

TN makes 'final effort' to exempt state from NEET

CHENNAI, JULY 31 /- The Tamil Nadu government today made the "final effort" in seeking exemption for the state's students from common nationwide medical entrance test NEET, with its representatives taking up the issue with Union ministers J P Nadda and Jitendra

Singh. TN health minister C Vijayabaskar, accompanied by health secretary J Radhakrishnan, met Union health minister Nadda and minister of state at PMO Singh, in Delhi. An official release here recalled a series of meetings with Tamil Nadu ministers, including Chief

Minister K Palaniswami, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his other colleagues on the issue in the last few days. "Following these, as a final effort, Vijayabaskar met Nadda and Singh to pressure them for an exemption for Tamil Nadu from the National Entrance

Exam Eligibility Test (NEET)," the release said. The Minister was accompanied by Radhakrishnan, it added. Tamil Nadu has been seeking exemption from NEET, saying it would affect the students appearing for the exam. In February, the assembly had passed two bills

seeking to pave the way for the continuation of undergraduate medical admissions on the basis of Class 12 marks, exempting Tamil Nadu from the ambit of NEET. The rival AIADMK Puratchi Thalvai Amma-faction led former chief minister O Panneerselvam, had

also met Modi on the same issue. Opposition parties, including DMK, have been urging the ante against the AIADMK government on the matter, with the DMK holding a human chain protest here last week to press for President's assent to the two Bills. (PTI)

Man gets five years RI for sexually assaulting minor girl

THANE, JULY 31 /- A Thane court has sentenced a 29-year-old man in Navi Mumbai to rigorous imprisonment for five years for sexually assaulting a minor girl in her home. Thane District and Special Judge Ashutosh N Karmarkar last week convicted the man under "The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act" sections 7 and 9 (sexual assault on a child below 12 years). According to the prosecution, the girl, who was 10 and studying in Class 5, was alone at home in Navi Mumbai's Pavane village when she was assaulted by the man on December 6, 2014. The girl had gone out to fetch some water.

When she returned home, the accused, who lived in the same neighbourhood, followed her inside and touched her inappropriately. When the girl resisted, he pushed her to the ground. As she raised an alarm, the man ran away, prosecutor Sanjay Londhe submitted before the court. The girl informed her mother about the incident when the latter came from work that evening. Subsequently, the girl's mother lodged a police complaint.

According to the prosecutor, the evidence of the victim showed there was sexual intent on the part of the accused. Also, there were marks on her chest. The medical certificate also supports her story, he said. The accused, in his defence, argued that the girl's mother had a dispute over water with one of his relatives. He said he attempted to settle the argument because of which the girl's mother was trying to implicate him with a false allegation. The accused also urged the court to take a lenient view saying he was poor and the only earning member in his family, with his wife and widowed mother being dependent on him. In his order, the judge noted that the act of the accused to enter the girl's house when she was alone and to touch her inappropriately showed it was committed with sexual intent. The court also convicted the man under IPC section 354 A (1)(b) (sexual harassment) and awarded rigorous imprisonment for another three months under it. Both the sentences are to run concurrently. (PTI)

2 zoos in UP faced difficulty in feeding beef to carnivorous animals: Govt

NEW DELHI, JULY 31 /- Two zoological parks in Uttar Pradesh faced difficulty in supply of beef meant for feeding carnivorous animals following a ban imposed by the state government on illegal slaughter houses, the Rajya Sabha was informed today.

Union environment minister Harsh Vardhan in written reply to the Upper House said apart from these two zoos situated in Lucknow and Kanpur, no other zoo in the country faced any difficulty in feeding the carnivorous animals. "As per information received from the Central Zoo Authority only Nawab Wazid Ali Shah Zoological Garden, Lucknow and Kanpur Zoological Park, of

Uttar Pradesh faced difficulty in the supply of beef for carnivorous animals due to ban on illegal slaughter houses," he said. The minister was asked whether carnivorous animals in various zoos of the country were facing inconvenience in their food consumption due to the unavailability of beef. "The carnivorous animals of above mentioned two zoos were served with goat meat (mutton) instead of buffalo meat," Vardhan said. After coming to power, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had ordered closure of illegal slaughter houses and strict enforcement of the ban on dog smuggling to fulfill a key electoral promise. (PTI)

Delhi govt freezes funding of 28 DU colleges

NEW DELHI, JULY 31 /- The Delhi government today ordered a freeze on funding of 28 Delhi University colleges - that are either fully or partially funded by it - following the varsity's failure to appoint governing bodies since months. "Iv ordered Fin Dept to stop funding for all Delhi govt funded 28 DU colleges, as DU not willing to hv governing bodies for last 10 months," deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said in a series of tweets. "I cannot allow unchecked corruption and irregularities to be sustained on Delhi govt funds in the name of education," he added. Delhi University Registrar Tarun Das, who is authorised to speak to media, remained unavailable for his comments on the issue.

The 28 colleges, of which 12 get 100 per cent and 16 get 5 per cent funding from the government, have not had full governing bodies since October 2016, when their term ended. This is the first time that the bodies were not given a three-month extension.

In February, DU had sent a panel of names to Delhi Government following which the AAP dispensation had sent the Governing Body list in March, for approval by Executive Council (EC). However, no decision has been taken yet in this regard by DU. (PTI)

Cross-LoC bus services remain suspended for 4th week

JAMMU, JULY 31 /- Cross-LoC bus services on the Poonch-Rawalakot road between Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) remained suspended for the fourth consecutive week in the wake of ceasefire violations by Pakistan that have led to border tensions, an official said today. A total of 116 PoK residents, who travelled on the Paigam-e-Aman bus service to visit their relatives in the state, have been held up here for the three weeks. The cross-LoC bus service re-



Devotees taking the idol of Lord Ganesha to a Puja pandal for the upcoming Ganesha Chaturthi festival in Mumbai.

SIT formed to probe complaint against AAP MLA in Punjab

RUPNAGAR (PB), JULY 31 /- The Punjab Police today formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the case against an AAP legislator who was booked for allegedly assaulting and outraging the modesty of a woman. The three-member SIT will be led by Rupnagar Superintendent of Police (SP) investigation Raminder Singh, said Rupnagar Senior SP Raj Bachan Singh Sandhu today. The other members of the SIT are Deputy SP Investigation Varinderjit Singh and Deputy SP Manvir Singh Bajwa, he said. The SIT was formed after the AAP MLA's wife met the Senior SP and demanded a fair probe, police said. The police had booked the AAP's Rupnagar legislator Amarjit Singh Sandoa on July 29 on charges of intent to outrage the modesty of a woman, assault and criminal intimidation. The case was registered on

the complaint of a 55-year-old woman who had alleged that the MLA had thrashed her when she had gone to his house to ask him to pay pending rents and electricity bills to the tune of Rs 2.5 lakh. She had claimed that Sandoa had rented her house in November 2016 for Rs 30,000 per month and used it as his election office. He vacated it in April this year but did not pay the rent and the electricity bill, the woman said in her complaint. She alleged that the MLA thrashed her when she had gone to his house to ask him to clear the due. However, Sandoa had rubbished the allegations and alleged that a conspiracy had been hatched against him. Backing his party MLA, Punjab AAP chief and Sangrur MP Bhagwant Mann accused the Congress led government of "threatening" opponents with "false" cases. (PTI)

Guj HC junks PIL on candidates' submission of documents with affidavit

AHMEDABAD, JULY 31 /- The Gujarat High Court today dismissed a PIL seeking court's direction to the Election Commission to ensure that a candidate contesting election also submits documents in support of claims made in the affidavit. A division bench of Chief Justice R Subhash Reddy and Justice V M Pancholl dismissed the petition on the ground that a Supreme Court's 2002 judgement (in Union of India vs Association of Democratic Reformers case) did not contain direction regarding submission of documents. The court said that it cannot give new direction based on a few instances of fraud

committed by elected representatives. The 2002 Supreme Court judgement had made it mandatory for a candidate to submit details regarding criminal offences, assets, liabilities and educational qualifications. Petitioner R R Koshi had submitted before the court that candidates looking to contest elections give false information regarding their details. The provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, do not empower returning officers to check and cross verify any detail submitted by the candidate in the absence of documents supporting averment made in the affidavit submitted before a returning officer; the petition contended. Due to this, many candidates either file false affidavits or conceal important information, it contended. The petitioner claimed that there have been several cases of "defective affidavits, fake degrees, false affidavits, concealment of important information by the returning candidates." The petitioner also contended that to make the process transparent, the high court should direct Election Commission to ensure that candidate also provides documentary evidences to support averments made in the affidavit. (PTI)

Discharge duties as per rule of law: Bedi sermon to babus

PUDUCHERRY, JULY 31 /- Puducherry Lt Governor Kiran Bedi today asked the senior bureaucrats serving in the territorial administration to be "bold enough to discharge duties" as per rule of law. In her monthly message to officials, Bedi said "It is the responsibility of the senior bureaucrats to be bold enough to record opinions within four corners of law."

She also said, "The experience of Centralised Admission Committee (CENTAC) has brought to the fore the system of functioning that was not only opaque but had also failed to render its duty within the framework of the law and the result of which has been plagued by CBI investigation, intervention of Medical Council of India and Judiciary." The signal that emanates from such failures and controversies in the system of government, she added.

Stating that the open house conducted at Raj Nivahani office (Lt Governor) regularly received complaints of land related disputes, the former IPS officer said the Land Grab Cell created in Revenue Department here has to be made to function effectively.

UP not benefitting from same party rule at Centre and state: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, JULY 31 /- The BJP is in power at the Centre as well as the state but this has not translated into any gain for the people of Uttar Pradesh, BSP chief Mayawati alleged today. She claimed that the central aid in some key schemes had been reduced. "The people of Uttar Pradesh are not benefitting from the same party governments at the Centre and the state... On the contrary, central aid for right to education and the scheme for creating employment has been reduced," Mayawati said in a statement here. Referring to BJP president Amit Shah's press conference here today, Mayawati alleged that he was projecting the "below average working of the Modi government as an achievement". Laying out the Yogi Adityanath government in the state, she said "jungle raj" prevailed and sensational crimes were taking place. The people are living in fear, she claimed. Accusing the BJP of winning the elections on the basis of false promises, she asked "how long the 22 crore people of the state will be taken for a ride?" She claimed that instead of doing real work, the BJP leadership was only making statements that it will take time to improve the conditions or that the income of farmers will be doubled in ten years. (PTI)



Rain fury: Raje asks officials to prepare report on losses

JAIPUR, JULY 31 /- Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje today conducted an aerial survey of Jalore district and asked officials in districts hit by torrential rains to make a report of losses so that an interim report can be sent to the Centre for financial assistance. The government, she said, will work on a permanent solution to tackle floods in Jalore and adjoining districts. Normal life in Jalore, Pali and Sirohi districts has been badly affected for a week due to heavy downpour. "I have sought report of losses in districts hit by rain. The report from district collectors so that an interim report can be sent to the Centre," she said during her visit of rainfall Jalore district. "We have faced a similar flood situation earlier. We will work to find a permanent solution to this problem so that such a situation can be tackled," she told reporters in Jalore. She said government will findout ways to utilise water through ponds and other water storage techniques to avoid such a situation. Briefing about the rescue operations, Raje said more than 11,000 persons have been rescued, including 42 persons rescued through choppers. "Teams of district administration, NDRF, SDRF, Army, health department, CRPF and volunteers are on their toes to carry out rescue operations and normalise life in heavy rainfall affected areas. The work done by all people involved in the rescue operation is commendable, she said. She said the power and telecommunication network is being repaired. In Jalore alone, 100 Grid Sub-Stations (GSS) were down due to the torrential rains. Out of the 100, 88 have been repaired and remaining 12 are still under repair. In Sirohi, of the 30 GSS, 25 have been repaired. Soon, road, power and water issues will be normalised, she added. Veterinarians of state government as well as of the Indian Army have been deployed to take care of bovines hit by rain water. (PTI)

Govt to make efforts to pass Transgender Bill soon: Athawale

HYDERABAD, JULY 31 /- The Centre would make efforts to soon pass the Transgender Bill, which seeks to empower the community by providing them a separate identity, Union Minister Ramdas Athawale said today. Expressing regret over the "discrimination and injustice" meted out to the transgender community, Athawale said men and women have their rights, and the transgenders should get their rights. A bill has also come in 2016. That bill has been sent to the standing committee. Very soon, the Government of India, the government of Narendra Modi, will pass that bill to give you your rights," the minister for social justice and empowerment said. He was speaking at a national workshop on "Developing Modules for Sensitising Transgender People and Stakeholders" organised at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD and PR) here. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, which seeks to define transgenders and prohibit discrimination against them, was introduced in the Lok Sabha last year. It was referred to the parliamentary standing committee on social justice and empowerment for examination and report. Athawale said the members of the transgender community are subjected to injustice and discrimination, sometimes even by their family members, and they have to beg to make their both ends meet. Stressing on the importance of education for the welfare of transgenders, he favoured giving reservation in jobs to this community. W R Reddy, the director general, NIRD and PR, said the workshop has been organised to understand and take "baby steps" towards the welfare of transgenders. Leaders of the transgender community who spoke on the occasion, narrated the "discrimination and agony" they had to face in their lives. (PTI)

SSB launches team to deal with disaster management

JAMMU, JULY 31 /- The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has launched its first contingent of rescue and relief teams (RRTs) to deal with the situation arising out of natural and man made disasters in Jammu and Kashmir, a senior official said today. The contingent, comprising 18 teams, presented its first demonstration at a special camp here yesterday, using equipment used for rescue and relief operations during disasters, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of SSB (Jammu) S Manvendra said. The RRT also exhibited its capabilities regarding medical first responder, rope rescue, building rescue and firefighting at the time of natural, accidental and man-made disasters. This contingent of the SSB will go a long way in strengthening the disaster management mechanism in the state, he added. (PTI)

MP: 4 sanitation workers die of suffocation while cleaning tank

Dewas (MP), July 31 /- Four sanitation workers died of suspected asphyxiation while cleaning a septic tank in the early hours today at Bardu village, around 60 km from here, police said. Vijay Sibote (30), Ishwar Sibote (65), Dinesh Goyal (65) and Rinku Goyal (16) died while cleaning a septic tank. Inspector B L Meena of the Pipraira police station said, He said one Kamal Singh Sandhav had hired them to empty the tank for Rs 8,000. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem. Meena said the exact cause of their death would be known once the autopsy report is received. It appears that they died of asphyxiation. (PTI)

The estimated Rs 5,300 crore desalination project will address the increasing drinking water needs of Chennai, Jayakumar said. Presently, two sea water desalination plants of 100 million liters a day each are located at Chembur and Nemmel. Among others, the state has also sought Central clearance for the second phase of Chennai Metro rail, road and infrastructure projects, he said. (PTI)

weeks as killed soldiers were among 11 people killed and 16 injured. About 35 structures were damaged and more than 110 livestock killed. The Chakan-Da-Bagh crossing point was started in 2006 to facilitate easier trade and travel between the divided families of Jammu and Kashmir. Cross-LoC trade and travel are considered major confidence building exercises between India and Pakistan. (PTI)