

Manmohan Singh to head Cong panel on North-East

NEW DELHI, JULY 3/—/Congress president Rahul Gandhi today reconstituted the North East Co-ordination Congress Committee (NECC) with former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as its patron and former Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma as its chairman. The NECC will coordinate the activities of PCCs in North East to strengthen Congress party in the region, said a statement from AICC general secretary Ashok Gehlot. All Congress chief ministers and former chief ministers of north eastern states will be advisers to the panel, while all PCC presidents, CLP leaders and Congress MPs and ex-mps from all north eastern states will be its members. Gehlot said the AICC general secretary and incharge of north eastern states along with attached secretaries will be special invitees to the North East Co-ordination Congress Committee. The role of the Committee has become more relevant in the wake of Congress losing state after state in the north east to the BJP or its allies. Incidentally, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is a Rajya Sabha MP from Assam.



Artisans working on unfinished Durga idols at Kumartuli. Durga Puja, biggest festival of Bengal is just 100 days away—Arijit Ganguly

NIA recovers Rs 40L cash, DeMO notes in Manipur terror-financing case

NEW DELHI, JUL 3/—/Over Rs 40 lakh in cash, demonetised currency notes and gold have been recovered by the NIA, following searches at the residence of a former director of an Imphal-based medical institute as part of a terror-financing probe against a banned outfit in Manipur.

An NIA spokesperson today said the agency raided the residence of Shyama Singh, former director of the Jawahar Lal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS), yesterday as part of probe into the financing of and supply of arms, ammunition and explosives to the proscribed terror group, KCP (Kangleipak Communist Party).

Cash amounting to Rs 40.03 lakh, in cr i m i n a t i n g documents, demonetised currency notes (old Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 notes) worth Rs 1 lakh and 700 grams of gold were seized from the house of Singh, the spokesperson said. Singh was currently being questioned by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) sleuths, he added.

The central probe agency had filed an FIR in the case last year, after taking cognisance of a criminal complaint lodged by the Delhi Police alleging that the accused or suspects were actively associated with the KCP.

The NIA has filed two chargesheets against four arrested accused in the case till now, the spokesperson said.

Congress suffered due to alliance with TMC: Adhir Chowdhury

KOLKATA, JUL 2/—/West Bengal Congress president Adhir Chowdhury today said his party had suffered badly due to its alliance with the TMC, whose "sole motive" was to weaken the grand old party in the state. "If you see the statistics of the number of seats we had won when we had an alliance with the TMC, you would see it is the Congress which has always made sacrifices. And in return, the TMC has always tried to weaken our party organization by it by poaching out elected representatives or by letting loose violence on us," he told reporters here. The constant poaching of our elected representatives by the TMC has weakened our party and has paved the way for the BJP in Bengal, Chowdhury said. "The TMC is not serious about fighting the BJP. Both the parties have a tacit understanding," he alleged. Chowdhury also mocked Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over her surprise visit to a college and alleged the state government had completely failed to curb irregularities in admissions.

The chief minister's visit to a college to inquire about irregularities is just an eyewash. What were police and the education department doing for all these days? Students have to give money to leaders of TMC union to get admission to colleges. The TMC leadership wants to believe that they were unaware of it," he said. The TMC government and the party had become synonymous with corruption and extortion and even students were not spared, he alleged. The state unit of Chitra Parishad, the students' wing of the Congress today organized a protest rally against the irregularities in the admission process in various colleges of the state. Mamata today paid a surprise visit to Ashutosh College in south Kolkata and warned of stern action against those who were indulging in irregularities during the admission process of colleges. State Education Minister Partha Chatterjee also visited two colleges in the northern part of the city. Jaipuria College and Maharaja Manindra Chandra college and spoke to the students about the problems they are facing.

Compensate human trafficking victim: HC to state legal body

KOLKATA, JUL 3/—/The Calcutta High Court has set aside denial of compensation to a victim of human trafficking by West Bengal State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) and directed it to pay the same to her. Justice Rajasekhhar Mantha said of the Victim Rehabilitation Scheme of 2017 as the fundamental rights of the victim under Article 21 (Right to Life) have been in fact violated. Such rehabilitation is not dependent on the pace in which either the investigation is conducted or the trial is carried on, the court said. "The object and purpose of the scheme of 2017 is that a victim of a serious crime, especially a woman,

NHRC asks Arunachal govt to pay 'monetary relief' to 88 girls forced to undress by their teachers

NEW DELHI, JUL 3/—/The NHRC has asked the Arunachal Pradesh government to pay Rs 5,000 as "monetary relief" to each of the 88 girls who were allegedly forced to undress by their school teachers as punishment last year. The students of class 6 and 7 of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya in Papum Para district were subjected to the humiliating treatment on November 23 after they allegedly wrote vulgar words against the head teacher. Taking suo motu cognisance of the incident, the National Human Rights Commission had issued notices to the Arunachal Pradesh government and the Union HRD ministry. "The NHRC has recommended that the government of Arunachal Pradesh pay Rs 5,000 each, as monetary relief, to the 88 girl

students of the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Papum Para, who were stripped of their dignity when forced to remove their clothes in front of the entire school, as punishment by the three teachers," the NHRC said in a statement. It said it has asked the government for a compliance report and proof of payments made within four weeks. The panel said the students were punished despite they denying to have written "vulgar words against the head teacher and another student on a piece of paper". The NHRC's directions come after reports received from the state government confirmed that the act of the three school teachers had been found "inhumane and cruel". "Their action on minor girl students was against the basic

human dignity and decency. After enquiry the education department placed one teacher under suspension, while the two others were removed from the services," it said. The matter was reported to the police station and a case was registered under IPC and POCSO Act, the panel said. The three teachers were arrested and later released on bail. The girl students were provided emotional and psychological counselling, the commission said. It said the government report indicates that authorities "failed" to protect the right to dignity of the girls. Issuing the notices to the state's chief secretary and the HRD secretary, the NHRC had observed that the "sordid act" of the teachers was inexcusable. "Teachers are always highly respected in the

AASU demands withdrawal of citizenship amendment bill

NEW DELHI, JUL 3/—/The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), an influential body in the Northeast, today demanded immediate withdrawal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, saying it was unconstitutional as it seeks to grant Indian citizenship only on the basis of religion. The AASU also said it was not against Hindus, neither Muslims nor Bengalis but against the illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Addressing a press conference, AASU advisor Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharya said the entire north-eastern region had voiced its opposition to the Bill, which seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, while governments of Meghalaya and Mizoram adopted resolutions opposing the proposed law. "A foreigner is a foreigner. He may be Hindu, he may be Muslim. We are against granting citizenship to foreigners on the basis of religion. The Bill must be withdrawn and scrapped immediately," he said here. Assam has been witnessing protests against the central government's

Body of 'BJP worker' found floating in pond

BERHAMPORE (WB), JUL 3/—/The body of a 52-year-old man, whom the BJP claimed as its member, was found floating in a pond in Murshidabad district, police said today. Dhormo Hazra was found on the surface of the water body close to his village in Taldanga area of the district yesterday, a police officer said. The man was missing since Sunday. His body was found with his hands tied, the officer said. Police have launched an investigation into the incident, but no arrests have been made so far, he said. Hazra's death has sparked a political blame game, with the BJP accusing the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) of orchestrating his killing, a charge brushed by the party. "TMC shames humanity, yet again. Another BJP karyakarta killed in the most barbaric manner. In Mamata's regime, West Bengal has become an epitome of violence and brutality. Entire BJP stands firmly with Dhormo Hazra's family in this hour of grief. My deepest condolences," BJP president Amit Shah said in a tweet. The saffron party had earlier claimed that three of its supporters had been killed before and after the May rural polls in West Bengal. TMC zila parishad member Shahzad Begum had denied the allegation and said that it was a fallout of a family matter.

BJD accuses BJP of playing politics over Jagannath Temple key

BHUBANESWAR, JUL 2/—/The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha today strongly objected to BJP chief Amit Shah raising the issue of the missing keys of the Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar and accused the saffron party of politicising the matter in the name of the lord. Shah, while addressing party members during his day-long visit to the state yesterday, had criticised the BJD government over the missing keys of the Ratna Bhandar. "If a government cannot safeguard the religious sentiments of the people, how can it protect the interest of the masses?" he had asked. Reacting to Shah's comments, BJD spokesperson and MP P K Deb said, "It is highly condemnable to do politics in the name of Lord Jagannath. Those who tried to do politics in the name of the lord in the past were ruined." Rejecting Shah's claim that the Centre had given Rs 4 lakh crore to Odisha, Deb said, "He is making such statements because the BJP has run out of issues against the BJD." Shah had also said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had been unable to develop the state, despite receiving Rs 4 lakh crore from the Centre. "Despite this, if the Naveen Patnaik government fails to develop the state, he should vacate the office," the BJP chief had said. "He (Shah) is telling half-truths. The fact is that the Centre has changed the funding pattern for a number of centrally-sponsored schemes, because of which our state has lost out," he said. Stating that the people of Odisha were aware of the BJP's false propaganda, the BJD leader said they would do 40 politics in the name of the lord in the past were ruined." Rejecting Shah's

FB account hacked by BJP to create rift in family: RJD leader Tej Pratap

PATNA, JUL 3/—/RJD leader Tej Pratap Yadav has alleged that his Facebook account was "hacked" by the BJP-RSS to create a rift in his family and weaken his party. "My Facebook account was hacked and recovered with the help of Facebook. BJP supporters have always tried to hack my social media accounts and today they succeeded," he said last night in a post on the social media site. The former state minister's remarks came almost an hour after a post had appeared on his page suggesting that he was upset with some leaders of his party, including an MLC, and that his parents - RJD supreme leader Prasad and national vice-president Rabri Devi - were turning a deaf ear to his complaints. The post was deleted by Yadav. "Upon hacking of my Facebook account they came up with a post aimed at creating a rift within my family and weakening our party. Some time ago, an RSS supporter had also hacked the Facebook page of my father," he said in his post. The post had also claimed that the RJD leader had decided not to contest elections from his assembly constituency and was contemplating retirement from politics. In an apparent reference to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Yadav the elder son of Prasad, alleged that the hacking of his Facebook account had the approval of "uncles and aunts" walked out of the Grand Alliance comprising the RJD, the JDU and the Congress last year and formed a new government with the BJP. No leader from the ruling JDU-BJP combine in the state was available for comments.

Ex-J'khand minister gets life term in murder case

SIMDEGA (JHARKHAND), JUL 3/—/A court here sentenced former Jharkhand minister Enos Ekka to life imprisonment today in a case of kidnapping and murder. Additional District Judge Neeraj Kumar Srivastav had convicted the Jharkhand Party MLA in the case on June 30. The quantum of sentence was pronounced today. The judge had found Ekka guilty under IPC sections 302 (murder), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of an offence committed), 304A (kidnapping for ransom), 117F (undue influence at an election) and the provisions of the Arms Act. The court also slapped a fine of Rs 1.65 lakh on Ekka. The case pertained to the kidnapping of a teacher, Manoj Kumar, on November 26, 2014. Kumar's body was recovered from a spot near a school the next day. The police had arrested Ekka on November 27, 2014 from Thakurtila in Simdega district in connection with the case. The MLA represents the Kolibera constituency in the Assembly.

Odisha team to study functioning of Bihar legislative council

PATNA, JULY 03/—/A team of legislators and officials of Odisha will come here tomorrow to study the functioning of the legislative council, a release said. The team, headed by the Minister for Commerce and Transport Narsingh Charan Sahu, will devote two days for the study of functioning of the upper house, the release issued by the Bihar Vidhan Parishad said yesterday. The team will also include detailed discussions on the functioning of the house with Haroon Rashid, Deputy Chairman of the Bihar Legislative Council, it said.