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PAGE-8

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PAGE-12

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## India, Spain sign 7 pacts during Modi's visit

MADRID, MAY 31 /-/ India and Spain today signed seven agreements, including on cyber security and technical cooperation in civil aviation, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the European country. The agreements were signed after Prime Minister Modi held wide-ranging talks with Spanish President Mariano Rajoy at the Moncloa Palace in the Spanish capital. The two sides agreed on transfer of sentenced persons and visa waiver for holders of diplomatic passports. Five agreements were signed between the two countries on cooperation in organ transplantation, cyber security, renewable energy, civil aviation and one between India's Foreign Service Institute and Diplomatic Academy of Spain. Modi, the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Spain since 1988, praised the Spanish president saying under Rajoy's leadership the country has undergone economic reforms "which is also the biggest priority of my government." Spain is India's seventh largest trading partner in the European Union. Two-way trade totalled US\$ 5.27 billion in 2016. Modi encouraged Spanish infrastructure, tourism, energy and defense companies to invest in priority sectors in India, saying "It's a great time for Spanish companies to invest in India. Earlier today, the Prime Minister said that India and Russia are "natural partners" in fighting terrorism. Modi said this as he asserted that the two countries must strive to open new vistas to broaden their ties that has "withstood the test of time." "We have been together in times-good and bad," Modi wrote in an article published today in Russian newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazetta.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls on His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain, at Palacio de Zarzuela, Madrid, Spain — PIB



An Afghan citizen grieves at the site of a blast in Kabul — Reuters

## Kabul truck bomb blast leaves 80 dead, hundreds injured

■ Modi condemns bombing, underlines need for defeating forces supporting terror

KABUL / NEW DELHI, MAY 31 /-/ At least 80 people were killed and hundreds wounded today when a massive truck bomb ripped through Kabul's diplomatic quarter, bringing carnage to the streets of the Afghan capital and shattering windows hundreds of metres away. Bodies littered the scene and a towering plume of smoke rose from the area, which houses foreign embassies, after the blast in the morning rush hour blew out the windows of several missions and residences. Witnesses described dozens of cars chocking the roads as wounded survivors and panicked schoolgirls sought safety. Men and women struggled to get through security checkpoints to search for loved ones. It was not immediately clear what the target was. But the attack underscores spiralling insecurity in Afghanistan, where a military beset by soaring casualties and desertions is struggling to beat back the insurgents. Over a third of the country is outside government control. Hours after the explosion ambulances were still at the scene as rescue workers were digging bodies from the rubble. "Unfortunately the toll has reached 80 martyred (killed) and over 300 wounded, in-

cluding many women and children," said health ministry spokesman Wahed Majrooh, adding the figures would continue to climb as more bodies are pulled from the debris. The interior ministry, which put the number of wounded at 320, said a suicide bomber had detonated an explosives-packed vehicle in Zanaqa Square around 8:30 am. "More than 50 vehicles were either destroyed or damaged," it said in a statement. The ministry called on Kabul residents to donate blood, saying hospitals were in "dire need".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today strongly condemned the bomb blast in Kabul and underlined the need for defeating forces supporting terrorism. Modi, who is in Spain on a visit, said India stands with Afghanistan in fighting all forms of terrorism. "We strongly condemn the terrorist blast in Kabul. Our thoughts are with the families of the deceased & prayers with the injured," he tweeted. In another tweet, Modi said: "Forces supporting terrorism need to be defeated." The Prime Minister's message came after a powerful truck bomb killed at least nine people and wounded scores of others in the Afghan capital's diplomatic quarter today morning.

## Kerala HC declines to interfere with Centre's cattle sale ban order

■ State to convene meeting of all CMs, special Assembly session  
■ Rajasthan top court judge for declaring cow as 'national animal'

KOCHI, MAY 31 /-/ The Kerala High Court today declined to entertain a PIL seeking quashing of the Centre's notification banning sale and purchase of cattle for slaughter, observing that there was no Constitutional violation in the rules. A division bench headed by Chief Justice Navanith Prasad Singh observed that its interference in the Centre's notification was not warranted. The bench said it could not see any prohibition in selling and consumption of beef in the notification, following which the PIL was withdrawn by petitioner A G Sunil. The petitioner had contended that the notification violated fundamental rights guaranteed under Art 19 (1) (g) of the Constitution and that it should be quashed. However, the court observed that it could not find any illegality in the rules as apprehended by the petitioner. There was no constitutional violation in the notification as alleged by the petitioner, it said. The Kerala High Court's observation came a day after the Madras High Court's decision. The government also decided to convene a special session of the state assembly after discussions with Leader of the Opposition Ramesh K. Vijayan. Vijayan said the state government cannot accept the new regulations. "This has to be questioned legally as it is unconstitutional," he said. Asked if the state will move the Kerala High Court or the Supreme Court, the chief minister said the matter will be first discussed with legal experts in his letter to the counterparts. The Kerala chief minister had said:

"Unless we stand together and oppose this anti-federal, anti-democratic and anti-secular move, it may mark the beginning of a series of similar measures aimed at destroying the federal democratic fabric and secular culture of our country." Vijayan had also asked off a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi opposing the ban and urging him to withdraw the regulations, which is facing protests in states, including Tamil Nadu and Kerala. However, a Rajasthan High Court judge today asked the state's BJP government to take necessary steps to get cow declared the national animal and ensure its slaughterers were punished with imprisonment for life.

In a direction that could further fuel the deeply divisive debate over beef consumption and vigilantism in the name of cow protection, Justice Mahesh Chand Sharma said the state's chief secretary and advocate general will be the legal custodians of cow. Nepal is a Hindu state (of the Constitution) it is expected from the state government that they would take action to get a legal entity for cow in this country," the judge said in the order passed on his last day in office.



HIGH COURT OF KERALA

## Leather traders in quandary over Govt's cattle sale ban

KOLKATA, MAY 31 /-/ The ban on sale of cattle for slaughter has cast a shadow on the leather industry triggering concerns among importers and exporters with leading global brands enquiring about its likely ramifications. Rajiv Bhatia, managing director of city-based leading leather product exporter D2 International, told news agency PTI that many global importers were making enquiries about the ban. "It has turned out to be a big worry for importers. I have received calls and enquiries from importers, including the UK's major handbag brand Bradley and US fashion brand Tommy Hilfiker. Bhatia said. It is getting difficult, he says, to allay their worries about the future of import despite being aware of the Madras High Court's stay order on the execution of the central notification regarding the ban. Despite long-standing association with the importers, they are "politely warning us about shelling orders to neighbouring countries," he said. "The timing of the ban has created more trouble. Till November, it is crucial for the leather industry. Orders are placed for Christmas and New Year," Bhatia said. CLC Tanners Association president Ramesh Juneja said that though the state had a stock of hide to last for two months and there was support from chief minister Mamata Banerjee, panic has gripped importers. The officials warned that the situation might get worse if shelling orders to neighbouring countries, he said. Exporters are demanding at least buffaloes to be made exempt from the banned animals list. Buffalo hide constitutes about 50 per cent of the hide requirement of the leather industry. Bengal leather exporters are particularly worried as cowhide constitutes a major chunk in the Rs7,000-crore export market giving employment to some five lakh workers. Nationally, leather and leather product exports are valued at Rs 35,000 crore in 2016-17 and the industry provides employment to 35 lakh people. Bhatia said that premium leather products are made of cowhide as they are softer compared to buffaloes. Juneja pointed out that cowhide made up almost 75 per cent of the state's leather export.



The timing of the ban has created more trouble. Till November, it is crucial for the leather industry. Orders are placed for Christmas and New Year — Rajiv Bhatia

## Bose died in 1945: Govt

NEW DELHI, MAY 31 /-/ Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died in an air crash in 1945, the Union government today said, putting to end a controversy that refuses to be buried about the freedom fighter having survived the accident. The ministry of home affairs said in a reply to an RTI application from a Kolkata resident that the Government had come to this conclusion after considering the reports of various committees that probed the death of Bose, who, many believed, had not perished in the crash. After considering the reports of the Shah Nawaz Committee, the Justice GD Khosla Commission and the Justice Mukherjee Commission of Enquiry, the government concluded that he had died in the crash, the ministry said in its reply. It also sought to dispel reports that Bose, who was born in 1897, lived in disguise as 'Gumnam Babu' — which was the belief of a large section of Bose's legion of admirers. The Mukherjee Commission had come to the conclusion that Gumnam Babu and Bhagwanji was not Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. It said, adding that information regarding Gumnam Babu and Bhagwanji was available in the Mukherjee Commission report on pages 114-122, and on the website, mha.nic.in. It also said that 37 files related to Bose had been declassified.

## State sets up commission to rein in private schools

EOI CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA, MAY 31 /-/ The West Bengal government is going to set up a self-regulatory commission to control affairs of education in the private sector. This was announced today by chief minister Mamata Banerjee at an interactive session with representatives of major private schools of the city that was called to review the overall system of education and the ills that are plaguing it. The commission, to be set up through an executive order, will have members, among others, principal secretary in charge of secondary education, Dushyant Nariela, representatives from DGP West Bengal Police and CP of Kolkata Police, representatives from schools

like La Martiniere, Modern High School, St Xavier's, Heritage School, DPS, Shri Sikshyatan, Loreto, South Point High School, St Lawrence High School, educationist Saurav Mukherjee, one representative from Darjeeling, the Archbishop and Bishop from Kolkata. All District Programme Officers in the department of education will be special invitees of the commission. The commission, which will meet four times a year, will look into all aspects pertaining to running of schools that include fee structures, income and expenditure, donations for admissions, grievance redressal, to name a few. The commission will have a website that will have all details about whatever com-

plaints they are getting. The chief minister who had been flooded with complaints of exorbitant fees, donation charges etc in fact put the schools in the dock accusing them of actually fleecing parents by the schools. "Schools are playing ducks and drakes with donations that they seek for admissions. It has become a racket. There are fees and money fees being run these admission rackets. It should be stopped immediately... Why should session fees and money fees be different? Why should stationery and books be bought from schools only. And thing is while some schools are taking exorbitant fees, many of them do not have good wash rooms," the chief minister asked the representatives. The chief minister actually



Representatives of private schools click selfie with chief minister Mamata Banerjee at the end of the meeting — Shyamala Maitra

named the schools and while accusing them of charging exorbitant money for admission and monthly fees, she said they must do something to rationalise the fee structure. Mamata also criticised one school for compelling students to listen to speeches of political leaders on TV. "You should stop it. I am getting complaints from students and teachers," the chief minister told the representative from the school. Mamata also said that from next year children studying from class 1 to class X will have to learn Bengali as a compulsory subject. "If you live in West Bengal you will have to learn Bengali," she said. In fact the state government is going to bring about a legislation to make Bengali compulsory in the school level from next year.

## ATA GLANCE Mamata to visit Netherlands

KOLKATA: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is going to visit Netherlands from June 22 to June 23 to attend the Public Service Day celebrations of the United Nations Organisation. The invitation from Netherlands has reached the state secretary today, according to government sources.