

Chopperfares to Vaishnovevi shrines slashed

JAMMU, MARCH 31/-/ Chopper services to the Vaishnovevi shrine in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district will cost less from tomorrow as the Board governing the cave shrine has decided to slash helicopter fares.

The one-way passenger fare for heli-travel between Katra and Sanjichhat will be Rs 1077 (inclusive of taxes) as against the existing fare of Rs 1170 per passenger (inclusive of taxes). The new rates shall be applicable from tomorrow.

Chief Executive Officer of the Mata Vaishnovevi Shrine Board Ajeet Kumar Sahasaid, "Shrine Board has slashed helicopter fare on Katra-Sanjichhat-Katra Sector for pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Mata Vaishnovevi from April 1, 2017. As part of the endeavour to provide improved services to the pilgrims visiting the shrine, the Board has been taking many initiatives including slashing of chopper fare. The helicopter fare for Katra-Sanjichhat and return shall be less than it was in the past three years. The CEO said the contract has been awarded to the two successful bidders - Global Vectra Helicorp Ltd and Himalayan Hel Services Pvt Ltd for operation of heli-services in the Katra-Sanjichhat-Katra Sector.

These two operators have been providing heli-services to the pilgrims for the past three years (2014-17). The shrine located on the Trikuta hills attracts lakhs of pilgrims every year. (PTI)

No plan to scrap Legislative Council: Fadnavis

MUMBAI, MARCH 31/-/ The BJP-led Government in Maharashtra today made it clear that it had no plan to scrap the Legislative Council and ticked off a party MLA for making that demand.

Making a statement in the upper house, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said BJP MLA Anil Gote, who demanded dissolution of the Legislative Council, had been warned against making such "irresponsible statements." "The Council has its glorious history. It has given a direction to the state. In a democracy, various issues of people get resonated in the Council. The government has tremendous respect for this House," Fadnavis said.

"Not only as a representative of the Government, but even in my personal capacity I do not endorse his (Gote's) remarks. I have personally spoken to Gote and asked him not to repeat such comments," he said. Fadnavis assured the House that its dignity would be maintained by the government. Raising the issue, Sunil Takare (NCP) alleged that the government did not want the Upper House to function smoothly and that was why disrespect was being shown to the council by Gote.

UP govt asks anti-Romeo squads not to use inhumane measures

LUCKNOW, MARCH 31/-/ Acting on the Allahabad High Court's order asking anti-Romeo squads to follow guidelines, the Uttar Pradesh government today directed the police to ensure that no inhumane measure was adopted in the name of ensuring security to women. There should be no shaving of heads, blackening of faces or "murga pose" (sit-ups while holding ears), a senior official said here.

The guidelines have been issued after the intervention of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath amidst reports of harassment by anti-Romeo squads.

These special squads of UP Police were formed after the Yogi Adityanath government assumed office this month, fulfilling one of the poll promises of the BJP. The Allahabad High Court had yesterday directed the Uttar Pradesh government to ensure that guidelines were followed by anti-Romeo squads and action was taken as per the law.

The court's Lucknow bench of justices Amreshwar Pratap Sahi and Sanjay Harkul had given the order on a PIL that alleged that police were not following the guidelines during the drive, aimed at checking eve-teasing, and was harassing couples.

The chief minister has also directed administrative and police officials in districts to regularly review the steps being taken for



women security and inform senior officials on a regular basis, the official said.

Stressing that his government was firm on upholding the security and dignity of women, he said a state-wide drive has been launched to free public places of anti-social elements and check incidents of eve-teasing, indecent behaviour and passing of lewd comments at women and girls.

The UP Home department has issued fresh directives to identify those involved in misconduct at schools, colleges, bus stations, railway stations, malls and markets.

The government is also firm on checking unnecessary harassment of girls and boys merely in the name

of curbing eve-teasing in public places like coffee shops, markets and parks.

The government has also made it clear that vigilantism of any sort in this regard will not be tolerated. With TV channels reporting that couples were being harassed and humiliated by anti-Romeo squads at some places, Adityanath asked officials to ensure there was no "unnecessary harassment".

The Chief Minister asked the Principal Secretary (Home) to chalk out clear guidelines for anti-Romeo squads and ensure there is no unnecessary harassment of boys and girls moving around or sitting at a place, an official release said.

Anti-Romeo squads, a poll promise of the BJP that secured a remarkable victory in the Uttar Pradesh election, drew criticism from certain quarters with visuals of policemen targeting young boys and girls going viral on TV and on social media.

The idea is to question, check group of boys or boys alone near colleges and other places and create fear among potential harassers in public places," said a police officer. However, it was being dubbed as an attempt at moral policing and widely criticised in some quarters as the modus operandi was being compared with the infamous Operation Majnu in 2005, in which boys at crossings and markets were pulled up, and couples in gardens were thrashed by police.

The officer sought to clarify that the only job (of the anti-Romeo squads) was to ensure safety of women and that eve-teasing does not take place.

"For this we will also take preventive steps like not permitting miscreants to loiter in public areas frequented by women. I will not say it is moral policing," he said.

The chief minister, who holds the portfolio of Home department, has also asked for effective steps in cases of acid attacks.

Adityanath has termed law and order as the top priority of his government and has asked for daily reports from all DMs and SPs on law and order. (PTI)

Punjab Police withdraws 800 cops deployed with VIPs

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 31/-/ About 800 personnel deployed with VIPs, including politicians, have been withdrawn by the Punjab police following a review of the security cover provided to various protectees in the state. "About 800 police personnel have been withdrawn from various protectees. The security has been reviewed on the basis of threat perception, intelligence and norms," a senior police official said here today.

However, those who were being given 'Z plus' and 'Y plus' security cover would continue to get the same, he said, adding fresh threat perception reports were also being prepared to ascertain the threat level to various individuals as part of security review exercise.

During the previous SAD-BJP regime, several political leaders were allegedly enjoying police security more than the prescribed norms. The new Congress-led Punjab government has committed to end VIP culture and prune their security which was being shown as a status symbol by many political leaders.

After Amarinder Singh formed the government, the Director General of Police Suresh Arora had constituted a State Level Review Committee (SLRC) under the chairmanship of DGP (Law & Order) Hardeep Singh Dhillon to review the security provided by the state police to various 'protectees'. The committee has mandate to carry out a comprehensive security review of the security provided to constitutional or public functionaries, officers as well as private individuals.

'Pellets, bullets' won't bring peace in Valley: Tarigami

SRINAGAR, MARCH 31/-/ Senior CPI(M) leader Mohammad Yousof Tarigami today said 'pellets and bullets' are not going to restore peace in Kashmir, accusing the Centre of neglecting the "spark" that has potential to "burn everything". He said there is a dire need for dialogue with all stakeholders to find a permanent solution to the Kashmir problem.

"The silence on part of New Delhi will only aggravate the situation here," Tarigami, who is an MLA from Kulgam constituency, said in a statement issued here.

He alleged that the Centre has put Kashmir issue on the "back-burner" and so far has not come up with a formula that could allay the apprehensions and sufferings of the people.

Tarigami demanded a judicial commission be instituted to probe the killing of three civilians in central Kashmir's Budgam district, regretting the use of "brute" force against the protestors.

Why is New Delhi shying away from dialogue with the stake holders. Everyone has been accepting that Kashmir is an issue and if so then why to act like an ostrich. If dialogue will be initiated, it will increase government's respect among the people," he said, of three civilians in central Kashmir's Budgam district, regretting the use of "brute" force against the protestors. (PTI)

Institute a judicial commission, so that it would become clear whether it was necessary to fire bullets and pellets," the CPI(M) leader said, adding, "It is not just to punish the culprits, but will heal the wounds of the demoralised and hapless people who have lost hope in the system".

Although hitting roads and pelting stones is not the right way, at least, it shows the frustration, anger and helplessness of the people of Kashmir," he said. "Tarigami said the Central government has failed to come up with some confidence building measures.

Why is New Delhi shying away from dialogue with the stake holders. Everyone has been accepting that Kashmir is an issue and if so then why to act like an ostrich. If dialogue will be initiated, it will increase government's respect among the people," he said, of three civilians in central Kashmir's Budgam district, regretting the use of "brute" force against the protestors. (PTI)

80,000 gram panchayats provided with broadband: Govt

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31/-/ The government today said 80,000 gram panchayats in the country have been provided with broadband connectivity under BharatNet programme and the rest of the targeted 1 lakh villages will be given the facility by the month.

Communications Minister Manoj Sinha said in the Rajya Sabha that under phase II of the plan, a total of one lakh gram panchayats were to be provided with broadband connectivity under BharatNet by March end this year.

The government finally intends to provide such broadband connectivity to 2.5 lakh gram panchayats across the country.

For providing internet-based services to citizens in rural areas, WiFi hotspots are proposed to be set up in Gram Panchayats in the country, leveraging the infrastructure of BharatNet, in the phase II of the BharatNet scheduled to be completed by December 2018," he said in his written reply.

Sinha said cable-laying work in many states like Kerala, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh is almost 100 per cent complete. He said a total of 1,127 WiFi hotspots in various gram panchayats will be set up in the coming days and a total of 25,000 public WiFi hotspots at rural telephone exchanges are to be installed and 5,000 WiFi 'champs' are to be set up.

He added that preference is also being given to areas affected by left-wing extremism. The Minister, however, admitted that West Bengal has lagged behind in broadband connectivity but efforts will be made to speed up the work soon.

He added that a total of Rs 71.71 crore has been earmarked for increasing connectivity in West Bengal during the year 2016-17. (PTI)



Samyukta Samara Samity activists staging a protest march to the AG office as part of their 24-hour strike to press their various demands including the withdrawal of hike in third party insurance premium, in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday.

Multi-tier security for PM's visit to J-K

JAMMU, MARCH 31/-/ A multi-tier security setup has been put in place ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jammu region on April amid alert sounded along the border and high degree of vigilance at vital installations in J&K. Modi is visiting the region to inaugurate India's longest road tunnel at Chenani in Udhampur district where he will also address a public rally on April 2.

The security setup includes elaborate deployments, area domination, checkpoints and alertness in border areas and vigilance on vital installations in the region by various security agencies, a police officer said. Director General of Police (DGP) S P Vaid has expressed satisfaction over security arrangements put in place by security agencies in connection with the Prime Minister's visit to Udhampur.

He stressed on maintaining close coordination among security agencies to ensure incident-free visit of the Prime Minister. Vaid was chairing a high level meeting here at police headquarters (PHQ) convened to review security arrangements for Modi's visit.

The meeting was attended by senior officers from J&K Police, paramilitary forces, intelligence and civil administration. The DGP stressed upon the officers to sound alert in border areas and ensure round the clock patrolling. He asked them to raise vigil at vital installations including airports, railway stations and highways with continuous surveillance.

He said the area in and around the venue of the Prime Minister's rally should also be highly sanitised. With the cooperation of people, all the arrangements made for the visit will be fruitful, he asserted.

Traffic plan was also discussed in the meeting and it was decided that common people should not be put to any inconvenience due to the arrangements made for the VVIP visit.

The meeting reviewed and discussed the security grid with all the officers related with the visit including senior officers from police, CRPF, BSF and intelligence agencies.

They informed that all necessary arrangements have been put in place well in advance. They said proper briefing has been made to all men and officers deployed on duty at different locations. "Intelligence grid has also been activated to gather the information about the activities of inimical elements and the inputs are discussed with other sister agencies" the meeting was informed. The DGP emphasised on close coordination among various agencies to ensure smooth and successful visit of the PM.

He said intelligence inputs should be shared and discussed among agencies and all preventive measures be taken collectively to foil designs of anti-national elements.

delhi HC judge to head Madras High Court

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31/-/ Delhi High Court judge Indra Banerjee was today appointed as the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court.

After then chief justice of the Madras high court Sanjay Kishan Kaul was elevated to the Supreme Court in February, Justice Huluvadi G Ramesh was appointed as the acting chief justice. Now, Justice Banerjee has been appointed as the chief justice, official sources in the Law Ministry said today.

Justice Banerjee (59) enrolled as an advocate in 1985 and practised both in the original and appellate sides of Calcutta High Court in all branches of law except criminal.

Ruling LDF govt outsmarts Opposition

P. SREEKUMARAN

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: For once, the Left Democratic front (LDF) Government got its timing right. The Government led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan neatly outsmarted the Opposition on an issue which could have become greatly embarrassing for it.

The Opposition parties comprising the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) and the BJP rubbed their hands in glee when they accused what they thought was a potent weapon to belabour the beleaguered Government.

But by taking action with lightning speed, the LDF Government took the wind out of the opposition sails. The issue in focus was the resignation by Transport Minister A K Saseendran belonging to the NCP hours after a newly-started Malayalam TV channel aired an audio clip of the minister allegedly

having a lewd conversation with a woman on phone.

The Minister, who promptly put in his papers, however denied the charges. "I am resigning to uphold morality in politics which my party and the LDF have always striven to uphold."

The Chief Minister also quickly accepted the resignation, adding that he himself would handle the Transport portfolio for the time being.

Needless to say, the swift action by the CM prevented the opposition from extracting any political mileage from the issue. A commission headed by a retired judge will probe the issue and submit its report within three months. Simultaneously, the police will also conduct an inquiry into the episode.

The sordid episode, which has been dubbed as an attempt to discredit the LDF Government, has taken a new turn with the TV chan-

nel admitting its error in airing the audio clip without making adequate preparations!

The admission comes after strong condemnation of the entire episode by top cultural leaders. Incidentally, it was the inaugural effort of the newly-formed channel.

The very first attempt having gone awry, the channel and its owners have ended up with egg on their faces. It may be mentioned that Mangalam, along with Malayala Manorama, is known for its anti-left stance.

That the entire episode has left a trail of bitterness in its trail is only to state the obvious. The incident also highlights the need for TV channels in particular to exercise greater care and vigil before telecasting controversial audio clips involving top political leaders.

Besides being a blatant invasion of privacy, the manner in which the channel manufactured the news

constitutes a perversion of media freedom aimed at attracting attention. The episode has also touched off a lively debate on the desirability of such efforts at 'breaking news' aimed at a leading newspaper called cheap TRP-mongering.

Legal experts are sharply divided on whether a case can be registered against minister in the absence of a formal complaint from the woman involved - an aspect which reinforced doubts about the authenticity of the audio clip. The subsequent admission by the channel that it was not a housewife with whom the minister was having an intimate talk but the thing was a 'string operation' by a woman journalist is self-explanatory! In hindsight, it must be admitted that this was a classic case of what journalism should not be about. That said, the minister should also have been more careful in his dealings with the public, especially women. (IPA)

Appendix - A (Ref to CWE(S) BKP letter No 8145/1672016-17/04/EB dated 30 Mar 2017)

MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES				
Commander Works Engineers (Suburb) Barrackpore, PO: Barrackpore, Dist : 24 Parganas (North), Kolkata - 700029 on behalf of President of India invites ONLINE Bids (E-Tendering) for awarding work from eligible enlisted Contractors of MES and enlisted-Un-enlisted Contractors working with other Govt Departments meeting eligibility criteria for selection of Contractors for issue of tender of under mentioned work:				
NTTN.	Brief Description of the work	Estimated cost of the works	Date of Publication of tender on website	Tender ID
8145/1672016-2017/EB	PROV OF HARD STANDING IN FRONT OF BLDG NO. A/8/98 AT OLD ME LINE UNDER GE PANAGARH.	Rs. 14.00 Lakh	30/03/2017	2017_MES_113673_1
8145/168-2016-2017/EB	PROV OF APPROACH ROAD FROM I/P-2 TO VD PANAGARH UNDER GE PANAGARH	Rs. 14.50 Lakh	30/03/2017	2017_MES_113678_1

For complete details please see our website www.eprocuremes.gov.in/www.mes.gov.in

STARAD