt to sabotage the probe. Swamy tried to link the death of Pushkar with some IPL controversy and asked the court for an investigation. Meanwhile, senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, appearing for Tharoor's stepson Shiv Menon, submitted that he appreciated the stand of the ASG on behalf of the police Pahwa also submitted that the court should peruse the case diary to ascertain the progress made in the probe. The bench replied that they would decide about it only after the ASG peruses the report and makes his submissions about the time-frame by which it would be over. Pahwa contended that Menon had sought his impleadment as a party in the matter because he thinks that nobody would be more concerned than him about his mother's death. The counsel further contended that he (Menon) had a right to get a copy of Swanmy' petition and other documents as he is the son of the deceased.