

Shehbaz Sharif barred from campaigning for by-elections

ISLAMABAD, AUG 3 /- Punjab chief minister Shehbaz Sharif has been barred by the Election Commission of Pakistan from taking part in his own by-election campaign to a National Assembly seat left vacant after the disqualification of his elder brother and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. According to the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), constitutional dignitaries, including the President, the Prime Minister and the provincial Chief Ministers, have been barred from visiting the constituency or a polling station after the issuance of the schedule for the September 17 polls. "All these public office-holders, including the Punjab chief minister who is a potential candidate for the by-election to Lahore National Assembly seat (NA-120), have been restrained from visiting the constituency or a polling station after the issuance of the poll schedule," it said. The ECP also told candidates that their election expenses should not exceed Rs 1.5 million and they must use a dedicated account for all transactions related to poll expenses. The Dawn newspaper reported.

AT A GLANCE

No decision on Indus Water Treaty yet: WB

WASHINGTON: The World Bank has said that discussions between India and Pakistan over Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants are ongoing, but no decision has been made yet. "The meetings earlier this week were held in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation. The two sides have agreed to continue discussions and reconvene in September in Washington, DC," the World Bank said in a statement on Wednesday. A day after officials of India and Pakistan concluded their two-day meeting on the issue. In its statement, the World Bank described an "erroneous" reporting from some of the media outlets on the outcomes of the Indus Waters Treaty meetings. "The World Bank desires to clarify that the discussions between India and Pakistan about the Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants are ongoing," the media statement said without giving any further clarification.

Central lawyer for ponzy schemes

NEW DELHI: The Union government is drafting a central law to protect people investing in chit fund schemes and will bring the legislation very soon. Parliament, Union finance minister Arun Jaitley said today. Replying to a debate on "The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2017" in the Lok Sabha, he said there is a need for a pan-India law to deal with chit fund schemes in addition to state laws which already exist. (Details on Page 8)

Border stand-off with China can be resolved through talks: Govt

New Delhi should show willingness for peace through deeds: Beijing

NEW DELHI, AUG 3 /- India today said the border stand-off with China cannot be resolved through a war but can be settled through bilateral talks. External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj said in the Rajya Sabha that "patience is key to resolving problems" because of patience is lost, there can be provocation on the other side. "We will keep patience to resolve the issue," she said referring to the Doklam stand-off issue with China. "We will keep engaging with China to resolve the dispute," Swaraj said replying to a discussion on "India's foreign policy and engagement with strategic partners" during which members voiced concern over the stand-off and raised questions over India's policy.



Kuwait NRI student Riddhraj presents a cheque of his Prize Money to the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, as doanor for the Indian Army Welfare Fund, in New Delhi—PIB

BJP asks state govt to shun use of force in Darjeeling

Ahluwalia seeks 'high-level' probe into alleged police firing

NEW DELHI, AUG 3 /- The BJP today asked the West Bengal government to shun use of force in the tense Darjeeling, saying the crisis there could not be resolved through bullet. Union minister S S Ahluwalia, who represents the hill region in the Lok Sabha, also sought a "high-level" probe into the alleged police firing in Darjeeling in which three protesters were killed, calling it "unpardonable". Addressing a press conference in which he was accompanied by members of the Gorkhaland Movement Co-ordination Committee (GMCC), Ahluwalia also expressed hope that peace will be restored there before August 15. "The crisis in Darjeeling cannot be resolved through bullet. Repressive measures and brutalities of police are not the solution," he said, making an appeal to the state's Trinamool Congress government and the GMCC for bringing peace and ending violence.

This 50-day long crisis can only be resolved through political dialogue, and for that peace was needed to be

restored in the town, he said, requesting GMCC members to end their fast and call off their strike. "Gorkhas are known for their honesty and loyalty for the country. They never hesitate in sacrificing their life for the nation. So I would also request them to call off their fast and end the strike," Ahluwalia said. As the MP of Darjeeling, he will submit a memorandum on behalf of the GMCC to the Prime Minister and the Union home minister. Meanwhile, the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) took out rallies in various parts of the Darjeeling hills today demanding restoration of internet services and immediate withdrawal of police force. No incident of violence has been reported since Wednesday night but the police and security personnel are keeping a vigil as the indefinite strike called by the GJM, in support of its demand for a separate Gorkhaland, entered its 50th day today.



Gopal Gandhi with a group of people.

Gopal Gandhi rejects suggestion of refusing support of JD-U

NEW DELHI, AUG 3 /- Opposition's Vice-President candidate

Gopalkrishna Gandhi on Thursday rejected a suggestion that he should not take support of the Janata Dal-United in view of Nitish Kumar joining hands with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "Nitish Babu's decision is his decision and his prerogative," Gandhi said when asked about Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Tariq Anwar suggesting that he should publicly say no to JD-U votes in view of Bihar Chief Minister and JD-U chief Nitish Kumar crossing over to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Nitish Kumar had announced support for Gandhi when he was heading the Grand Alliance government in Bihar backed by the RJD and the Congress. He later dumped the two parties to join hands with the BJP but said he would still back Gandhi in the Vice Presidential election.

Gandhi did not comment on Nitish Kumar's decision to head a coalition government with the BJP in Bihar. "In the present context, it is not for me to judge politicians... It is for them to assess the relative merits of the two Vice Presidential candidates," Gandhi said a news agency. Gandhi also did not elaborate on the support being extended to him by the RJD, whose leaders are facing allegations of corruption.

"It is again their (RJD's) decision and their prerogative," he said.

Talks with Pak can start the day it stops terror: Sushma

NEW DELHI, AUG 3 /- India will start dialogue with Pakistan the day it stops promoting terrorism against this country, external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj said in Parliament today, while making it clear that terror and talks cannot go together.

A combative Swaraj rejected the Opposition contention that the Union government has no policy with regard to Pakistan, asserting that it had laid the "roadmap" envisioning peace and normalcy even before it took over. "But it can't be one-sided... Terror and talks cannot go together. The day they stop promoting terror, we will start the talks," she said replying to a discussion on "India's foreign policy and engagement with strategic partners". "You are asking what is our Pakistan roadmap? We had declared it even before the swearing-in."

We had invited prime ministers of all the neighbouring countries and all came... Bilateral meetings were also held and I was present," Swaraj said.

The external affairs minister recalled that the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif along with leaders of all other neighbouring countries had been invited to the swearing-in ceremony of the NDA government in May 2014.

Since then, the relations with Pakistan have been witnessing ups and downs, she said. Swaraj claimed when she visited Pakistan for the 'Heart of Asia Conference' on December 9, 2015, Sharif had said the dialogue should be started in a new format and it was given the name of Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue.

Afterwards, Modi went to Lahore as part of that initiative, taking an 'out-of-box' decision, she said. The relations with Pakistan were at such height that on December 25, 2015, when Modi wished Sharif on his birthday, the Pakistani leader asked him to greet him personally.

Modi then visited Lahore to set, putting protocol aside. She said even after the terror attack on Pathankot Airbase on January 1, 2016, Pakistan, shedding its past practice of being in denial, set up an investigating team to probe it. "The story changed after (the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander) Burhan Wani (in an encounter) when (the Pakistan) declared him as a martyr," Swaraj said.



Sushma Swaraj speaking.

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Nation may have a new coastal security force

NEW DELHI, AUG 3 /- The country may have a new force to guard its maritime boundaries, with a proposal coming up for discussion at a high-level meeting chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh today.

The proposed force would guard maritime frontiers closer to the country's landmass. The Indian Coast Guard protects India's mari-

time interests and enforces maritime law, with jurisdiction over the territorial waters of India, including its contiguous zone and exclusive economic zone.

The ICG has a large mandate and territory to cover. The proposal for raising a new central armed police force - Coastal Border Police Force (CBPF) - was discussed at the meeting

which was attended by the top home ministry officials and chiefs of central armed police forces (CAPF), a home ministry statement said.

India has a vast coastline of 7,516 km touching 13 states and Union Territories (UTs). It also has around 1,197 islands. Apart from the raising of CBPF, the meeting discussed housing issues related to CAPF personnel, recruitment to fill up vacancies, shortage of doctors for central forces, setting up an institute of medical sciences for them. The cadre review of central forces, review of the BSF's air wing and issues related to procurement of various items for CAPFs also came up for discussion, the statement said.

Recommendation to induct pvt sector talent in Govt depts under consideration: Minister

NEW DELHI, AUG 3 /- Niti Aayog's recommendation on induction of private sector talent in central government departments through lateral entry is under consideration, Union minister Jitendra Singh said today.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha, he said the government is always committed to appoint best available talent subject to provisions of rules. Niti Aayog in the three-year action agenda for 2017-2020 has recommended for inducting specialists into the system through lateral entry in policy making areas on fixed-term contract, said Singh, minister of state for personnel.

In case the recommendation is implemented the efforts will be to supplement the existing talent with further competencies in different areas/sectors. This recommendation along with suggestions received from other quarters is under consideration," he said in a written reply in the Lower House.

Singh said over the recent years only about 15 per cent posts at deputy secretary/director level under the central staffing scheme have remained vacant due to various reasons viz. gap between occurrence of vacancy and filling up of posts, non-availability of suitable officers, pre-mature and sudden departure/repatriation of officers etc. It was recently reported that the Centre was mulling to open its doors for private sector specialists in its select departments.