



Members of United Hindu Front raising slogans during a demonstration against the Anti-National Activities in the Kashmir Valley, in New Delhi on Thursday

THE ECHO OF INDIA

SILIGURI • FRIDAY • AUGUST 24, 2018 • PAGE-11



A man removes debris from a collapsed house after floods in Paravur, Kerala — Reuters

We have 'solid evidence' against Kulbhusan: Pak minister

ISLAMABAD, AUG 23 /- Pakistan has "solid evidence" against Indian national Kulbhusan Jadhav and is hopeful of winning the case against him at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Pakistan's new Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said today. Jadhav, 47, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on spying charges in April 2017. India moved the ICJ in May the same year against the verdict. The world court halted Jadhav's execution on India's appeal pending the final verdict by it. Both India and Pakistan have already submitted their detailed pleas and responses in the world court. "We have solid evidence against Jadhav and are hopeful we will win the case in the ICJ, Qureshi told the media in his home city of Multan in southern Punjab. "We will try our best to present our stance in an effective manner before the ICJ," he said. On Wednesday, the Geo TV citing sources had said that the world court will hear the case daily for a week in February next year. Pakistan says its security forces arrested Jadhav from Balochistan province in March 2016 after he reportedly entered the country from Iran. In its submission to the ICJ, Pakistan had stated that Jadhav is not an ordinary person as he had entered the country with the intent of spying and carrying out sabotage activities. India denies all the charges and maintains that Jadhav was kidnapped from Iran where he had business interests after retiring from the Navy and that he has no links with the government.

Rahul belittled India, 'lied through his teeth' in attacking Govt: BJP

NEW DELHI, AUG 23 /- The BJP today accused Rahul Gandhi of belittling India in his address at an event in Germany, alleging that the Congress president justified terrorism and "lied through his teeth" to attack the Narendra Modi-led Union government. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra sought explanation from the Congress chief on his comments on a range of issues, claiming that he presented India in a bad light by allegedly blaming its culture for violence against women. Addressing a gathering at the Bucerius Summer School in Hamburg on Wednesday, Rahul had cited the example of Islamic State to say that exclusion of a large number of people from the development process could lead to the creation of terrorist groups in the world. He then accused the BJP government of excluding tribals, Dalits and minorities from the development narrative and "this could be a dangerous thing". Hitting back, Patra said: "Rahul Gandhi left no opportunity to belittle India and to present it in a bad light. We need explanations from you." Rahul has tried to justify terrorism and give justification for IS, he said and added: "There cannot be anything more frightening and worrying". The BJP spokesperson said Gandhi's submission was that minorities in India would "sell their soul" to IS if jobs are not available for them, and this amounted to "denigrating" the community. The Congress president has a poor opinion of India, he said, adding Rahul harped on about China even though, he claimed,



India had become one of the leading countries in the world under the Modi government. "His speech was full of lies and deception," Patra alleged, wondering if the figures Gandhi cited of China producing 50 jobs every 24 hours compared to 4 in India, were "made in 10 Janpath". The Congress chief's mother Sonia Gandhi stays in 10 Janpath. "You have no data and you do no preparation," Patra said of Gandhi. The BJP leader said Sonia Gandhi was the Congress chief for over 19 years and ruled India as a "proxy prime minister" for 10 years. "Wasn't this Indian culture which helped her reach the top? Rahul and Sonia Gandhi should come out and explain as to how they can point fingers at this great Indian culture," he said, seeking Gandhi's apology for his response on the issue of woman safety in India. The Congress chief "lied through his teeth" in accusing the Modi government of striking down a law on atrocities against Dalits and tribals, Patra said, pointing out that Parliament had in fact made the legislation more stringent by passing an amendment in its latest session. Under the Congress-led UPA government, the Right to Food law was implemented in only 11 states while the BJP-led NDA dispensation has brought it in force in all 36 states and UTs of the country, he said. (PTI)

CEC rules out simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, says 'no chance at all'

AURANGABAD, AUG 23 /- Putting to rest all speculation, Chief Election Commissioner O P Rawat today emphatically ruled out the possibility of holding simultaneous elections to the state assemblies along with the Lok Sabha anytime soon. Rawat said a legal framework is needed to be in place for holding simultaneous polls. There has been some speculation in the recent weeks that Assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Mizoram due this year end may be deferred and held simultaneously along with the Lok Sabha elections, scheduled for April-May 2019. While the term of the Mizoram Assembly ends on December 14, the terms of the Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan assemblies will end on January 5, January 7 and January 20, 2019, respectively. "Koi chance nahin" (no chance at all), Rawat told a select media meet in Aurangabad when asked if it was feasible to hold simultaneous Lok Sabha and

state Assembly elections in the near future. The CEC's comments also come against the backdrop of BJP President Amit Shah's recent call for a "healthy and open debate" among stakeholders for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the state Assemblies. "The lawmakers will take at least a year to frame a law that can be enforceable. This process takes time. As soon as the Bill to amend the Constitution is ready, we (the Election Commission) will know that things are now moving," Rawat said. The Election Commission commences preparations for the Lok Sabha elections 14 months before the scheduled timeframe of polling, Rawat said. "The Commission has a staff strength of just 400 but deploys 1.11 crore people on poll duty during elections," he added. To a query on complaints of "failure" of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Rawat lamented that in many quarters in India, the understanding of the EVM system "isn't comprehensive

enough". "There is just a 0.5 to 0.6 per cent rate of failure and such a rate of machine failure is acceptable," he said. Rawat also said the Voter Verified Paper Trail (VVVAT) usage is a new concept which was put in place after the Commission made a commitment to have 100 per cent VVVATs following "political pressure", he said. In Meghalaya assembly by-polls today, there were complaints of VVVAT malfunctioning but that could have been avoided had the authorities there used a high humidity paper, keeping in view that there is high rainfall in the state, he said. "You all know that Cherrapunjee, which records the highest rainfall, is in that state," Rawat said. To a query, he said the percentage of NOTA option in elections is normally between 1.2 and

1.4 per cent. Replying to another query, Rawat said the Election Commission enjoys full autonomy as can be seen from the manner in which poll officials didn't budge



The lawmakers will take at least a year to frame a law that can be enforceable. This process takes time. As soon as the Bill to amend the Constitution is ready, we will know that things are now moving

under political pressure in the Rajya Sabha polls in Gujarat last year. The Congress had then said two of its MLAs had crossed voted and showed their ballot papers to BJP President Amit Shah. The EC ruled in Congress' favour, declaring that the two MLAs had violated polling procedures and secrecy of the ballot. (PTI)

No place for middlemen in my govt, every paisa reaches the poor: PM

JUJWA, AUG 23 /- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said every paisa of every rupee released by his government reaches the poor as there is no place for middlemen and assured that his endeavour is to provide every Indian family a home of its own by 2022.

In an apparent jibe at former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's famous comment about only 15 paise of every rupee released by the Centre reaching the targeted beneficiary, Modi said people now do not have to pay bribes to avail benefits of the Centre's flagship housing scheme. The Prime Minister said he dreams of every family owning a house of its own by 2022 when the nation will celebrate 75 years of independence. The erstwhile rural housing scheme, Indira Awas Yojana, was restructured into Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), which was launched by Modi in November 2016. As part of the government's 'Housing for All by 2022' scheme, targets have been set to complete one crore new pucca houses in rural areas by March 2019 worth 95 crore by 2022. According to information available on the Union rural development ministry website, 19.22 lakh houses were completed under the erstwhile scheme in 2015-16, while the number rose to over 32 lakh in 2016-17 and 44.54 lakh in 2017-18 after taking into account houses built under the new scheme and completion of incomplete houses started under the previous scheme. The scheme aims to provide a pucca house with basic amenities to all homeless families and those living in kutcha and dilapidated houses by 2022. It provides unit assistance of Rs 1.20 lakh in plains and Rs 1.30 lakh in hilly areas, besides other benefits. The assistance cost is shared between

the central and state government in the ratio of 80:10 in plains and 90:10 for North Eastern and Himalayan states. "While talking to the women beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, I was watching the homes behind them. Even you would be wondering how such good quality houses were built under that scheme," the Prime Minister said, referring to his interaction through video conferencing with some beneficiaries. "This was made possible because there is no place for middlemen in my government," he said. Modi said his government has the "guts" to ask the women beneficiaries - when the entire country is watching and the media is present - if they had to pay any bribe or commission to get the houses. "In reply, the mothers and sisters could say with satisfaction that they got the houses according to rules and they did not have to pay a single rupee bribe," he said. Prime Minister

said his government has paid due attention to ensure that these houses are of good quality. "Gujarat has taught me a lot. It has taught me to fulfill dreams within a specific time. It is my dream, it is our endeavour to ensure that every Indian family has its own home by 2022," he said. Modi said the government has given money for building the houses, but these homes have also been built with the "sweat of the family". "The family decided how will the house be, what material will be used and how will it be made. We put our trust in them and not on contractors. When a family makes its own home, it takes it the best," the Prime Minister said. While interacting with women beneficiaries, he asked them about their experiences of owning a concrete house, quizzed them about cleanliness, education of the girl child, supply of water, power, and gas connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi distributing the certificates and employment letters to the select beneficiaries under various development schemes, at a function, at Jujwa village in Gujarat

11 killed in accident near Rohtang Pass

MANALI, AUG 23 /- All 11 people, including five women and three children, travelling in a vehicle were killed when it skidded off the road and fell into a gorge near the Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu district,

police said on Thursday. The accident occurred near Rahni Nallah on the Manali-Leh highway, 47 km from here. The victims were on their way towards Pangri from Manali when the accident occurred. Prima facie, poor visibility

owing to rainfall was believed to be the cause of the accident, Superintendent of Police Shalini Agnihotri told IANS over the telephone. She said the accident occurred on Wednesday night but the police came to know about it only on Thursday morning. Witnesses said the administration had a tough time in extracting the victims from the gorge. The villagers started the rescue operations before the authorities could reach the spot.

Veteran scribe Kuldeep Nayar passes away

NEW DELHI, AUG 23 /- Eminent journalist and author Kuldeep Nayar, who fought fiercely for press



freedom and civil liberties, died here early today, Nayar was 95.

Nayar died around 12.30 am at the Escorts hospital, his elder son Sudhir Nayar said. He was suffering from pneumonia and was admitted to the hospital five days before he passed away. Nayar, a proponent of India-Pakistan peace, is survived by his wife and two sons. His last rites will be performed at a local crematorium in New Delhi at 1 pm. Nayar, who was born in Sialkot in Pakistan in 1923, began his career in the Statesman in the Urdu language press and went on to serve as editor of several newspapers, including Indian Express and The Statesman. Known not just as one of India's most respected journalists but also as an advocate for human rights, Nayar served as India's high commissioner to the United Kingdom in the 1990s and was nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 1997. The journalist-author was arrested during the Emergency. Condolences poured in as news of his death came in. (Details on Page 7)

AT A GLANCE

TV serial shooting to resume today
KOLKATA: The deadlock between artistes and producers of TV serials over regularisation of payment ended today, with chief minister Mamata Banerjee giving an assurance that a committee formed with representatives from both sides will "look into the issues". Shooting for the mega soaps will resume from tomorrow, she said. "A conciliation committee, with state youth affairs minister Aroop Biswas as the chairman and veteran actor Soumitra Chatterjee as chief adviser, has been constituted to look into the problems of both sides," she said. (Details on Page 2)

Sunanda death: Police hand over documents to Tharoor



NEW DELHI, AUG 23 /- Delhi Police today handed over documents to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor before a court here in a case against him regarding his wife Sunanda Pushkar's death almost four years ago in a luxury hotel in Mumbai. The documents included statements of various witnesses recorded in the case. During the hearing, BJP leader Sunanda's lawyer Vikash Pahwa requested additional chief metropolitan magistrate Samar Vishal that he be allowed to assist the police in the case, even though

senior advocate Vikash Pahwa and advocate Ganav Gupta, appearing for Tharoor told the court that Swamy had no locus in the case which was already being probed by the police. The court, thereafter, posted the matter for further hearing on September 20. Pushkar was found dead in a suite of a luxury hotel in the city on the night of January 17, 2014. The couple was staying in the hotel. The official bunglow of Tharoor was being renovated at that time. The court had directed the Delhi Police to hand over various documents filed along with the charge sheet, in-

cluding statements of witnesses, to Tharoor on a plea moved by him. The Thiruvananthapuram MP was granted regular bail by court on July 7 after he appeared before court in pursuance to the summons issued against him. The court had on June 5 summoned Tharoor, observing there was sufficient ground to proceed against him. Tharoor has been charged under sections 494 (husband or his relative subjecting a woman to cruelty) and 306 (abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), but has not been arrested in the case.