



A man poses for pictures in front of souvenir plates featuring portraits of former and current Chinese leaders including President Xi Jinping and the late Chairman Mao Zedong in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. REUTERS

CBI writes to 5 banks; seeks details of Nostro transactions in PNB

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 /--/ The CBI has sought from the chief vigilance officers of five banks the details of financial transactions in the Nostro accounts of Punjab National Bank (PNB) on the basis of 293 fraudulent Letters of Undertaking issued by it to jewellers Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi, officials said.

The overseas branches Canara Bank, Bank of India, State Bank of India, Allahabad Bank and Axis Bank had credited over Rs 11,400 crore into the Nostro account of Punjab National Bank on the basis of the guarantees (LoUs) given by to Modi and Choksi, they said. The Nostro account refers to an account that bank holds in a foreign currency in another bank overseas to enable foreign trade by its clients. The CBI has now written to these five banks, having branches in Antwerp, Frankfurt, Mauritius, Hong Kong and Bahrain - to provide details of all such transactions to dig out a clear money trail of Rs 11,400 crore.

Meanwhile, BJP president Amit Shah today took on Congress chief Rahul Gandhi for his attacks on the Prime Minister over the PNB scam, saying no other government had acted as promptly and taken stringent action against frauds as the Narendra Modi government. Shah also hit out at the Sidaaramaiah government, accusing it of following "three Ds - Dhokha (cheating), Dadagiri (goondism) and dyanistic politics".

The BJP chief said the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI have taken prompt action in the case. "There has been no government other than Modi's government, that has taken prompt and most stringent of action against any frauds committed in the past," Shah told newsmen here. His reply came when he was asked about Gandhi's remarks against Modi in the multi-crore PNB fraud case.

Mystery over Sridevi's death deepens

Forensic report ascribes tragedy to accidental drowning



DUBAI, FEB 26 /--/ Bollywood actor Sridevi died of accidental drowning in her hotel bathroom Tuesday, following loss of consciousness, the Dubai government's media office said on Twitter. It is not clear what caused Sridevi, 54, to lose consciousness, and whether the initial report of her death due to cardiac arrest still holds.

The actor's death, which was first reported at around 3 am on Sunday in India, sent shock waves across the country with those who knew her at a loss to explain how she could have suffered cardiac arrest at such a young age. The latest report of accidental drowning only deepens the mystery surrounding her death. Her family has not commented

due to drowning in her hotel apartment's bath tub following loss of consciousness, the Dubai government's media office said on Twitter. It is not clear what caused Sridevi, 54, to lose consciousness, and whether the initial report of her death due to cardiac arrest still holds.

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beyond their initial statement on Sunday to announce the death, and requested the media to not contact them as they deal with the tragedy. The Dubai-based Gulf News said in a report that the actor "was under the influence of alcohol. She fell into the bathtub and drowned, it added. However, this could not be independently confirmed. The report, citing Gulf News also attached a copy of the UAE government's forensic report on its Twitter handle.

The report, citing accidental drowning as the cause of death, has a stamp of the "ministry of health UAE" and the director of preventive medicine,

Dubai, Dr Sami Wadie. The report mentions the actor's full name, "Sreedevi Boney Kapoor Ayyappan", her passport number, date of the incident (February 24, 2018) and cause of death.

The investigation is still going on to determine the circumstances surrounding the accident as the forensic report only says that she drowned, Gulf News quoted an official as saying. Her body has been sent for embalming, the newspaper said. It is not clear when the body will be brought back to India.

The Bollywood actor was in Dubai for a family wedding, and had stayed back after the ceremonies. Her husband had flown

back to Mumbai with their younger daughter Khushi, but he had returned to Dubai to surprise her, according to Khushi's Times. He was reportedly in the room when Sridevi went to the bathroom to get ready for a dinner, according to Khaleej Times. It said Kapoor discovered her unconscious in the bathtub filled with water. She was rushed to the hospital where she was declared dead on arrival. In Mumbai today, many Bollywood celebrities visited the home of actor Anil Kapoor, the brother of Boney Kapoor. Sridevi's two daughters, Khushi and upcoming actor Jhanvi are staying at the house.

SC sets up 5-Judge Constitution bench to hear land acquisition related matters

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 /--/ A five-Judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court would hear on March 6 a contentious issue that had cropped up after a three-judge bench had raised concern over "judicial discipline" and propriety arising due to conflicting views of different benches of the apex court in matters relating to land acquisition.

The issue had come to fore on February 21 when a three-judge bench had virtually stayed the operation of a verdict delivered on February 9 by another three-judge bench of the top court, which had held that compensation not a ground for cancellation of land acquisition. On February 21, the three-judge bench had observed that perhaps there had been a tinkering with judicial discipline in arriving at a conclusion as the issue should have been referred to a larger bench in case of difference of opinion, as a 2014 verdict passed by another three-judge bench had held that non-payment of compensation would be a ground to cancel the land acquisition.

The very next day when another matter on the land acquisition issue came up for hearing before a two-judge bench, it had referred the case to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) for constituting an "appropriate bench" to deal with the "piquant" situation that had arisen after the February 21 order. Now, a five-Judge Constitution bench has been set up by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra to deal with the issue. Besides the CJI, Justices A.K. Sikri, A.M. Khanwilkar, D.Y. Chandrachud and Ashok Bhushan are part of the bench, which would hear the matter on March 6. A three-judge bench headed by Justice Madan B Lokur had on February 21 referred to the February 9 judgment and observed that if "judicial discipline" and propriety were not maintained, the institution will "go forever".

King of Jordan to visit India

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 /--/ King of Jordan, Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, accompanied by a business delegation, will come on a three-day visit to India starting on Tuesday, the external affairs ministry announced on Monday. This will be his second visit to India after his visit along with Queen Rania in 2006.

According to an external affairs ministry statement, King Abdullah will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra during the course of which the two sides will discuss the entire gamut of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest. The twosides are expected to sign a number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and agreements in diverse areas of bilateral cooperation. President Ram Nath Kovind will host a banquet in honour of King Abdullah while Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will call on the visiting dignitary. On Wednesday, the King will visit IIT Delhi to explore collaboration with Jordanian technical institutes. On Thursday, the King will deliver a special address on "Promoting Understanding and Moderation" organised by the India Islamic Centre at Vignyan Bhawan.

Rahul questions PM over delay in appointing Lokpal

RAMADURG, FEB 26 /--/ Congress president Rahul Gandhi today accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of favouring the "super rich" and questioned why he had still not appointed a Lokpal to fight corruption.

Gandhi, who has been targeting Modi in all public rallies in poll-bound Karnataka, also quizzed Modi over his "silence" on issues such as the Punjab National Bank fraud. "In Gujarat, Modi ji did not implement Lokayukta. It has been four years since he became prime minister. He did not implement Lokpal even in Delhi," he said. The Congress president said the Prime Minister, who had described himself as the country's "chowkidar" (watchman), was silent on the fraud and the alleged increase in the turnover of a company owned by BJP president Amit Shah's son, Jay Shah.

"The country's chowkidar comes to Karnataka and speaks about corruption with his chief minister (former chief minister Yeddyurappa) who had been to jail on one side and on the other, four ministers who also went to jail during the BJP rule," he said, addressing a rally here. "Nuddante nade" (practise what you preach)," he urged Modi, quoting 12th century social reformer Basaveshwara from Karnataka. Rahul, who is on the second leg of his three-day tour of the northern parts of Karnataka, said, "Modiji... nuddante nade. The country has not made you Prime Minister just to give speeches."

The Congress leader said diamantaire Nirav Modi had taken away crores of rupees "belonging to India's poor. Nirav Modi took away Rs 22,000 crore belonging to India's farmers, labourers and the poor, but our chowkidar does not utter a word," he said.

Chief secy assault row: Delhi govt mulling live streaming of meetings

Employees demand apology, action against CM, Dy CM

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 /--/ The row over the alleged attack on Delhi chief secretary by AAP MLA Sanjay Singh today intensified with government employees demanding action "as per law" against chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia in the case, even as the AAP dispensation mulled live streaming of all meetings of its ministers. Digging their heels in, the officers, including those from IAS and DANICS, said they will continue to communicate with members only in writing until Kejriwal and Sisodia give a public apology over the alleged incident at the chief minister's residence on the intervening night of February 19 and 20. In a resolution, the Joint Forum of Delhi Government Employees also rejected mediation by Delhi minister Rajender Pal Gautam, the peacemaker "appointed by the AAP government, who said the attitude of officers 'is not correct' and "they should show a positive response to government efforts to end the current crisis". Meanwhile, the AAP, which has alleged that its minister Iman Hussain and Delhi Dialogue Commission's vice chairman Ashish Khetan were assaulted, sent a delegation to Delhi Police Commissioner Anulaya Patnaik to demand "justice" for its leaders and action in the case. The delegation, which included AAP leader secretary by AAP MLA Sanjay Singh, told newsmen that they gave Patnaik "video evidence" of the "assaults" that took place on February 20 at the Delhi Secretariat. Ashutosh claimed that police were prompt in taking action against AAP MLAs Prakash Jaiswal and party MP Kahan - for allegedly assaulting chief secretary Anshu Prakash - though there was no evidence against them. Amid the standoff with the bureaucracy, the Delhi government today said it is now mulling live streaming of all meetings of its ministers. A senior government official said that as per the plan, live feed of meetings with audio output will be available on a web site, and if the proposal passed, funds will be allocated for it in the upcoming budget. "Through live streaming of official meetings, people will be able to know who spoke what in the meeting, be it the elected representative or officials," the official said. However, the officers have officially resigned from the membership and all the official and political posts of All India Trinamool Congress party. I am no longer a member or associated with any political party in India," Bhutia said in a tweet.

Transporting a coffee table dream

Café owner's bid to make communication in districts easier

DEBANJAN MUKHERJEE

KOLKATA, FEB 26 /--/ Uber, with its app-based taxi service has already become a household name across the country and soon, West Bengal may witness Urn, a bike taxi service, which apart from Kolkata, will provide services in the districts. Jul Mukherjee, a young entrepreneur, who is already a popular face for his Cafe Kabira near Sulekha in south Kolkata, said he has submitted a proposal for Urn to the West Bengal government and discussions have so far been positive.

"I saw bike taxi when I visited Bangkok way back in 2004-05. Bike taxi was the best mode of transportation for me there. Later I availed the same service in Gurgaon. Then I thought if such a service could be launched in the districts of West Bengal, many young people could earn their breads through it," Jul said and added that he has done a survey on people engaged in marketing jobs who frequently visit districts for professional reasons. "For people who travel to places like Durgapur or Asansol and are in a hurry to reach their targeted locations there, often face difficulty in getting transportation. Taxis charge them high and direct buses are not always available. So if there is a bike taxi service, they can simply call a taxi through an app and reach places comfortably," he said.

According to Jul, a flat fare of Rs 6 per kilometre will encourage youths having bikes to join Urn. "Anybody having a bike can join Urn. We will simply modify the vehicle. We will install an app, provide medical kit and security alarm and training to the bike owners. Then they can become a part of the service and earn money. We will just earn a commission from them," the young entrepreneur said. Though the project has not yet got green signal from the government and required finance from bank, work for it has already started. "We have already assigned the task of designing the app to a Bangalore-based company and a trial version is almost ready. We are very hopeful of getting approval from the state government. Though there are still some issues to be sorted out, we think the government will



Jul Mukherjee, owner of Cafe Kabira with Kabira merchandise in his hand. (inset) logo of Urn - EOPix

give us the go ahead signal. The main concern now is getting finance from the bank," Jul stated. Asked about the tentative sum that he is looking forward to get from the bank for his project, Jul said he has already talked to Jadavpur branch of Bank of Baroda for an initial amount of Rs 20 lakh. Apart from the bike riders, who will employ around 100 people for back-office jobs. We will have a technical team of 20-22 people, five-seven persons for monitoring the app and then there will be people to run the offices at different centers and for different marketing jobs. Moreover, the app that we are designing for App would cost around Rs 1 lakh," he said. Asked what makes him so confident about Urn getting the green signal from the state government when many other big names have also submitted similar proposals, the think tank said: "They are all targeting Kolkata, but we are giving more importance to districts like Shiliguri, Malda, Murshidabad, Durgapur, Burdwan and Howrah where the issue of unemployment is more burning than that in Kolkata."

Jul said if the service gets approval and required finance, then 500 bike owners will get enrolled with Urn initially. "There is no categorization for bikes. Nor is educational qualification a constraint here. Anybody with any kind of bike can register with Urn. We will provide them with training. We are in talks with a Bangalore-based app developer, from there will come here for providing the riders with training. And there will be separate training for operating the app as well. Asked by when people of West Bengal may see Urn becoming a reality if things work well, an optimistic Jul said: "Poila Boishakh is your targeted day for launching Urn."

AT A GLANCE

Musharraf treason case hearing on March 8

ISLAMABAD: A special tribunal in Pakistan will resume on March 8 the hearing of treason case against former military dictator Pervez Musharraf for imposing emergency rule in the country in 2007. Musharraf, 74, who left the country for Dubai in March 2016, was declared a proclaimed absconder by the court in May 2016. The court also asked the government to confiscate his properties, including a farm house in suburbs of capital Islamabad.

Bhaichung quits TMC

KOLKATA: Former India football captain Bhaichung Bhutia today announced his decision to quit the Trinamool Congress (TMC). The footballer, who contested elections twice as a Trinamool Congress candidate and lost both times, took to social media to announce his decision. "As of today I have officially resigned from the membership and all the official and political posts of All India Trinamool Congress party. I am no longer a member or associated with any political party in India," Bhutia said in a tweet. (Details on Page 2)