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CBI writes to 5 banks; seeks details of Nostro transactions in PNB

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 /--/ The CBI has sought from the chief vigilance officers of five banks the details of financial transactions in the Nostro accounts of Punjab National Bank (PNB) on the basis of 293 fraudulent Letters of Undertaking issued by it to jewellers Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi, officials said.

The overseas branches Canara Bank, Bank of India, State Bank of India, Allahabad Bank and Axis Bank had credited over Rs 11,400 crore into the Nostro account of Punjab National Bank on the basis of the guarantees (LoTs) given by to Modi and Choksi, they said. The Nostro account refers to an account that bank holds in a foreign currency in another bank overseas to enable foreign trade by its clients. The CBI has now written to these five banks, having branches in Antwerp, Frankfurt, Mauritius, Hong Kong and Bahrain - to provide details of all such transactions to dig out a clear money trail of Rs 11,400 crore.

Meanwhile, BJP president Amit Shah today took on Congress chief Rahul Gandhi for his attacks on the Prime Minister over the PNB scam, saying no other government had acted so promptly and taken stringent action against frauds as the Narendra Modi government. Shah also hit out at the Siddaramaiah government, accusing it of following "three Ds - Dhokha (cheating), Dadagiri (gooddism) and dynastic politics".

The BJP chief said the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI have taken prompt action in the case. "There has been no government other than Modi's government, that has taken prompt and most stringent of action against any frauds committed in the past," Shah told newsmen here. His reply came when he was asked about Gandhi's remarks against Modi in the multi-crore PNB fraud case.

Mystery over Sridevi's death deepens Forensic report ascribes tragedy to accidental drowning



DUBAI, FEB 26 /--/ Bollywood actor Sridevi died of accidental drowning in her hotel bath tub after losing consciousness, the Dubai government said today, giving a dramatic twist to her sudden death that has stumped a legion of fans and industry colleagues.

The Dubai government said in a tweet that the police have transferred the case to the 'Dubai Public Prosecution' which will carry out regular legal procedures followed in such cases. "Following the completion of post mortem analysis, Dubai police headquarters today stated that the death of the Indian actress Sridevi occurred

due to drowning in her hotel apartment's bath tub following loss of consciousness at the Dubai government's media office said on Twitter. It is not clear what caused Sridevi, 54, to lose consciousness, and whether the initial report of her death due to cardiac arrest still holds.

The actor's death, which was first reported at around 3 am on Sunday in Dubai, sent shock waves across the country with those who knew her at a loss to explain how she could have suffered cardiac arrest at such a young age. The latest report of accidental drowning only deepens the mystery surrounding her death. Her family has not commented

beyond their initial statement on Sunday to announce the death, and has requested the media to not contact them as they deal with the tragedy. The Dubai-based Gulf News said in a report that the investigation is still going on to determine the circumstances surrounding the accident as the forensic report only says that she drowned, Gulf News quoted an official as saying. Her body has been sent for embalming, the newspaper said. It is not clear when the body will be brought back to India.

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The Bollywood actor was in Dubai for a family wedding, and had stayed back after the ceremonies. Her husband had flown

back to Mumbai with their younger daughter Khushi, but he had returned to Dubai to surprise her, according to Khaleej Times.

He was reportedly in the room when Sridevi went to the bathroom to get ready for a dinner, according to Khaleej Times. It said Kapoor discovered her unconscious in the bathtub filled with water. She was rushed to the hospital where she was declared dead on arrival. In Mumbai today, many Bollywood celebrities visited the home of actor Anil Kapoor, the brother of Boney Kapoor. Sridevi's two daughters, Khushi and upcoming actor Jahnuvi are staying at the house.

SC sets up 5-Judge Constitution bench to hear land acquisition related matters

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 /--/ A five-Judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court would hear on March 6 a contentious issue that had cropped up after a three-judge bench had raised concern over 'judicial discipline' and propriety arising due to conflicting views of different benches of the apex court in matters relating to land acquisition.

The issue had come to fore on February 21 when a three-judge bench had virtually stayed the operation of a verdict delivered on February 8 by another three-judge bench of the top court, which had held that compensation not awarded within a stipulated five year period would not be a ground for cancellation of land acquisition. On February 21, the three-judge bench had observed that perhaps there had been a tinkering with judicial discipline in arriving at a conclusion as the issue should have been referred to a larger bench in case of difference of opinion, as a 2014 verdict passed by another three-judge bench had held that non-payment of compensation would be a ground to cancel the land acquisition.

The very next day when another matter on the land acquisition issue came up for hearing before a two-judge bench, it had referred the case to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) for constituting an "appropriate bench" to deal with the "piquant" situation that had arisen after the February 21 order. Now, a five-Judge Constitution bench has been set up by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra to deal with the issue. Besides the CJI, Justices A.K. Sikri, A.M. Khanwilkar, D.V. Chandrachud and Ashok Bhushan are part of the bench, which would hear the matter on March 6. A three-judge bench headed by Justice Madan B Lokur had on February 21 referred to the February 8 judgement and observed that if "judicial discipline" and propriety were not maintained, the institution will "go forever".

King of Jordan to visit India

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 /--/ King of Jordan, Abdullah II Al-Hussein, accompanied by a business delegation, will come on a three-day visit to India starting on Tuesday the external affairs ministry announced on Monday. This will be his second visit to India after his visit along with Queen Rania in 2006.

According to an external affairs ministry statement, King Abdullah will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra during the course of which the two sides will discuss the entire gamut of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest. The twosides are expected to sign a number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and agreements in diverse areas of bilateral cooperation. President Ram Nath Kovind will host a banquet in honour of King Abdullah while Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will call on the visiting dignitary. On Wednesday, the King will visit IPT Delhi to explore collaboration with Jordan technical institutes. On Thursday, the King will deliver a special address on "Promoting Understanding and Moderation" organised by the India Islamic Centre at Vignyan Bhawan.

Rahul questions PM over delay in appointing Lokpal

RAMADURG, FEB 26 /--/ Congress president Rahul Gandhi today accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of favouring the "super rich" and questioned why he had still not appointed a Lokpal to fight corruption.

Gandhi, who has been targeting Modi in all public rallies in poll-bound Karnataka, also quizzed Modi over his "silence" on issues such as the Punjab National Bank fraud. "In Gujarat, Modi ji did not implement Lokayukta. It has been four years since he became prime minister. He did not implement Lokpal even in Delhi," he said. The Congress president said the Prime Minister, who had described himself as the country's "chowkidar" (watchman), was silent on the fraud and the alleged increase in the turnover of a company owned by BJP president Amit Shah's son, Jay Shah.

"The country's chowkidar comes to Karnataka and speaks about corruption with his chief minister (former chief minister Yeddyurappa) who had been to jail on one side and on the other side four ministers who also went to jail during the BJP rule," he said, addressing a rally here. "Nuddante nade" (practise what you preach)," he urged Modi, quoting 12th century social reformer Basaveshwara from Karnataka. Rahul, who is on the second leg of his three-day tour of the northern parts of Karnataka, said, "Modiji... nuddante nade. The country has not made you Prime Minister just to give speeches."

The Congress leader said diamantara Nirav Modi had taken away crores of rupees "belonging to" India's poor. "Nirav Modi took away Rs 22,000 crore belonging to India's farmers, labourers and the poor, but our chowkidar does not utter a word," he said.

CM approves research scholar's plea

Site for Malda Bhawan finalized at Salt Lake
SOUMYA DE SARKAR

MALDA, FEB 26 /--/ Following instructions from chief minister Mamata Banerjee the state municipal affairs & urban development department offered a land measuring 5 cottah at a prime place in Salt Lake for construction of Malda Bhawan. CM during her recent Malda tour was inspired by Srabanti Chakraborty, a research scholar in Political Science from the University of Ganga for an accommodation in Kolkata for the students and youths of Malda. Mamata Banerjee appreciated Chakraborty's proposal and asked Finance, state municipal affairs and urban development minister to offer a suitable plot jointly to English Bazaar municipality (EBM) and Malda Zilla Parishad (MZP).

During the administrative review meeting in Malda on Feb 26, the CM also asked Sri Bhattacharya, principal secretary of state tourism department to offer the details



Nihar Ghosh, EBM chief and Gour Mandal, deputy head of MZP offer inspecting site for proposed Malda Bhawan at Salt Lake on Sunday (EOL Photo)

of project report available with him so that additional cost of preparing detailed project report (DPR) could be saved by the urban and rural bodies of Malda. It has been learnt from state urban development department sources that a plot near AMRI hospital and Salt Lake stadium has been spotted for construction of Malda Bhawan. Another part of the plot of the same measure adjacent to the location would be offered for construction of Cooch Behar Bhawan. A delegation of EBM and MZP inspected the spot on Sunday and expressed content with the location.

Nihar Ghosh, MLA and head of EBM, Gour Mandal, deputy head of MZP along with EBM councillor Subhamay Basu and others inspected the spot today. "There would be a six-storied building here. We are now waiting for the map from state tourism department," Ghosh said. Chakraborty, the research scholar is delighted too. "The promptness of the CM in resolving the prolonged crisis for accommodation for students and youths is stupendous. No word of gratitude is enough to appreciate her authority as the head of the state," she said while being congratulated by fellow scholars for having raised the proposal to the CM.

AT A GLANCE

Musharraf treason case hearing on March 8

ISLAMABAD: A special tribunal in Pakistan will resume on March 8 the hearing of treason case against former military dictator Pervez Musharraf for imposing emergency rule in the country in 2007. Musharraf, 74, who left the country for Dubai in March 2016, was declared a proclaimed absconder by the court in May 2016.

Bhaichung quits TMC

KOLKATA: Former India football captain Bhaichung Bhutia today announced his decision to quit the Trinamool Congress (TMC). The footballer, who contested elections twice as a Trinamool Congress candidate and lost both times, took to social media to announce his decision. (Details on Page 2)

Transporting a coffee table dream

Café owner's bid to make communication in districts easier

DEBANJAN MUKHERJEE

KOLKATA, FEB 26 /--/ Uber, with its app-based taxi service has already become a household name across the country and soon, West Bengal may witness Urn, a bike taxi service, which apart from Kolkata, will provide services in the districts. Jul Mukherjee, a young entrepreneur, who is already a popular face for his Café Kabira near Sulekha in south Kolkata, said he has submitted a proposal for Urn to the West Bengal government and discussions have so far been positive.

"I saw bike taxi when I visited Bangkok way back in 2004-05. Bike taxi was the best mode of transportation for me there. Later I availed the same service in Gurgaon. Then I thought if such a service could be launched in the districts of West Bengal, many young people could earn their



Jul Mukherjee, owner of Cafe Kabira with Urn merchandises in his hand. (inset) logo of Urn - EOL Pix

bread through it," Jul said and added that he has done a survey on people engaged in marketing jobs who frequently visit districts for professional reasons. "For people who travel to places like Durgapur or Asansol and are in a hurry to reach their targeted locations there, often face difficulty in getting transportation. Taxis charge them high and direct buses are not always available. So if there is a bike taxi service, they can simply call a taxi through app and reach places comfortably," he said.

According to Jul, a flat fare of Rs 5 per kilometer would be excellent and it will encourage youths having bikes to join Urn. "Anybody having a bike can join Urn. We will simply modify the vehicle. We will install an app, provide medical kit and security alarm and training to the bike owners. Then they can become a part of the service and earn money. We will just earn a commission from them," the young entrepreneur said. Though the project has not yet got green signal from the government and required finance from bank, work for it has already started. "We have already assigned the task of designing the app to a Bangalore-based company and a trial version is almost ready. We are very hopeful of getting approval from the state government. Though there are still some issues to be sorted out, we think the government will

give us the go ahead signal. The main concern now is getting finance from the bank," Jul stated. Asked about the tentative sum that he is looking forward to get from the bank for this project, Jul said he has already talked to Jadavpur branch of Bank of Baroda for an initial amount of Rs 20 lakh. "Apart from the bike riders we will employ around 100 people for back-office jobs. We will have a technical team of 20-22 people, five-seven persons for monitoring the app and then there will be people to run the offices at different centers and for different marketing jobs. Moreover, the app that we are designing for App would cost around Rs 4 lakh," he said. Asked what makes him so hopeful about Urn getting the green signal from the state government when many other big names have also submitted similar proposals, the think tank said: "They are all targeting Kolkata, but we are giving

more importance to districts like Siliguri, Malda, Murshidabad, Durgapur, Burdwan and Howrah where the issue of unemployment is more burning than that in Kolkata."

Jul said if the service gets approval and required finance, then 500 bike owners will get enrolled with Urn initially. "There is no categorization for bikes. Nor is educational qualification a constraint for operating the app as well. Asked by when people of West Bengal may see Urn becoming a reality if things work well, an optimistic Jul said: "Poila Boishakh is your targeted day for launching Urn."