

## Hills continue on knife's edge

◆ **Rajnath sermon for "dialogue" panacea** ◆ **Gurung rubbishes Mamata's claim of deep-rooted conspiracy, firm on Gorkhaland** ◆ **Shah snaps at Mamata** ◆ **GJM takes out rally with body of activist demanding removal of security forces** ◆ **TRSM demands thorough examination on statehood demand**

NEW DELHI, JUNE 18 /- /As Darjeeling remained on the boil over a separate statehood agitation, Union home minister Rajnath Singh today appealed to protesters not to resort to violence and, instead, hold dialogue to resolve any issue. He said resorting to violence would never help them in finding a solution and asked the people living there to remain calm and peaceful.

"All concerned parties and stakeholders should resolve their differences and misunderstandings through dialogue in amicable environment," Singh said. In a democracy like India resorting to violence would never help in finding a solution, he said, emphasising that "every issue can be resolved through mutual dialogue". "I appeal to the people living in Darjeeling and nearby areas to remain calm and peaceful. Nobody should resort to violence," the home minister said in a series of tweets. Singh also spoke to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today and discussed with her the situation prevailing there. "She (Banerjee) has apprised me of the situation prevailing in Darjeeling," he said. Singh had yesterday also spoken to Banerjee and asked her to take all possible steps so that peace is restored in the picturesque hill station where people are protesting against "imposition" of Bengali in schools by making the language mandatory. The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), which is in power in the semi-autonomous Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, is spearheading the agitation demanding a separate state - Gorkhaland. Darjeeling remained on the edge today as thousands of protesters assembled at the central Chowkbazar carrying the body of a GJM activist, who was killed

during clashes with police, and raised slogans demanding a separate state of Gorkhaland. Security personnel in large numbers were deployed in the hill district of West Bengal after widespread clashes between Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) activists and the police were witnessed yesterday. The GJM has claimed that two of their supporters were shot dead by police in Singmari yesterday. The police rejected the allegations of firing by its personnel, and said one person was killed during the clashes.

This was the first death since violent protests returned to Darjeeling on June 8, after a gap of a few years. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had yesterday said that the ongoing agitation in Darjeeling hills was a "deep-rooted conspiracy" supported by the insurgent groups of the Northeast and some foreign countries. The GJM had rubbished the allegation made by Banerjee, saying that she was trying to malign the Gorkhas fighting for their identity. Meanwhile, GJM chief Bimal Gurung today termed as "white lies" Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's claim that the agitation in Darjeeling hills was supported by insurgent groups, and asserted the struggle for a separate Gorkhaland state would be responded to the charge. BJP chief Amit Shah took potshots at Banerjee in Mumbai, saying she smelt "conspiracy in everything". "Mamata sees conspiracy in everything. She had made similar allegations against the Indian Army as well," Shah told a press conference when asked about Banerjee dubbing the ongoing agitation in Darjeeling a "deep-rooted conspiracy". "The allegations are baseless, Mamata Banerjee is trying to mislead people. It is not a political fight but a fight for our own identity. We will not stop until and unless Gorkhaland is achieved. The struggle will intensify in the hills," Gurung said in an audio-visual statement. On the boil for the past 10 days over a separate state demand, Darjeeling had yesterday witnessed widespread clashes between GJM activists and the police in which one person was killed and 55 security personnel were injured, including an India Reserve Battalion (IRB) officer. Meanwhile, GJM got

a shot in the arm as Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MP Kalvakuntla Kavitha today said a dialogue must be initiated with those demanding a separate Gorkhaland state and the issue thoroughly examined, and that it should not be kept lingering for long. A key leader of the ruling TRS, Kavitha, however, did not state if the demand was legitimate or otherwise. Kavitha said even during the agitation for creation of Telangana, which was formed three years ago after bifurcating Andhra Pradesh, there were movements pushing for Vidarbha and Gorkhaland states, and the TRS always held the view that every demand had to be treated and looked at separately. "We said (at that time) kindly examine the merits of the case individually. So, I believe, now also the Gorkhaland issue has to be examined properly from its people's point of view," the MP from Nizamabad in Telangana told PTI here. "I would not be able to comment 'yes' (it should be created), 'no' (should not be), because I do not know what the ground situation is. I believe every case has to be considered on its own merit," she said. She thought the demand for a separate Gorkhaland is "legitimate," she noted that India itself is a combination of so many diverse cultures. "All of us want to assert our own independent identity which is a good thing because we have been united despite being so diverse in our cultural backdrop. But when it comes to political decision-making, I believe rest of the issues also, have to be considered," she said. "I would not say it's a legitimate demand or an illegitimate demand. It has to be thoroughly examined," the daughter of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao said (PTI).

recruitment and training of the youths. The outfit was first named Gorkhaland Police, but after opposition from various quarters it was renamed Gorkhaland Personnel (GLP). The criteria for a place in this force was education upto standard eight and of course physical fitness and agility. After initial selection, nearly 3000 youths were trained for joining GLP. The force in 2009 enforced bands which by GJM, ensured that locals wear traditional Nepali attire at least three a week, seize and destroy liquor and provide protection to Gurung and top GJM leaders. Paid only a paltry allowance, the GLP youths were promised to be absorbed into the police force after the creation of Gorkhaland. However, GLP took a back seat and most of its trained youths were absorbed into GJM youth wing instead following the formation of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration in 2011. "During GTA, the state government had promised that these youths would be absorbed in the police force. But nothing of the sort happened. Now we no longer have any expectation from the state government. We are Indians and we hope that the Centre will take action to resolve the crisis in the hills," Alley said.



Supporters of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) rally as they carry bodies of protesters who were killed in clashes with security forces on Saturday, in Darjeeling. REUTERS

## GJM plans revival of GLP

DARJEELING (WB), JUNE 18 /- /With GJM gearing up for a prolonged confrontation with West Bengal government over the Gorkhaland statehood issue, the party's leadership is planning to revive Gorkhaland Personnel (GLP) - its "peacekeeping" wing. "The situation is getting worse with each passing day. We feel that a head-on collision is just a matter of time. So we need to prepare ourselves to counter the state government democratically," GJM central committee member and former in-charge of GLP Colonel (ret) Ramesh Alley told PTI. "We (GJM) will revive and recruit more youths in GLP our own peacekeeping force. We are not into any kind of violence nor is GLP into this. But we have to prepare ourselves," he said. GJM, Alley said, wants to raise a 8000-strong force in Darjeeling hills which will be well prepared to tackle "any kind of situation". The idea of setting up GLP by recruiting youths from the hills was first mooted by Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) supreme Bimal Gurung during the Gorkhaland agitation of 2008. Gurung had then held a meeting with former army personnel and officers from the hills and requested them to take charge of selection,



Mir celebrates after fall of Virat's wicket--Reuters

### AT A GLANCE

#### Rajnath suffers leg fracture

NEW DELHI: Home Minister Rajnath Singh today suffered a fracture in his left leg, according to a close aide. Sixty-five-year-old Singh twisted his ankle during morning walk at his official residence here, the aide told PTI.

#### No-fly norms for rogue passengers

NEW DELHI: The norms for no-fly list to rein in unruly passengers are expected to be ready early next month, the government said today amid a parliamentary session being barred by domestic airlines for allegedly creating ruckus. A revised Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR) is being finalised after receiving comments from the stakeholders.

#### VHP for felicitation of 'Gau rakshaks'

NAGPUR: Vishwa Hindu Parishad international general secretary Surendra Jain today alleged that 'gau-rakshaks' who should be felicitated for trying to stop cow slaughter are being implicated in false cases by police. "Gau-rakshaks (cow protectors) are doing the work that the police department needs to do. They are coming out on roads to stop cow slaughter. They should be felicitated for the same," Jain told reporters here today.

## Prez rejects two more mercy pleas before demitting office

NEW DELHI, JUNE 18 /- / President Pranab Mukherjee rejected two more mercy petitions in the last week of May, just two months before he completes his tenure. Both cases are of an 18-year-old girl and a 4-year-old girl by three men in Indore in 2012, and of a 22-year-old woman by two men in Pune in 2007. The two pleas were received in the President's secretariat in April and May. The convictions had urged the President to commute the death penalty awarded to them by local courts concerned and upheld by respective high courts and finally by the Supreme Court. In the Pune case, the convicted were sexually assaulted, strangled her to death and dumped the body in a drain. In the Pune case, the convicted - cab driver Purushottam Dashrath Borate and his accomplice Prateep Yeshwant Kokade - had raped and murdered the woman. The woman, who was on her way to office for night shift, was picked up by the cab. She was abducted, raped and killed by the driver and his aide - the two convicted. The trial court had awarded death penalty to the duo, which was confirmed by the Bombay High Court and upheld by the Supreme Court on May 8, 2015. The mercy petition was rejected by the president on May 26. With these two cases, the total number of mercy petitions rejected by Mukherjee during his tenure has gone up to 30. As per rules, there is no fixed time limit for the president to decide on a mercy petition. President Pranab Mukherjee completes his five-year tenure on July 24 (PTI).

## Many of today's godmen are traders, says ex-minister Shourie

HYDERABAD, JUNE 18 /- / Former union minister Arun Shourie has alleged that many of today's godmen are "traders" who run real estate and financial empires and are in contrast with those of yesteryears who provide personal solace to many of us. "Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi, the real miracle of their lives was the solace they provided," their contribution and their enormous influence in the course of our country. "Today reading about them... lifts us up and provides personal solace to many of us," Shourie said at the release of his latest book 'Two Saints' here last evening. Terming Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi as the two great saints of India, he said that his book examines their experiences from whatever is today known about brain and also about their peripheral experiences. This book has relevance in many other respects also for instance in one contrast between their utter simplicity and humility and the pride of the godmen today, said Shourie. "Godmen today run real estate empires, financial institutions, empire, cosmetic and pharmaceutical empires in the name of yoga and all sorts of things," he alleged. "Such is the influence, that the authorities have repeatedly found their products to be contaminated and their advertisements to be false and they have given the rules, but you will find only small mention and no follow up action by any government," he claimed. So, he said, there is great contrast and we must hold such fellows (today's godmen) to the high standards of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi in their simplicity, in humility and in their attainments. Shourie further said Ramakrishna Paramahansa and