

Hardik announces 'last fight' for quota, to sit on indefinite fast from Aug 25

AHMEDABAD, JULY 8 /-/- Patidar quota agitation leader Hardik Patel today announced that he will sit on an indefinite fast from August 25 to press for reservation to the community members in government jobs and education. The 24-year-old activist, who shot to prominence in 2015 with his agitation over the quota issue, vowed to continue his fast till his demand for reservation was met. In a video message posted on his official Facebook page, Patel said getting reservation for the members of his community was his primary concern. He added that the fast would be his "last fight". "This is our last fight. Either I will give my life or we will get reservation. I need your support for this. The fight has come to the last phase. Reservation is our primary is-

sure and we will continue to fight for it. From August 25, which is observed as the Patidar Kranti Divas, I am going to sit on an indefinite fast and will not eat anything until we get reservation," Patel said, interacting with his supporters via a video-streaming feature on Facebook. On the same day three years ago, the Patel-led Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS) had organised a mega rally here to put forth the demand for reservation to the community members. The rally had turned violent, leading to a police crackdown on the participants and the eventual detention and incarceration of Patel on sedition and other charges. Around 14 Patidar community members were killed in the violence.

Making an emotional appeal to his supporters and the Patidar com-

munity members, a section of whom had criticised him recently for "diverting" from the core issue of reservation, Patel sought their united support. "We will get reservation, but only when we come together to fight for it. If we are fighting among ourselves, then this is not going to happen. We are lagging behind due to unnecessary debates and opposition (from within the community)," he said. Patel also defended his decision to support Congress MLA Alpesh Thakor on the issue of prohibition, saying it was his responsibility to fight against the menace of liquor. The Congress MLA, who represents the Kshatriya Thakor community in Gujarat, has been a vocal critic of the way prohibition has been implemented in the state.

Thakor, Independent legislator

Jignesh Mevani and Patel were yesterday booked by the police on trespass and other charges after they allegedly led a "raid" of a house, where they claimed liquor was kept stored illegally, Patel said. Fighting for reservation was his top priority, but he will also continue to raise issues related to farmers, prohibition and unemployment. PAAS convener Alpesh Kathariya said the venue for Patel's fast next month was yet to be decided. "We will soon inform about the venue, where the indefinite fast will be organised. Patel's supporters will also join him," he added. From August 25, every day one of Patel's supporters would get his head tonsured to highlight the issue of reservation and make the government take note of their demand, Kathariya said. (PTI)

'BJP has set example by breaking alliance with PDP'



JAMMU, JULY 8 /-/-Weeks after the fall of Mehbooba Mufti government, Union minister Jitendra Singh today said BJP has set an example by breaking its alliance with PDP with out any pressure as discrimination with Jammu region was not acceptable to the party. He said the decision of the BJP has baffled the opposition parties in Jammu and Kashmir which have never witnessed such a thing in their political history. BJP is the only party which can become part of any government in the state without any pressure you can break away if it is not satisfied with the pace of development works. It is not acceptable to the BJP to stay in power while compromising with the interests of the people of Jammu region, he said. Singh, the minister of state in Prime Ministers office, was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a party function in Kathua district. BJP broke its alliance with PDP last month leading to the collapse of the coalition government and imposition of Governor's rule. Whatever the circumstances, there will be no compromise with the interests of the Jammu region, he said, adding BJP has set an example by walking out of the government.

He said the opposition parties are frustrated because they are not able to understand what had happened that led to the decision. Their tradition and their politics have not seen such an example in the past. They have not learnt it. The opposition is puzzled when any pressure you come out of power because you feel you are not able to fulfil your developmental agenda for the people, he said. BJP is the only party which can be part of the government for the interest of the people of Jammu region and can say goodbye to the power for the sake of the people, he said. Singh addressed party workers at Barnoti village in the district.

Asked whether the meeting was part of the party's preparation for the next year's Lok Sabha elections, he said, BJP is the only political party in the country which is ready for any type of polls all the time. Such meetings are taking place all the time round-the-year to discuss current issues being faced by the people. It is not focused on elections. "BJP is the only party which holds such meetings round the year and always prepared to face all type of elections. BJP is the only party which is linked to the people at the grass roots level, he said. The minister said there is no possibility of discrimination with Jammu region under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. With full authority, I want to make it clear that over the last four years of Modi government, there was no discrimination with any part of the region for financial and development packages are concerned," he said.

This year, Rs 3800 crore was sanctioned under PMGSY for the state, out of which Rs 2100 crore were meant for Jammu region, he said. This included Rs 1700 crore for Kathua, Udhampur and Doda districts - three medical colleges were to be established here and two others there (Kashmir), the minister said. The Union Cabinet recently decided to seek seven acre of land at Udhampur from defence ministry and yesterday the land was identified for setting up of Kendriya Vidyalaya, he said. When there is discrimination against the state government look into the issue and increase the honorarium from its reserves like other states of the country such as Delhi had done. The Anganwadi workers and helpers are on strike since February 1 in support of their demands which include implementation of the pension scheme, release of pending salaries and gratuity of Rs two lakh for workers and Rs one lakh for helpers on retirement. (PTI)

Three to four people being bitten by monkeys daily in Shimla; 879 cases already this year

SHIMLA, JULY 8 /-/-Two and a half-year-old Vedansh was playing with a plastic ball at his home in Shimla locality here on June 30 when a monkey bit him. He was immediately rushed to a hospital. On Friday last week, the medical treatment was still on as Vedansh's mother reached the Anti Rabies Clinic (ARC) at Deen Dyal Upadhyay (DDU) Zonal Hospital here for the third Anti Rabies Vaccine (ARV) injection to be administered. But Vedansh's is not an isolated case. According to the data for the past over four-and-a-half years procured by PTI from the city's two main hospitals - Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital (IGMCH) and DDU Hospital - on an average three to four persons are being bitten daily in Shimla.

As many as 8,974 persons were bitten by monkeys here since January 1, 2014, which comes to 3.6 cases of monkey-bite per day, according to the data. A total of 1,442 persons were bitten by monkeys in 2017, 1,368 in 2016, 1,148 in 2015 and 1,135 persons in 2014.

In the current year, 879 monkey-bite cases have already been reported till July 8, the data revealed. Many of these cases have been reported from Jakhu, Summer Hill, Khalini, Mall Road and Chhoti Shimla areas, said Staff Nurse Nirmal Gupta posted at DDU Hospital's ARC. And unsuspecting tourists constitute nearly a fifth of these victims, she added. Monkeys are also known to remove spectacles, snatch eatables and purses from the tourists at the famous Hanuman temple at Jakhu, she added. An official said that ARV injections are administered on the first, third and seventh day of the monkey-bite victim. Jakhu area councillor Archana Dhawan, who received multiple mon-

President Kovind visits iconic church, temple in Goa

PANAJI, JULY 8 /-/-President Ram Nath Kovind today paid respects at two spiritual landmarks of Goa, including the Basilica of Bom Jesus, on the second day of his visit to the coastal state. Kovind, accompanied by Governor Mridula Sinha, this morning visited the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Old Goa where the relics of St. Francis Xavier, a saint revered in the coastal state, are kept. The president was at the church, about 9km from here, for around 20 minutes before heading to the Mangueshi Temple, located around 5 km away from there. The body of the saint, who died in 1552, is encased in a silver casket and placed in a glass container at the church, a popular attraction for the tourists and others.

Fr Patricio Fernandes, rector of the Basilica, who guided the president during his visit, said Kovind told him he feels blessed by coming to the medieval-era heritage monument and had visited the place earlier as well. "He was also happy that this was the time when he visited Goa, there are rains in the state. So he said besides the blessings from the church, God is also blessing (Goa) in the form of rains," the priest said. During his tour, the president told the rector he had been to Old Goa twice in the past. "I visited him on the significance of the church and its history. I also told him about the incorrupt body of St Francis Xavier (the body of the church) which is nothing sort of a miracle," he said. "So I prayed for him and also for the country. Then I took him inside and showed him the golden rose where he clicked pictures with us. The rose had been given to the Diocese of Goa by the Pope (as a token of reverence) to the church," he said.

At the Mangueshi Temple, Kovind took blessings of Lord Mangueshi (considered an incarnation of Lord Hanuman) and headed back to Panaji. The shrine is perhaps the most famous of all Goa temples and attracts a large number of tourists. The president arrived here yesterday on a two-day visit to Goa. He addressed the convocation ceremony of the Goa University and attended a civic reception hosted by the state government yesterday. (PTI)



The Vice President, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu presenting the medals to students at the 30th Convocation of Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University, in Chennai

Snippets

Youth shot dead

BALLIA (UP), JULY 8 /-/-A youth was shot dead in Pakdi village when he entered into an altercation with a rival group over playing of a song during a programme here, police said today. The incident took place yesterday when some persons opened fire at Dinesh Prajapati during a marriage function, they said. Prajapati was rushed to hospital where he was declared 'brought dead'. One person was injured in the incident, officials said. On a complaint by the victim's brother an FIR was registered against four persons and two of them were arrested, Superintendent of Police S P Ganguly said. (PTI)

Missing jawan traced to native town in Maharashtra

JAMMU, JULY 8 /-/-An Army jawan, who had gone missing from Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir two days back, was traced to his home in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district, a defence spokesman said today. Disciplinary action will be initiated against the jawan on his return to his unit for remaining absent without leave, the spokesman said. The Army's mobile field veterinary hospital yesterday lodged a missing report at a police station, stating that a jawan went for some personal work in a bank on July 6 but did not return. The jawan, who had left his unit in civil dress and without any weapon, had reached his home in Aurangabad, the spokesman said. He said a contact was established with him and he is returning to the unit shortly to face disciplinary action as per Army rules for remaining absent without leave. (PTI)

College teacher arrested for extorting money in Koraput

KORAPUT (ODISHA), JULY 8 /-/-A lecturer of a private engineering college and a bank employee were arrested for allegedly trying to extort money by posing as Maoists in Koraput district, the police said today. The two men were arrested yesterday as they were trying to extort money from a senior staff of the engineering college at Phampuni under Jaypore sadar police station area. While the lecturer has been identified as Santosh Swain, the other man as Amir Kumar Behera, the police said. (PTI)

Simultaneous polls will 'destroy' parliamentary democracy: AAP

NEW DELHI, JULY 8 /-/-The Aam Aadmi Party firmly believes that simultaneous elections will "destroy" India's parliamentary democracy and federalism, its senior leader Ashish Khetan said today. Khetan, who met the chairman of the Law Commission and its members, said AAP will submit a detailed paper to the commission outlining the party's position on the matter. The Commission had on June 14 written to all recognised political parties seeking their views on the issue. "Met Law Commission Chairman & members. Told them that AAP firmly believes that simultaneous elections will destroy our parliamentary democracy & federalism & it will mean moving the basic structure of our Constitution. We will soon submit a detailed paper before the Comm (sic)," he tweeted. Seeking to give shape to the government's concept of "one nation, one election", the commission's internal working paper has recommended holding Lok Sabha and Assembly polls simultaneously but in two phases beginning 2019. The second phase of simultaneous polls can take place in 2024, the document states. The internal paper has proposed amending the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act to shorten or extend the terms of state legislative assemblies to effect the move. The proposal to hold simultaneous polls is being pushed by the central government. (PTI)

TN govt opposes Centre's decision to conduct NEET twice a year

COIMBATORE / CHENNAI, JULY 8 /-/-The Tamil Nadu government today opposed the Centre's decision to conduct NEET twice a year, while the opposition DMK slammed Union government for "creating confusion" over the exam for entry into medical colleges. School Education Minister K A Sengottaiyan said the state's stand was the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) should be conducted only once a year. "We will take the matter to the notice of the Chief Minister (K Palaniswami) and further take it up with the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) and the Union Minister concerned," he told reporters at Coimbatore. He said students cannot appear for NEET twice in the same year as a "six-month period will be short".

Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar had yesterday said that engineering and medical entrance exams JEE and NEET would now be conducted online and twice a year by the newly formed National Testing Agency (NTA). Responding to the announcement, DMK Working President M K Stalin slammed the Centre for "creating confusion" over NEET every time, and accused it of "shattering" the medical education dreams of rural students. He also reminded the Centre of the state's demand for an exemption from NEET and urged the Centre to ensure Presidential nod for two Bills on this issue.

Stalin said medical education aspirants from rural areas, especially those from government schools, hardly had computers or knowledge about computers and wondered how the BJP government at the Centre did

notafactor in this point before deciding to conduct NEET online.

The proposal to hold NEET online is a conspiracy to make medical education remain out of reach of rural students, "the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly said. In order to ensure equality, the BJP government at the Centre should immediately withdraw the decision to hold NEET online and also get the President's approval for the two bills on NEET exemption, he said.

NEET has been a sensitive issue in Tamil Nadu, with political parties opposing it right from day one. The protests against NEET followed the suicide of an anti-NEET petitioner, S Anitha, last year, after she failed to clear the exam. Recently, another girl had also taken the extreme step, allegedly over her failure to clear NEET. (PTI)



Shobhana Shah, general secretary, All India Mahila Congress (AIMC) addressing a press conference in Lucknow on Sunday.

Documentary raises issues of child trafficking, sex slavery

NEW DELHI, JULY 8 /-/-The issue of child trafficking has taken a centre-stage once again with the screening of "Amoli", a documentary that offers a deep insight into the ugly world of sex slavery. With an aim to create awareness on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and prevent the trafficking of children, the 30-minute film features stories of children who were forced into the sex industry, interviews of survivors who have been rescued, and families of girl children who are still missing. Made with the intention to identify and plug gaps in the existing legal framework regarding the burning issue, according to director Jasmine Kaur Roy, the "traffickers" and "customers" should be blamed alike for the horrible flesh-trade prevailing in the country.

"Our aim is to encourage policy makers to create laws that punish not just traffickers but also penalise the customers who foster the demand for minors," she said.

The screening organised by Change.org and Youth Ki Awaaz at Bikaner House was followed by a discussion on the issue by eminent speakers including Delhi Commission for woman (DCW) chairperson

Swati Malavi and actor Adil Hussain. "As the head of the DCW, I have led many raids and rescued minors from GB Road, which is a forced prison for thousands of children who have been trafficked and fleeced through in the flesh trade."

"I have also met children who were kidnapped and sold to these brothels. All of them are reportedly raped. Sex trafficking is the worst form of slavery. Places like GB Road have no place in a civilised society," Malavi said.

Actor Adil Hussain, who has acted in films dealing with child-trafficking, said by doing films on such "neglected" topics he wants to start a conversation with his audience. "I have been directly connected with child trafficking issues through my films. Sunrise in Marathi and the recently

released 'Love Sonia'. "It is time we think why children are being targeted sexually. We need to understand the mindset of these criminals," he said. The event also showcased a self-made artist and photographer - Leena Kejriwal's interactive art installation called 'Missing', aimed at creating awareness on the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (PTI)