

# Nine trekkers dead in TN forest fire; CM says they didn't take permission Garud commandos, choppers pressed into rescue operation

**SALEM, MARCH 12** /- The trekkers who were caught in a forest fire in the Western Ghats' Kurangan Hill ranges did not have permission for an expedition, Tamil Nadu chief minister K Palaniswami said today. Nine people, who were part of a 36-member trekking team, were killed in the incident on Saturday. Three men and six women were among the deceased, a senior official told newsmen. "Without their permission, they embarked on a trekking expedition. Trekkers should climb hills only after taking the government's nod," Palaniswami said. No criminal action would be taken in the

future against trekkers who undertake such expeditions without the state's permission, he said. During the summer months of March, April and May permission to trek is not given as the high forest ranges are dry with the possibility of forest fires spreading fast, he said. The chief minister told newsmen that a probe had been ordered to ascertain the cause of the fire and how it spread along the Kurangan Hill ranges in Theni district. Out of the 17 people getting treatment in hospitals, five are in Theni and the rest in Madurai, he said, adding he will visit the injured

at Madurai this evening. The team comprised 24 people from Chennai and 12 from Tiruppur and Erode districts. Meanwhile, defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman today said an advanced light helicopter (ALH) will be pressed into service for rescuing those trapped in the forest fire in Tamil Nadu, due to the hostile terrain. Citing the difficult terrain as a major hindrance in conducting operations seamlessly, Sitharaman said: "We are also bringing in an ALH, which is a light helicopter so that the manoeuvrability will be better because this cliff is almost a vertical hillock, which goes up

very sharply and there is not much not of a level ground where they can land." Therefore, the operation has to be done winching the survivor or the dead, she told reporters here. The defence minister said 16 Garud commandos - a special force of the Indian Air Force - have rescued a few people in the night. "At the moment, the report is that the garuds are trying to lift the bodies of the dead to a higher plain, from where you can have the helicopters go and carry them down. So there are two helicopters waiting to do this particular activity," Sitharaman said. One helicopter has spent a lot of time from

early dawn to contain the fire. It has also doused the fire in that area, from where the garuds have moved the bodies, she added. Various political parties, including opposition DMK, today expressed concern over the death of nine persons, part of a trekking expedition, in a forest fire in Tamil Nadu and called for steps to streamline the activity. DMK working president M K Stalin, AIADMK leader T T V Dhinakaran and PMK founder S Ramadoss, among others, condoled the death of nine trekkers in the Kurangan Hills fire. Stalin, also the leader of the opposition in the state Assembly, said he was

"shocked and anguished" over the loss of lives and expressed his sympathies with the families of the victims. "Such fires are often happening in the Kurangan forest. If the district administration and forest department had ensured adequate guidance and arrangements for those who had gone on the trekking expedition, the loss of lives could have been certainly avoided," he said in a statement. In future, officials should ensure that adequate steps are in place for the safety of the trekkers, he added. AIADMK leader and RK Nagar MLA Dhinakaran also condoled

the death of the victims. "The forest department not issuing alerts and not preventing them (trekkers) from undertaking the expedition is the reason for the loss of lives," he said. In future, relevant rules and regulations regarding trekking should be duly followed, he said. CPI state unit secretary R Mutharasan demanded a probe into the matter. He expressed sympathies with the families of the victims. PMK leader Ramadoss wondered if all the rules were duly followed by the authorities concerned and the company that arranged for the trekking expedition.

## Goa MLA for law to ban sale of agricultural land to non-Goans

**PANAJI, MARCH 12** /- Goa BJP legislator Michael Lobo today favoured bringing a law to ban the sale of agricultural land to non-Goans. Lobo comments came after he was trolled online for his reported statement supporting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Karnataka's Lamani tribe, whose members have migrated to Goa. Lobo, who is also the deputy speaker of the Goa Assembly, claimed he never made any such statement and maintained he was being unfairly criticised on social media. "Time and again, I have spoken in the Assembly that we need to bring a legislation to stop the sale of agricultural and orchard land to non-Goans," Lobo told news agency PTI.

There should be a criteria of 25-year domicile certificate, which one needs to produce in the sub-registrar's office for registering sale of agricultural or orchard land, he said. According to the MLA, there is a lack of political will to bring a law to ban the sale of agricultural land to people from outside Goa. "The minute you pass such a legislation, everything will fall in place," said the MLA from the Calangute constituency.



A pillion rider pleading before security personnel to allow him to cross the Kaudara chowk after curfew like restrictions were imposed in the Shehar-e-khas area of Srinagar on Monday

## Restrictions imposed in Srinagar after killing of 3 militants

**Srinagar, MARCH 12** /- Authorities today imposed restrictions in parts of Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order in view of the killings of three militants - one of whom hailed from the city police said. Restrictions under Section 144 of the CrPc have been imposed in eight police station areas of Srinagar, a police official said. He said the curbs have been imposed in the jurisdiction of Nowhatta,

Khanayar, Rainawari, Safakadal, M. Gung, Maisuma, Kralkhudan and Soura police station areas of the city. The official said the restrictions have been imposed as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order. Three militants were killed in a pre-dawn encounter with security forces in Hakura area of Anantnag district of south Kashmir today. Two of the slain militants were identified as Eesa Fazli, a resident of Soura area of the city here and Syed Owais, a resident

of Kokernag in Anantnag. The identity of the third militant was being ascertained. Meanwhile, a spontaneous shutdown was observed in many areas across the valley as shops and other business establishments were shut and public transport was minimal, the official said. Clashes between groups of youths and security forces broke out in several areas of the city, he said. According to the police official, stone pelting have been reported from Soura, Anchar, Old Barzulla, Lal Chowk and other areas of

the city. Authorities have ordered closure of schools and other educational institutions as a precautionary measure in Srinagar and south Kashmir. Kashmir University has suspended classes for the day and postponed examinations as well. Islamic University of Science and Technology has also postponed examinations for today. Mobile internet speeds have also been reduced across the valley. Police have issued an advisory for the citizens, seeking their cooperation.

## Failing to secure 2nd innings in RS, SP's Naresh Agrawal joins BJP

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 12** /- Rajya Sabha MP Naresh Agrawal, who lost out in the race for re-nomination to the Upper House to Jaya Bachchan, today quit the Samajwadi Party and joined the BJP, which was left embarrassed after he remarked that the SP had equated him with the film actor "who used to dance in films". Agrawal, who has courted controversies in the past too over his statements, made the remarks in the presence of BJP leaders, including Union minister Piyush Goyal, at a press conference held at the party headquarters here to announce his joining the BJP. "I have been compared with those who dance and work in films," he said, leaving the BJP leaders on the dais squirming. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra, however, immediately distanced his party from Agrawal's remarks, saying his party respects people from all fields and welcomed them in politics. The Upper House Member also expressed his affection for SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav and his cousin Ram Gopal Yadav, but said the party's strength in Uttar Pradesh has depleted.

## Common man, police officers not safe in Karnataka, says BJP spokesperson

**BENGALURU, MARCH 12** /- Demanding an immediate meeting between IPS Officers Association and the chief secretary, BJP spokesperson Suresh Kumar today alleged that the common man and police officers are not safe in Karnataka, "which chief minister Siddaramaiah claims is the number one state." "The common man and police officers are not safe in Karnataka, claimed to be number one state by chief minister. It is very sad that police officers are not feeling safe in the system," he said in a video clip released to the press. The police system is under strain...the ruling

party for its survival and to protect its followers does not have a right to destroy a system and an institution," he alleged. Suresh said the Association had written to chief secretary Ratna Prabha, asking her to convene a meeting of all IPS officers and some retired IPS officers, "to discuss and evolve a strategy considering their immediate goal of a fair and free election and long-term goal of imbuing strong professional values in the service and police force." Assembly polls are due in Karnataka this year. Each and every sentence in the letter, which

raised relevant issues at the right time, would be endorsed by all citizens of the state, a confident BJP spokesperson said and added that it started with the assault on IAS officer Kashmi and the latest was the attack on Karnataka Lokayukta Vishwanath Shetty. Six police commissioners in four years for Bengaluru city was a telling comment on the system, Kumar said. It was high time the chief secretary agreed to the meet and thrashed out issues to give confidence to the public as ultimately their welfare was most important for any administration, he said.

## Police register FIR against Cardinal George Alencherry

**KOCHI, MARCH 12** /- Police today registered a case against Syro-Malabar Church head Cardinal George Alencherry and three others on a complaint alleging irregularities in land deals in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese. The FIR was registered nearly a week after the Kerala High Court ordered the police to do so against the cardinal, priests Joshy Pathy and Fr. Delius, and middleman Sajju Varghese on a petition filed

by Shine Varghese from Chertthala. Shine had moved the high court, saying that the Ernakulam Central Police had not registered an FIR on his complaint against the cardinal and others over the land deals. They were named in the complaint alleging criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and cheating in sale of over three acres of land, worth crores of rupees, belonging to the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese. Alencherry, who is also the

major archbishop of the archdiocese, is the first accused in the case, police said. They have been charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including sections 120b (criminal conspiracy), 406 and 406 (criminal breach of trust), and 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), police said. Police have registered the FIR after a section of the Syro-Malabar Church faithful questioned the delay in filing it and threatened to move the Kerala High Court on the

matter. Police also secured legal advice before registering the FIR. The cardinal and the other accused moved separate appeals in the high court, submitting that the order of the single judge and the conclusions arrived at by him were unsustainable in law and facts. Earlier, a six member church committee, which probed the alleged irregularities, said it had found numerous instances of violation of canon and civil laws. It had recommended necessary action against those responsible.

## Business body in Valley slams minister for saying 'J&K not a political issue'

**Srinagar, MARCH 12** /- The business community in the Valley today hit out at state finance minister Haseeb Drabu for his statement that Jammu and Kashmir was not a political issue, saying the remarks were far from the truth as the whole world recognised it as a political issue pending a solution for the last 70 years. "The KCCI (Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry) is disgusted while going through the statement by the minister of finance. The comment made by him is a slap on the face of social issue is far from the truth when the whole world recognises it as a political issue pending for a solution for the last 70 years," KCCI president

David Ahmed Tenga said in a statement here. He said by using the platform of an organisation which is based in Delhi, "attempts are being made to dilute the narrative of Kashmir and an impression is being created particularly in front of ambassadors present on the occasion." According to the business body chief, the PDP in its Agenda of Alliance common minimum programme between the PDP and the BJP - had recognised the fact of the settlement of Kashmir by talking to the government internally and externally, and as such the finance minister had done "a great disservice" to not only his own party but to the people of Kashmir.

## BJP's DP Vats files nomination for RS seat from Haryana

**CHANDIGARH, MARCH 12** /- Retired Lt General D P Vats, who was chosen by the P as its nominee for the lone Rajya Sabha seat in Haryana, today filed his nomination papers. The seat is being vacated by Congress member Shadi Lal Batra. While filing his nomination, 67-year-old Vats was accompanied by chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, many Cabinet colleagues including Ram Bilas Sharma and Abhimanyu, and BJP legislators from the state. The ruling BJP has 47 MLAs in the 90-member House and it is set to win the seat comfortably. The INLD has 19 members, the Congress 17, the BSP and the SAD one each. There are 5 Independents. Vats, who hailed from Hisar, had also served as director and commandant of the prestigious Armed Forces Medical College, Pune.

## Maharashtra Assembly pays tribute to Patangrao Kadam

**MUMBAI, MARCH 12** /- The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly today paid rich tributes to senior Congress leader and sitting MLA Patangrao Kadam, who died on March 9. The condolence motion was moved by chief minister Devendra Fadnis and seconded by Leader of Opposition Radhkrishna Vilke Patil. All legislators, who spoke on the occasion, recalled Kadam's rise from humble background and his contributions in the education and co-operation sector. Senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar said Kadam was a leader who formulated "realistic" programmes and policies and went all out to implement them vigorously. "He was a fierce political rival but this never affected his personal relations with people cutting across party lines," Pawar said.

## Muslim women march against instant talaq bill in Rajasthan

**SIKAR, MARCH 12** /- Muslim women today took out a silent protest march against the instant triple talaq bill in Rajasthan's Sikar district. The women took out the march from Idgh Chowk to the district collectorate, holding placards demanding withdrawal of The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill. After the protest march, a delegation of Muslim women handed over a representation to additional district collector Jaiprakash Chaudhary, addressed to the President and Prime Minister. The bill has been pending withdrawal of the bill, alleging that it was a defective bill that would lead to destruction of families and increase the sufferings of the women. "We reject the bill and appeal to take it back as it is against the Constitution of India, women's rights and gender justice," Yasmeen Farooqui, a board member, had said during a similar protest in Jaipur last February.

## State Notes

### Shopkeeper foils loot bid by 3 armed men

**GURGAON, MARCH 12** /- A shopkeeper foiled a bid by three armed persons to loot his shop in Palam Vihar here, police said today. The three persons on Sunday night entered the store posing as customers and attacked shop owner Surendra Kumar while one of them held the shopkeeper at gunpoint, a senior police officer said. Unfazed, Kumar fought back despite one of the accused opening fire at him, the police officer said, adding the bullet missed Kumar and he raised alarm to alert passers-by. As Kumar raised alarm, the accused escaped from the spot, he said.

### Four-member gang backs school student to death

**HYDERABAD, MARCH 12** /- A 12th standard student was allegedly chased and hacked to death by a four-member gang here today, police said. The incident happened around 8.30 am when the deceased, identified as Sudheer (E), was on his way to write his examination, they said. Police said Sudheer got off his two-wheeler when he was attacked and boarded a bus, but the gang pulled him out and hacked him to death on the roadside, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Kukatpally Division) N Bujanga Rao said. Previous enquiry is said to be the reason for the attack. (PTT)

### New Hyderabad City Police Commissioner takes charge

**HYDERABAD, MARCH 12** /- A 1990 batch IPS officer Anjani Kumar today assumed charge as the new Commissioner of Police of Hyderabad city. Anjani Kumar, who served as Telangana's additional director general of police (law and order) for the last two years, took over as the new Hyderabad Police Commissioner from V V Srinivasa Rao at the Commissioner's office here. Prior to this, he served as additional commissioner of police (law and order) Hyderabad city besides also Inspector General of Police Warangal Range and Deputy Inspector General of Police of Nizamabad Range. He was also chief of Greyhounds (elite anti-naxal unit) and also served as the chief of Counter Intelligence Cell.

**EASTERN COALFIELDS LIMITED**  
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

ESTENDER NOTICE

Area : MM Dept. ECL Hqs., NIT No. ECL/Hq/Pur/O2017-18/81781016/AutoCAD/100 Date: 08.03.2018. Name of Work : Procurement of AutoCAD Software Updated Version. Estimated Cost : ₹25,40,000.00; Document Download Start Date & Time : 14.03.2018 from 11.00 a.m. IST; Document Download End Date & Time : 06.04.2018 at 11.00 a.m. IST; Tender Opening Date and Time : 07.04.2018 at 11.00 a.m. IST; Details of tender can be seen at ECL website or <http://procure.gov.in> or [www.coalindiatenders.nic.in](http://www.coalindiatenders.nic.in)

ECL's Website : [www.easterncoalfields.nic.in](http://www.easterncoalfields.nic.in)