Rafale "biggest ever" defence scam: Rahul Gandhi

RAIPUR, AUG 10 /--/ Congress president Rahul Gandhi today termed the Rafale fighter jet deal as the country's "biggest ever" defence scam and alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a "partner" in the corruption. Addressing a party event here, he also said that Modi has not yet spoken a word on the rape incidents in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan. He said the situation related to the condition of women has not been as bad in the "last 3000 years" and "everybody is asking the BJP and the NDA where are 'acche din' (good days)." The Congress leader said the promises made by Modi to farmers, youth and the poor people have remained unfulfilled. He also attacked the prime minister over the resignation of two journalists and alleged that "those who try and bring the truth out are stifled." Gandhi was addressing Congress workers after inaugurating the newly-constructed office of the party's unit in the state which is slated to go to the polls later this year.

Raking up the issue of the Rafale jet deal with France, Gandhi alleged that it was the "biggest ever" corruption and "the 'chowkidaar' (watchman) has been a 'bhagidaar'". He was obviously referring to Modi who has been saying that in his position as the prime minister he is the country's 'chowkidaar'. India had signed an inter-governmental agreement with France in 2015 for procurement of 36 Rafale figher planes. "The UPA government had readied the Rafale contract, according to which the price for each jet was approximately Rs 540 crore. The contract was ready and Modi ji only had to take a decision. "But, Modi ji goes to France and scraps the previous contract and the Defence minister and other cabinet ministers do not know about it," Gandhi said. "Magically, the price of each Rafale jet shoots up from Rs 540 crore to Rs 1400 crore," he added.

He maintained that the secrecy pact with France did have any clause wherein the price of the jets could not be disclosed to the country. The Congress leader claimed that the contract was earlier given to state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Modi handed it over to "his friend Anil Ambani". "The fun part is that the contract was given to Ambani ji, who has never made an aeroplane in his life nor has he ever taken a contract for defence," Gandhi said. "The company, which was given the contract, was in a debt of Rs 45,000 crore," he claimed. Ambani has already rejected Rahul Gandhi's allegations and emphasised that the government had no role in the Rafale- manufacturer French company Dassault picking up his company as a local partner. He had written to Gandhi on December 12, 2017, refuting allegations of his Reliance Group lacking experience to get the Rafale fighter jet deal.

He had written that Reliance Defence has the largest shipyard in the private sector at Pipavav in Gujarat and is currently building five Naval Offshore Patrol Vessels (NOPVs) for the Indian Navy and 14 Fast Patrol Vessels for the Indian Coast Guard. Invoking his family's "respectful relationship" with the Gandhi family over generations, Ambani had said he was "personally saddened" by the "unfortunate statements" against him and his group by several functionaries of the Congress party. Gandhi, while addressing the event today, said when he raised the Rafale issue in Parliament, the PM could not even look into his eyes.

"Women are being raped in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan and despite the involvement of (some) BJP legislators, the "56-inch chest" Prime Minister does not speak a word over these incidents," Gandhi said. "Today, women are scared of even going out of their homes. The situation has not been so bad in the last 3000 years," he said. (PTI)

UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi alongwith Congress MPs staging a demonstration at Parliament House, in New Delhi

BJP sponsored goons may attack me: Tripura Cong chief

AGARTALA, AUG 10 /--/ Two days after he was shown black flags and stopped from joining a rally at Dhalali district, around 90km from here, Tripura Congress chief Birajit Sinha today alleged that the ruling BJP had "sponsored goons" to attack him near the venue of the public meeting. The saffron party, however, dismissed the allegations and said Sinha was attacked by members of his own party. Talking to the press, the Congress president also claimed that the BJP-IPFT coalition withdrew his security cover after assuming office to "restrict his movements" for organizational works. The state government, after coming to power on March 9, had removed the security guards of Sinha and Gopal Roy, an ex-MLA of the Congress. "A group of goons sponsored by the BJP had attempted an attack on me in a bid to prevent me from joining a rally at Halahali in Dhalai district. It is now difficult for us to move in different parts of the state for political and organizational works," Sinha told reporters.

The state Congress chief threatened to launch a protest outside the office of the director general of police, demanding restitution of his security cover. "At least 5000 activists of the Congress will gherao the DGP's office to seek the restoration of security for the party leaders," he said. Sinha also said that the former Congress MLAs, who joined the BJP, still enjoys security cover. It is a "political discrimination", Tapas Dey, the party's vice president, said. "The state unit president of the ruling BJP, Pratima Bhowmick, still enjoys a security cover, but the Congress president had to let go of his guards," Dey said. If any Congress leader is "attacked or murdered", the onus would lie on the BJP government, he added. Reacting to the allegations of the Congress, BJP spokesperson Mrinal Kanti Deb said Sinha was a "victim of infighting" within his party. "The Congress chief was attacked at Dhalali by members of his own party. The Congress has no political significance and the BJP won't do any such thing," he added. (PTI)

Britain justifies decision to allow rally in London despite protest by India

NEW DELHI, AUG 10 /--/ Britain today justified its decision to allow holding of a pro-Khalistan rally in London on August 12 despite India describing it as a "separatists' activity" aimed at impinging on India's territorial integrity.

A British High Commission spokesperson said here that people in the UK have a right to protest and to demonstrate their views, provided they act within the law. "Should a protest contravene the law, the police have comprehensive powers to deal with activities that spread hate or deliberately raise tensions through violence or public disorder," it said. "This does not negate the right to peaceful protest. The use of these powers and the management of demonstrations are an operational matter for the police," the spokesperson said . The statement came a day after Ministry of External Affairs said it has conveyed to the UK that the rally will be "separatists' activity" aimed at impinging on India's territorial integrity.

The UK has already turned down India's request to not allow the rally to take place. "We have said that it seeks to propagate violence, secessionism and hatred and we expect them to take into account the larger perspective of the relationship when they take a decision on such matters," MEA Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said yesterday. Britain's left-wing Green Party has already thrown its support behind the pro-Khalistan rally planned at Trafalgar Square in London on Sunday. India registered its formal opposition to the event through a demarche when news of the rally emerged in July. Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), which calls itself an advocacy group, says the rally is intended to raise awareness on the demand for a non-binding referendum in 2020 calling for the Sikh-majority state of Punjab to be granted independence.(PTI)

HC issues directions to protect elephants from being mowed down by trains

NAINITAL, AUG 10 /--/ The Uttarakhand High Court today issued various directions to the chief wildlife warden for protection of elephants and other wildlife, relocation of nomadic Van Gujjars living in protected forests and identification of elephant corridors. To protect wild elephants who often meet with accidents along railway tracks, the division bench of Acting Chief Justice Rajiv Sharma and Justice Lokpal Singh directed the forest department to identify elephant corridors, in consultation with the Railways, so that steps to avoid such mishaps could be taken. After identification of such corridors, trenches and underpasses should be made within two months so that the elephants could be prevented from crossing the railway tracks, the court said, and added that the speed limit of trains while passing through such corridors be fixed at 25 kmph. The Railway authorities, in consultation with the Forest Department, are directed to use modern wireless animal tracking systems to avoid deaths of helpless elephants on the railway tracks, the court said.

The court directed the state government to prescribe a maximum speed of 40 kmph for motorists on stretches of national highways and state highways that pass through national parks, sanctuaries, protected forests and reserved forests to avoid accidents. The Ministry of Railways as well as the Forest Department are directed to use navigation satellites to track the movement of elephants, particularly in the immediate vicinity of railway tracks, within 12 weeks from today. The court also directed the Forest department to relocate Van Gujjars, living in protected forests, describing them as a threat to wildlife, and asked the state government to apprise the court how soon this could be done. (PTI)

SC to examine laws on media reporting in sexual assault cases

NEW DELHI, AUG 10 /--/ The Supreme Court today said it would examine the provisions of law which provide curbs and balances for media in reporting incidents of sexual assault, including that of minors, after it was complained that there have been "regular violation" of such provisions. The apex court was told that in today's world, parallel media trials were going on even when proceedings of cases were pending before the court of law, like in the recent Kathua gangrape-murder case. A bench headed by Justice Madan B Lokur was informed by senior advocate Indira Jaising, who is assisting the court as an amicus curiae, that disclosing the identity of a victim of sexual assault infringes the privacy of that person and it should not be allowed. She referred to the provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, which deals with disclosure of identity of victims of such offences and procedure to be followed by the media in reporting these cases, and said they needed to be interpreted by the apex court.

Jaising said a balance of rights of such victims and that of the media to report such incidents was required, and the apex court should interpret Section 228-A of IPC (dealing with disclosure of identity of victims of sexual offences) and provision 23 of the POCSO Act which deals with the procedure to be followed by media. "A balance will have to be struck. We do not want a complete ban on the media, but victim's identity should be protected. Also, there should not be any media trials," she told the bench, also comprising Justices S Abdul Nazeer and Deepak Gupta. "We will hear you on that," the bench told Jaising. "Is there a requirement to hear somebody from bodies like the Press Council of India (PCI) because then the media will say they were not heard," it said. Jaising, also referring to the Contempt of Courts Act, told the bench that media has now "gone beyond reporting" and deciding even before a court's judgement as to who should be an accused.

The bench, which said during the hearing that it would issue notice to the PCI on the matter, later said that it would hear submissions on September 5. During the hearing, Jaising said a scheme prepared by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) for compensating victims of sexual assault and acid attacks should be notified by all states since the apex court has also accepted it. She said the Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/ Survivors of Sexual Assault/ Other Crimes-2018 would be effective from the date the states notified it and there should be a time frame for it. "Have it (notified) on October 2," the bench said. The amicus curiae said October 2, being Gandhi Jayanti, was an auspicious day and states should notify the scheme on that date. She said the issue related to making the scheme "gender neutral" and extending it to child victims of such assaults would be looked into. Jaising said even the POCSO Act prescribed compensation to minor victims and NALSA's scheme has an upper limit as far as paying compensation to the victims was concerned.

"We will pass direction that in POCSO Act cases, the upper limit will not apply," the bench said. The bench also referred to an application filed by a body suggesting some changes in the NALSA's scheme and asked the amicus curiae to look into it. The court said that the body could make a representation before a committee of NALSA, which has representatives from various ministries, and the panel would look into it and suggest changes, if necessary. The amicus also raised the issue of black tinted glasses in vehicles and offences reported in app-based taxi services. She said the black tinted glasses in vehicles was one of the reasons of the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case in Delhi in 2012. (PTI)

Kejriwal accuses Centre of not taking steps to check crimes against women

NEW DELHI, AUG 10 /--/ Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal today accused the Centre and Lt Governor Anil Baijal for not taking effective steps to curb crime against women. His remark comes in the wake of the alleged rape of a six-year-old girl at a NDMC-run school here. Blaming Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Baijal for rise in such crimes, he said it was a "serious issue". "In the last few years, cases of crimes have been increased in Delhi. Also, cases of crimes against women have been increased, which is a serious issue," he said.

"Law and order comes under PM, Union Home Minister and LG in Delhi, but effective steps have not been taken," the Delhi chief minister said. He said in view of increase in crimes against women, the Delhi government has decided to install CCTV cameras across the city. This will ensure deterrence, Kejriwal said. "I hope that within few months of completion of CCTV installation, cases of crimes will be decreased by 30 to 40 per cent in Delhi," he said. (PTI)

Confer Bharat Ratna to Karunanidhi, demands DMK MP

NEW DELHI, AUG 10 /--/ DMK member Tiruchi Siva today asked the Centre to posthumously confer Bharat Ratna to M Karunanidhi as a tribute to his outstanding and exemplary work for the people. DMK chief M Karunanidhi died on August 7 after a brief illness. The 94-year-old DMK patriarch had served as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for five times but was never a member of Parliament. Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Siva said Karunanidhi was a Dravidian stalwart and the tallest leader of the country. Karunanidhi contributed 80 years to public life, fighting for the cause of the downtrodden, backward and the suppressed people, he said, while elaborating on the achievements of late Karunanidhi. "I would urge the Government to confer upon him posthumous Bharat Ratna Award which will be a real tribute for his outstanding and exemplary work which had left an indelible mark in the annals of history," Siva said.

In a break from tradition, both Houses of Parliament were adjourned on August 8 as a mark of respect to M Karunanidhi. Siva said Karunanidhi had "a long list of achievements which will bring feathers in his crown." "He was an outstanding orator, a prolific writer, a novelist, a short-story writer, a philosopher, a philanthropist and also a dramatist. He was an actor and he also wrote scripts for eighty movies. Sir, he is unparalleled and he made a mark in all walks of life," Siva said. The late DMK leader was fighting till his last breath for social justice, secularism, state autonomy and self-respect, he added. Many members, including Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad, associated themselves with Siva's demand.

Ram Gopal Yadav of SP raised the issue of a dalit being beaten to death in Meerut. He demanded that the Centre should probe this matter. Yadav expressed concern over rising incidents of atrocities against dalits. Sukhendu Shekhar Ray of TMC demanded that a museum on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and the Azad Hind Fauj should be inaugurated on October 21 at the Red Fort premises to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of Azad Hind Fauj. "On the 75th Anniversary of the establishment of Azad Hind Fauj Government, a befitting tribute to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and the soldiers and martyrs of Azad Hind Fauj would be to inaugurate the Netaji and Azad Hind Fauj Museum at Red Fort on October 21 this year as a mark of 75th Anniversary of the occasion," the senior Trinamool Congress lawmaker said.(PTI)

ER RPF rescue children

Rescued minor girl being handed over to her parents by ER RPF

KOLKATA, AUG 10/--/ ER RPF made commendable service by rescuing children recently. One ruaway minor girl, loitering at Sealdah station was rescued and handed over to her parents on proper documentation. Two runaway minor boys, loitering at Bhagalpur station were rescued and handed over to Child Line, Bhagalpur on proper documentation. One minor boy, weeping at Deoghar Railway station separated from his parents was rescued and handed over to his relative on proper documentation.

Commendable performance of ER RPF

ER RPF returning left behind article to the passenger.

KOLKATA, AUG 10/--/ With the prompt action taken by ER RPF, passengers got their left behind valuable belongings recently. On receipt of information, one left behind trolley bag containing clothes valued Rs.3,500 found in coach No. G-3 of train no. 22406 Anand Vihar (T) - Bhagalpur Exp. at Jamalpur Railway station was recovered and handed over to its owner on proper documentation. In a separate incident, after receiving information, one left behind ladies bag containing personal belongings valued Rs.2,000/- found in General coach of Train No. 12378 Padatik Exp. at Bolpur Railway station was recovered and handed over to its owner on proper documentation.

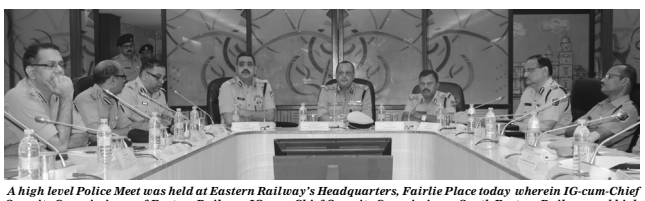
Up trains to depart from Dn platform of Kavi Subhash station on Aug 12

KOLKATA, AUG 10/--/ Due to maintenance work of the track bed, the Metro services on the UP direction from Kavi Subhash Station will depart from the DN platform on 12.08.2018 as given below: The first four(04) UP services from Kavi Subhash Station will start as usual from the UP platform. All other services in the UP direction will start from the DN platform. However, the number of services on that day will remain unchanged. Passengers are requested to co-operate with the Metro authorities and carefully follow the announcements which will be made through Public Address System. Inconvenience caused due to this arrangement is deeply regretted.

Sanjeev Agarwal Sr. Dy. General Manager ER inaugurating award ceremony to mark the Railway Week award ceremony at ER HQ this evening (10-8-18). A total no of 40 staff awarded for their dedicated service to the Eastern Railway.

Vigilance awareness workshop-cum-seminar in Metro Railway

KOLKATA,AUG 10/--/ Vigilance Department, Metro Railway, Kolkata organised a Workshop-cum-Seminar at Tapan Sinha Memorial Hospital on 09.08.2018. Shri Mihir Chowdhury, Chief Medical Superintendent, doctors, nurses and other staff of the hospital participated in the seminar. Ways to prevent corruption and avoid common irregularities in day to day's work were elaborately discussed. The main objective of this workshop was to make all aware for a corruption free environment in the office as well as in the society and ethical upliftment of the individual.



A high level Police Meet was held at Eastern Railway's Headquarters, Fairlie Place today wherein IG-cum-Chief Security Commissioner of Eastern Railway, IG-cum-Chief Security Commissioner, South Eastern Railway and high level police officials of Kolkata, Bidhannagar, Howrah and Barasat, 24 Parganas attended the meeting. The law and order situation, discipline during the time of Independence Day was discussed in detail. It has been planned to keep the Railway premises and all other places like Howrah and Sealdah stations free from any miscreant activities during the time.