

Raj Thackeray urges parties to boycott polls with use of EVMS

MUMBAI, AUG 30 /-/ Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray has urged all political parties to boycott elections till the Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VPAT) machines or the ballot paper system are not made available. In a letter written to chiefs of various political parties, Thackeray said since the elections in 2014, there have been doubts about the credibility of the electronic voting machines (EVMs). The allegations that EVMs are being tampered have been confirmed in all subsequent polls, he claimed. "In so many constituencies, our corporators and MLAs worked relentlessly and yet they faced defeat. In fact, in so many places the candidates got zero votes. Now, how is this possible?" Thackeray questioned.

The MNS chief said the First World countries like USA, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and Korea chose to discontinue the use of EVMs and reinstated the ballot system. "The only countries still using EVMs are India, Nigeria, Venezuela, among others. Why are we insisting on this disputable method," Thackeray asked. "One cannot push aside the possibility of EVMs being hacked during the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls due next year, he said, adding that the fundamental right of freedom of expression stands infringed.

NIA raids house of accused in murder of Hindu Munnani leader

COIMBATORE, AUG 30 /-/ National Investigation Agency (NIA) sleuths today carried out search at two places belonging to an accused in the 2016 murder of a Hindu Munnani functionary here, police said. As part of the investigation, a six-member team from Kochi in Kerala, headed by Superintendent, Rahul conducted raids in the house of Shahjahan in Salabaha colony and his saw mill in Thuriyaha, they said. Shahjahan's son Munna, living abroad, is said to be wanted in the case and NIA had asked him to appear for interrogation. However, he had not responded so far following which the raids were conducted, to ascertain whether he had any role in the murder, they added. The NIA, which took over the probe from CB-CID police in February last, have already arrested four people in connection with the murder of C Sasikummar Sasikummar was hacked to death by a gang of two wheelers when he was returning home in Subramaniampalayam, on the outskirts of the city on September 22, 2016.



Rinchen Chedup Tamang, Naseeb Tamang and Shyam Bishwakarma from Sikkim will appear for a body-building competition scheduled to be held in Chattisgarh on September 1. --- DEEPAK SHARMA

Arjun Ghatani welcomes launch of ABN Television Nepali channel

EOI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, AUG 30 /-/ Sikkim Minister for Information and Public Relations Arjun Kumar Ghatani attending a Wednesday evening the re-launch of ABN Television channel at Siliguri. He congratulated ABN Television on taking the initiative to introduce the first Nepali TV Channel in India and extended his best wishes for accomplishing successful journey ahead, said an IPR release. The Minister also congratulated Chief Managing Director Bhoj Chandra on the new and exciting venture into the world of television to benefit people across the globe, particularly the Nepali



community. Ghatani, in his brief address, acknowledged the hard work and dedication put behind the introduction of ABN Television based on the concept of "Yug ko Aawaaj".

He marked the achievement as the historic initiative to broadcast time bound information. On the occasion, ABN TV launched its Logo and Promo of different segments of the programmes including ABN Samachar, Visech Prahar, Serofero, Unsung Heroes, Brain Storm, Visech Samay and Hosiyar. Chief Operational Officer Mahindra Thapa presented an overview and explained the purpose behind introducing India's First Nepali Satellite TV Channel.

All-party delegation meets Rajnath; seeks more funds for flood-hit Kerala

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /-/

An all-party delegation from Kerala today met Union home minister Rajnath Singh and urged him to provide more funds to the flood-hit state and allow foreign assistance. Eleven MPs belonging to the Congress, the CPM, the RSP, the Kerala Congress (Mam) and one independent were part of the delegation which apprised the home minister on the prevailing situation in the southern state which faced the worst deluge in a century that claimed over 320 lives since August 8.

"Respective of the party, we are united for rebuilding Kerala. We want more funds. We have asked the home minister to waive off the restriction on foreign assistance. The home minister has assured us that he will speak to external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj," senior Congress leader and former defence minister A K Antony told newsmen after the meeting.

Those part of the team include Antony, K V Thomas, K C Venugopal, K Suresh, Anto Antony, M K Raghavan (all Congress), P

Karunakaran and P K Biju (CPI M), K Prasad (CPI), Jose K Mani (Kerala Congress Mani) and Joice George (CPM backed Independent). The Kerala leaders said Union tourism minister Alphons Kannanthan, who hails from Kerala, could not join them as he was away in China. The Centre had already allotted Rs 600 crore for flood relief after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the home minister visited the state. However, citing a 2004 decision of the then UPA government, the Centre had

said that it would not accept any foreign assistance for natural calamities. The external affairs ministry's clarification came following reports of offer of Rs 700 crore assistance to Kerala. According to a preliminary estimate, the loss and damage due to the rain fury was Rs 20,000 crore, but chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said it would be much more.

The deluge in the state, the worst in a century, had claimed 483 lives since August 8 besides causing widespread destruction. (PTI)

Kamala Mills fire: Bombay HC asks probe panel to submit report on Sept 10

MUMBAI, AUG 30 /-/ The Bombay High Court today asked the committee probing the Kamala Mills Compound fire incident that claimed 14 lives to submit its report before the court on September 10. In April this year, the High Court had ordered that a three-member committee be set up to conduct an inquiry into the incident that took place last year. The panel was later set up and it is headed by retired Chief Justice A V Sawant and has two other members -- Vasant Thakur, an architect on one of the high court panels, and former chief secretary K Nalinakshan. The committee was directed earlier to submit its report to the High Court on August 31. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) moved an application today before a division bench of Justices BR Gavai and M S Karik seeking extension of the time granted to the committee to submit its report.

"The committee has completed its proceedings. All the data is being compiled and the report is being prepared. The committee has sought time till September 10 to submit its final report to the high court," BMC's counsel Anil Sakhare told the court. The bench accepted the request and said the committee shall submit its report on September 10. The court was hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by retired IPS officer Julio Ribeiro, seeking, among other things, a judicial inquiry into the fire tragedy. The committee has to inquire if there were any violations of norms by the land owners or restaurants in the Kamala Mills Compound. It has to probe if the immediate and probable cause of fire was due to violations of the sanctioned plans and approvals granted by various authorities. It has to consider if there was any dereliction of duty on part of the civic body and government officials. The committee also has to recommend measures to be taken to avoid repetition of such incidents and other fire safety compliance steps.

Oppn demands expunction of UP CM's remarks in Assembly

LUCKNOW, AUG 30 /-/ Opposition members in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly today accused the minister Yogi Adityanath of using "unparliamentary language" during his speech in the House and demanded expunction of the remarks from proceedings.

As soon as the House met for the day, Leader of the Opposition Ram Govind Choudhury raised the matter and alleged that unparliamentary language was used by the chief minister in his reply on the state's supplementary budget on Wednesday. SP member Parasnath Yadav said that despite being a "yogi", the chief minister made such statements in the House that showed his "inexperience". Congress Legislature Party leader

Ajay Kumar Lallu alleged that political parties and persons were compared with "accused" in the good and unparliamentary words should be "expunged" from proceedings.

State parliamentary affairs minister Suraj Kumar Khanna maintained that there was nothing unparliamentary in the chief minister's speech. "You can get the speech examined. There was nothing objectionable or unparliamentary in the chief minister's speech. Many times comparisons are drawn in an address. No names were taken by the CM," Khanna said.

Speaker Hriday Narain Dixit said he would sit with the minister and discuss the issue and added that "he is reserving his decision on the matter".

Alagiri 'ready' to accept Stalin's Leadership if readmitted to DMK

MADURAI, AUG 30 /-/ Sending out a signal that he was prepared to bury the hatchet, M K Alagiri today said he was ready to accept the leadership of his younger brother and DMK chief M K Stalin if he was readmitted into the party.

The estranged elder brother of Stalin said neither he nor his son Durai Dayanidhi yearned for any position in the party. "When we desire to be inducted into the party, we must then accept the (Stalin's) leadership, isn't it," Alagiri told newsmen when asked if he was ready to accept the leadership of his younger brother if he was readmitted into the party.

The former Union Minister said he was ready to work alongside the top party leadership, apparently referring to Stalin, and added that he and his supporters have been reiterating it. "We are ready to join the party and work together, they are not taking us back," he said.

A decision on the future course of action would be decided after consultations with leaders, he said. When pointed out that the DMK general council had elevated Stalin unanimously, he shot back: "Is the general council alone the party? ... do 1,500 members of the council alone represent the DMK? ... the cadres are on my side, after next month's rally more will come to my side."

HC notice to Gujarat govt on fishermen's plea against suspension of contract

AHMEDABAD, AUG 30 /-/ The Gujarat High Court has issued a notice to the state government on a petition of a group of fishermen seeking that an order suspending their fishing contract licence be revoked.

The fishermen claimed that their contract for fishing in a lake in Gujarat's Sabarkantha district was suspended earlier this year after the upper caste locals complained that the activity hurt their religious

sentiments. A division bench of Justices Anant Dave and Biren Vaishnav issued notices yesterday to the government and the commissioner of fisheries on the petition "Asha Matsya Vikas Khedut Mangalam Mandal", a fishermen's group. The petition, filed by the group's lawyer advocate S H Iyer, challenged suspension of their fishing contract in the Pratapsagar Lake near Idar town in Sabarkantha.

Sikkim Aam Bihari Kalyan Manch gets 'token of love' from IDCC Rangpo



SANJAY AGARWAL

RANGPO, AUG 30 /-/ The Aam Bihari Kalyan Manch Sikkim has expressed its gratitude towards Independence Day Celebration Committee Rangpo 2018 for giving Token of Love to the Manch in the closing ceremony of IDCC by MLA Gopal Baraily and SDM Prem Kamal Rai. Manch national president Chotele Prasad has mentioned it as a proud moment for all the members of Aam Bihari Kalyan Manch. In

a Press release he has paid special thanks to the IDCC Rangpo President U Narayan Sharma and all the committee members for organizing the programme.

Sikkim Aam Bihari Kalyan Manchs playing an active role in major social activities in the state. They have organized Swatchh Bharat Abhiyan, held beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme and carried out plantation drive. They have also raised different issues of business community for their benefit.



All political parties of Sikkim except the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front on Thursday attended a special prayer session in memory of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The programme was organized by Bharatiya Janta Party Sikkim Chapter. --- SHEKHAR KHAWAS

State Notes

Boylnced on suspicion of being buffalo thief

BAREILLY, AUG 30 /-/ A youth who was home from Dubai where he worked as a tailor was lynched in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district on suspicion that he had stolen a buffalo. Police said today. Shahruck, 20, was beaten to death on Wednesday night in Bholapur Hadoliya village under the Cantt police station area here. Four people have been arrested, said superintendent of police (city) Abhinandan Singh. Shahruck and three others had gone out on Wednesday night when a group of locals caught hold of them, suspecting that they had stolen a buffalo.

Kiki challenge lands 2 Kashmiri boys in jail

JAMMU, AUG 30 /-/ Dancing on roads on the kiki song landed two boys in jail in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, police said today. Kiki challenge, also known as 'In My Feelings Challenge', has been all over the internet in the last few months. It involves jumping out of a moving car and dancing alongside it to Canadian rapper Drake's latest song, 'Kiki do you love me'. Two boys - Yemesh Chibber and Chetan Bali - were arrested for taking the challenge on road, senior superintendent of police Yugal Manhas said.

Kathua to be declared ODF by Sept 15

JAMMU, AUG 30 /-/ Kathua district in Jammu and Kashmir is all set to be declared open defecation free (ODF) by September 15, an official said. On Wednesday, district development commissioner (DDC), Kathua, Rohit Khajuria had convened a meeting of officers to review the progress of work under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). The DDC emphasised on geo-tagging of constructed IHHL units, which requires concerted efforts of employees of the rural development department (RDD) and directed block development officers (BDOs) of Kathua district to finish it before September 15, Khajuria said.

A person, Hiralal Joshi, had earlier filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) challenging the tender floated for awarding the contract. The fishermen said in their plea that they belong to a "backward class" and that the contract was granted to them in October 2017, "subject to the outcome of that PIL". The contract was suspended on February 21 by the fisheries commissioner. Till the final outcome of the PIL. However, the PIL was withdrawn later.

HDK urges Rahul to give nod for Karnataka cabinet expansion

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /-/ Karnataka chief minister H D Kumaraswamy today urged Congress president Rahul Gandhi here and urged him to take early decision on cabinet expansion of the coalition government. Kumaraswamy also said that the JD(S)-Congress coalition government is secure under the leadership of senior Congress leader and former chief minister Siddaramaiah. In a brief meeting with the Gandhi at his residence, the Karnataka chief minister also apprised him about the 100 day performance of the coalition government. "In the meeting, I have requested Congress President to take early decision on expansion of the cabinet and appointment of corporation Boards chairman," he told newsmen after the meeting. At present, the cabinet comprises 16 Congress and 10 JD-S members, including chief minister and deputy chief minister, and as per rule four more can be added, one from JD-S and three from Congress. Kumaraswamy's discussions with the Congress president also comes on the eve of the JD-S-Congress Coordination Committee meeting scheduled on Friday to iron out differences in the alliance that has arisen after Siddaramaiah's remarks about becoming the state chief minister. Asked about the remarks, he said: "He (Siddaramaiah) is a leader. If he expresses desire to become CM, what's wrong in that?" "The coalition government is secure under the leadership of Siddaramaiah is necessary for the coalition government to run safely," Kumaraswamy said. Already, Siddaramaiah has clarified that he would become the chief minister if people desire in the next election, the chief minister said.