



# THE ECHO OF INDIA

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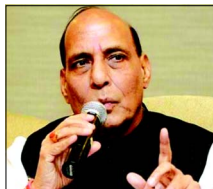


## Pak must not misinterpret India's 'decency': Rajnath

CHANDIGARH, JAN 30 /- Union home minister Rajnath Singh today slammed Pakistan for continuously violating the ceasefire agreement with India despite giving assurance not to do so, saying Islamabad should not misinterpret 'powerful' India's 'decency'.

Pakistani shelling along the border in Jammu and Kashmir has increased over the past two weeks. Fourteen people, including eight civilians, have been killed in the shelling since January 18, according to the state police. Today, Pakistani troops opened fire and lobbed mortars on forward and civilian areas along the LoC in Rajouri district. No casualties have been reported. "Three-four days ago, Pakistan Rangers held a flag meeting with our BSF DG. (The Rangers) assured that the ceasefire violation would not take place. But despite this, Pakistan has been violating ceasefire," Singh said.

"Not saying much, I just want to say our politeness and decency has a limit and we want to maintain good relations with all and also with our neighbours. But our decency should not be wrongly interpreted," the



minister said. "India is no more a weak country. India has now become a powerful country," Singh said. Pakistan, being a neighbour, should have a friendly attitude towards India, but added that the fencing of the Indo-Pak border was underway at a rapid pace. Singh was in Chandigarh to address members of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha. He was accompanied by Chandigarh MP Kirron Kher and Chandigarh BJP unit chief Sanjay Tandon.

Asked about the case registered against Army personnel following the death of two civilians in firing in Kashmir's Shopian district last week,

the minister praised the Army. "I can say that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has turned far normal compared to what it was. Our security forces and Army personnel were working effectively. J&K is ours, it will always be ours and people of J&K are also ours," he said. To a question related to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, he said the Supreme Court recently gave a verdict and an SIT was being formed to follow the order.

On January 11, the court ordered to set up a three-member special investigation team to supervise further probe into 186 anti-Sikh riot cases in which investigations were closed. Asked about the incidents of violence over caste and religion, he said all people in India are safe irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. Asked to comment on a reported statement of J.K's deputy grand mufti Basher-ud-din that Muslims of India should demand a separate nation for themselves, Singh said: "I also want to appeal to those people with mentality of casteism, religion and minority should come out of it and they need to ponder over it. All should believe that we are Indian." (PTI)

## GST 'hastily enforced' across country, Bengal Gov says in his budget speech

KOLKATA, JAN 30 /-/- West Bengal governor K N Tripathi today hailed the performance of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) government despite facing the "challenge" of Goods and Services Tax (GST) which was "hastily enforced" all across the country.

Addressing the budget session of the assembly, Tripathi said the state government is committed to maintaining harmony and brotherhood and will repel any subversive attempts to create fissures in the society. "With the economy having barely recovered from the effects of demonetization, it (the state) faced with a fresh challenge midway through the year when GST was hastily enforced all across the country," Tripathi said in the state Assembly. He said the manufacturers, suppliers, traders as well as consumers faced difficulties in switching over to the new GST regime from the existing system. Referring to the rising agitation, Tripathi said some vested interests tried to subvert the mandate of the people by taking recourse to vandalism and anarchy.

## Two historians in Karni Sena panel clear 'Padmaavati'

JAIPUR, JAN 30 /-/- Two of the two historians named by the Shree Rajput Karni Sena in a panel to watch "Padmaavati" have said the film does not hurt the sentiments of any caste and nobody should have a problem. R S Khangarot, the principal of Agarwal PG College in Jaipur, and B L Gupta, a retired professor of history at Rajasthan University, watched the movie in Bengaluru on Monday. "The film has nothing to do with history. I do not think it will hurt any section of society. The character of Rani Padmini in the film is not like the one in history," Khangarot said. Gupta seconded the view of Khangarot. "I feel that nothing in the film would hurt the sentiments of any particular caste. Nobody should have a problem," he said. Both the historians, however, said it was their personal opinion. Ahead of the release of "Padmaavati" on January 25, the Karni Sena had named four historians in the six-member panel and demanded that the film be screened for them. The other two historians are Jaipur's Roshan Sharma and Delhi's Kapil Kumar.



Chief minister Mamata Banerjee releasing 'Final Gazi', a novel by senior IPS officer Humayun Kabir in presence of the author (L) and other ministers at Kolkata International Book Fair

## CM inaugurates Book Fair

KOLKATA: The 42nd Kolkata Book Fair was today inaugurated by chief minister Mamata Banerjee at Central Park of Bidhan Nagar. The inauguration ceremony of the fair that will go on till February 11, was also attended by, among others, legendary actor Saumitra Chatterjee and French Ambassador to India, Alexandre Ziegler. Incidentally this year the theme country of the fair is France.

## Sushma to visit Nepal

KATHMANDU: External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj will arrive here on Thursday on a two-day visit during which she will hold talks with Nepal's top leadership, days ahead of the formation of a new Left alliance government. Swaraj's visit comes at a time when Nepal successfully concluded three phases of provincial, local and parliamentary elections as part of its efforts to implement the new Constitution that was promulgated in September 2015.

## Sonia calls meeting of all Oppn parties

NEW DELHI: Chairperson of Congress Parliamentary Party Sonia Gandhi today convened a meeting of all opposition parties in the afternoon of February 1, the day the Union budget will be presented. According to sources the meeting has been called to work on the strategy and course of action of the Opposition parties during the budget session of Parliament. The Trinamool Congress (TMC) will be represented by TMC parliamentary party leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay and MIP Derek O'Brien.

## India crush Pak in U-19 cricket WC

CHRISTCHURCH: India entered the final of the U-19 cricket World Cup after thrashing arch-rivals Pakistan by a massive 205 runs in the semi-finals here today. India will now meet Australia in the summit clash on February 3. Opting to bat first, India led on Shubman Gill's 102 not out of 94 balls to pile on 272/9 and then bowled Pakistan out for a mere 69 in just 29.3 overs. (Details on Page 12)

## Delhi HC asks poll panel to state facts behind AAP MLAs' disqualification

NEW DELHI, JAN 30 /-/- The Delhi High Court today asked the Election Commission (EC) to state the facts behind its decision to disqualify the 20 AAP MLAs for holding office of profit by filing an affidavit. A bench of Justices Sanjay Khanna and Chandier Shekhar asked the poll panel to file the affidavit after the EC said it wanted to respond to some of the allegations made in the MLAs' pleas challenging their disqualification from the Delhi Assembly. The Commission also told the court that it would rely upon the opinion it gave to the President to disqualify the 20 AAP MLAs who were appointed as Parliamentary Secretaries. When the matter was taken up for hearing initially, the court asked the petitioners to go through the poll panel's synopsis of the case and then decide if affidavits are needed. Subsequently, the matter was taken up again after everyone perused the EC's synopsis. In the second round of proceedings, the bench said that the 250-page long synopsis, containing various documents, was very big and asked the EC to file a shorter one on affidavit. "A synopsis of 250 pages. It cannot be that big," the court observed. After the brief proceedings, the court listed the matter for further hearing on February 7 by when the MLAs have to file their responses to the EC affidavit.

## Bus tragedy: Death toll reaches 42 as Mamata orders inspection of ill-fated bridge

KOLKATA, JAN 30 /-/- Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today ordered the inspection of the Balirghat bridge at Daulatabad area of Murshidabad from which a bus that was coming from Karimpur in Nadia and moving to Malda plunged into the Gogra canal yesterday morning.

The death toll in the gruesome tragedy has risen to 42 even as divers of the National Disaster Response Force have kept on their search operations to find out more bodies, if any. Mamata, who visited the site yesterday, and supervised rescue operations also directed the district authorities to put up speed restrictions on the road. Survivors allege that the accident was caused because of callousness of the driver who, according to them, was talking over his cell phone while driving. The bus had rammed into the bridge early yesterday and fallen deep into the canal. Eight people are believed to have been injured in the accident.

The chief minister, who had visited the spot after the incident and stayed in the town overnight, said the condition of the bridge had to be examined. "An inspection of the condition of the bridge must be conducted. And speed-breakers must be installed in and around the area... That is really needed," she told newsmen. The state government had announced compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the next of kin of each of those killed and Rs 1 lakh for those gravely injured. Others injured would get a compensation amount of Rs 50,000. Mamata said the district magistrate had already handed over the compensation to the next of kin of those killed. "We had completed handing over the bodies to their family members by midnight," she said, referring to the 26 bodies that had been pulled out on Monday.

"The DM has already distributed Rs 5 lakh to each family as we had announced," she said. On the possibility of more casualties, she said, "We have to check the river. They (rescuers) are looking into it." (EOIC)

## PM, Vice-Prez attend interfaith prayer meet on Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary

NEW DELHI, JAN 30 /-/- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice President Venkaiah Naidu today attended an interfaith prayer meeting on the occasion of the 70th death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, his wife Gursaran Kaur, Union ministers Harsh Vardhan and Mahesh Sharma, and GopalKrishna Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and former West Bengal governor, were also present at the prayer meet at the Gandhi Smriti here. Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a right-wing Hindu activist, on January 30, 1948 at the Birla Bhavan, which was later rechristened as Gandhi Smriti. Prayers were led by religious

gurus belonging to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Baha'i, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism.

Modi, Naidu and other dignitaries paid floral tributes at the Gandhi Smriti. The Prime Minister also interacted with students present at the event. Earlier in the day, Modi paid homage to Gandhi and recalled the sacrifices made by those who laid down their lives for the country. "Remembering Babu on his Punya Tithi," he said in a tweet. "We bow to all those martyrs who have sacrificed themselves in service of our nation. We will always remember their courage as well as dedication towards the nation." Modi said.



President Ram Nath Kovind attending Sarva-Dharma-Prarthana being organised on the occasion of 70th Death Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, at Rajghat, in New Delhi on Tuesday.

## Yashwant Sinha launches 'Rashtra Manch'

Shatrughan joins, does not see move as anti-BJP activity

NEW DELHI, JAN 30 /-/- After months of snapping at the BJP, a disgruntled Yashwant Sinha today launched a political platform, joined by a number of politicians led by BJP MP Shatrughan Sinha.

The new political platform 'Rashtra Manch' seeks to take the Centre on and would start a movement against its policies, former Union finance minister Yashwant Sinha said. Shatrughan Sinha said he had joined the platform because he had not been given a forum in his party for expressing his views, but added that his decision to back the front should not be seen as an anti-party activity as it was in national



interest. Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Dinesh Trivedi, Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury, NCP MP Majeed Memon, Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh, former Gujarat chief minister Suresh Mehta and JD-U leader Faxon Varma were among those who attended the event marking the launch of the front. RLD leader Jayant Chaudhary and former Union ministers Som Pal and Harmohan Dhawan were also present. Yashwant Sinha likened the present situation that which prevailed 70 years

ago when Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated, on this day, and said democracy and its institutions were under attack. He claimed that the Narendra Modi-led NDA government at the Centre had reduced farmers to "the status of beggars" and

accused it of presenting "made to order" statistics to suit its interests. The senior leader, however, claimed that the Rashtra Manch would be a non-party political action group, and insisted that it was not against any party but would work to highlight national issues. "It is not an organisation but a national movement," he said, hitting out at the government's economic and foreign policies. "Everybody in the BJP is living in a cocoon. We are not," he said. Dialogue and debate in

the country had become "coarse, one-sided and dangerous," he added. "It seems mob has the job of giving justice," the former Union minister claimed. The first leg of the Budget Session of Parliament would effectively have only four working days, something that was unprecedented, he said. Taking up farmers' issues would be the top priority of his organisation, said the 80-year-old leader, who had held the finance and external affairs portfolios in the first NDA government. Yashwant Sinha has publicly criticised the Modi government's economic policies and style of functioning.