CYMK

Ahead of Laxmi Puja, People buying idols of Laxmi from a road-side shop, in Kolkata on Monday.

ECHO WORLD

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Pak PM calls for dialogue to resolve Kashmir issue

ISLAMABAD, OCT 22 /--/ India should move to resolve the Kashmir issue through dialogue, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said today. Khan's remarks came a day after six civilians were killed after an explosive went off at an encounter site in Kulgam district of South Kashmir.

"Strongly condemn the new cycle of killings of innocent Kashmiris.....by Indian security forces," he tweeted. "It is time India realise it must move to resolve the Kashmir dispute through dialogue in accordance with the UN SC resolutions & the wishes of the Kashmiri people," he said. Three militants were killed on Sunday in an encounter with security forces in Kulgam district, while six civilians lost their lives in a blast following the gunfight there. It is not the first time Khan has spoken about Kashmir. In September, New Delhi called off a meeting between the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan, citing killings of Indian security personnel by Pakistan-based entities and the release of Pakistani postage stamps "glorifying a terrorist and terrorism". (PTI)

AT A GLANCE

Pak reopens friendship Gate at Afghan border

ISLAMABAD: After remaining closed for over two days due to parliamentary polls in Afghanistan, Pakistan has reopened the friendship gate at the Afghan border in Chaman, the shut down of which caused a loss of Rs 100 crore to the country, according to media reports. US-led NATO military coalition in Afghanistan import vital supplies, including fuel, through the friendship gate, in the land-locked country.

Rafale deal will 'sink' Modi govt: Gehlot

JAIPUR: AICC general secretary and former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, saying the Rafale fighter jet deal will "sink" the Modi government. He claimed that Modi's popularity graph has come down and looking at the prime minister's previous speeches, the Congress does not even need to campaign because "things have been exposed now". "The Rafale deal will sink the Modi government," Gehlot said at a press conference here.

Crises in CBI: DSP arrested in bribery case involving its 2nd-in-command

■ Cong questions agency's credibility; people's faith in the institution should continue, says BJP

NEW DELHI, OCT 22 /--/ The CBI has arrested its deputy superintendent of police (DSP) Devender Kumar in connection with bribery allegations involving its special director and second-in-command Rakesh Asthana, officials said today. Kumar, who was earlier the investigation officer in a case involving meat exporter Moin Qureshi, has been arrested on the allegations of forgery in recording the statement of Sathish Sana, who had alleged to have paid bribes to get relief in the case, they said. It is alleged that a statement of Sana was purportedly recorded on September 26, 2018 by the investigating team headed by Asthana, but it emerged in the CBI probe that on that given day the businessman was in Hyderabad, they claimed. In his statement, Sana had purportedly said that he had in June this year discussed his case with Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) Rajya Sabha member C M Ramesh who, after speaking to the CBI director, had assured him that he would not be summoned again.

"From June onwards, I was not called by the CBI. I was under the impression that investigation against me is complete," he is believed to have said. The CBI has now alleged that Kumar had fabricated this statement as an "afterthought...to corroborate the baseless allegations made by Asthana against CBI Director Alok Verma to the CVC (Central Vigilance Commissioner)", they claimed. They said the agency was also looking into the alleged role of other members of the special investigation team headed by Asthana. Asthana, who was booked by the agency on bribery charges in an unprecedented action, had complained against CBI director Verma on August 24, 2018 that he had taken bribe of Rs 2 crore from Sana to give him relief in the matter. The Congress today said there is a serious credibility crisis in the CBI with its top officers accusing each of massive corruption and blamed "vested interests" within the government for bringing the agency to "such a pass". Terming the issue "very serious", Congress leader Sachin Pilot accused the government of interference in the CBI and asked why it was silent on the issue. "How do we trust the CBI to look at corruption issues when their top people are themselves involved and allegations are flying thick and fast? The fact that it has reached this point tells you how long and how deep the rot may be within this government," Pilot told newspersons at the Congress headquarters. The CBI's top officers are accusing each other of massive corruption, he said, questioning the sanctity and the credibility of the government and the CBI to function in an "honest, unbiased transparent way". "So there are serious credibility issues and I think there are vested interests within the government and within CBI that have brought this agency to such a pass," Pilot said. As far as the internal functioning of the CBI is concerned, it is apparent that there is "power play and a blame game going on", he said. Earlier in the day, Congress president Rahul Gandhi alleged that the CBI is being used as a "weapon of political vendetta" under the Modi government and said the premier investigation agency is "at war with itself". Taking to Twitter, he cited a media report naming the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) second in command Rakesh Asthana as an accused in a bribery case. "The PM's blue-eyed boy, Gujarat cadre officer, of Godra SIT fame, infiltrated as No. 2 into the CBI, has now been caught taking bribes," Gandhi tweeted. "Under this PM, the CBI is a weapon of political vendetta. An institution in terminal decline that's at war with itself," he said. The Congress has been attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the appointment of Asthana as CBI special director.

CBI Special Director Rakesh Asthana

Meanwhile, the BJP today said that people's faith in an institution like the CBI should continue, as a row erupted over two top agency officials levelling corruption and other serious charges against each other. Asked about the agency registering a case against its own special director Rakesh Asthana, BJP spokesperson Meenakshi Lekhi pointed out that there is also a report against its director Alok Verma, a reference to his deputy Asthana's complaint against him. "There are two reports, one is against the director and another against the special director. We would like people's faith in the institution of the CBI to continue," she told newspersons. The Centre will be putting forth its views on the matter, she said, adding that the party will speak on such a serious matter later. "Arun Jaitlie's daughter was on the payroll of thief Mehul Choksi. Meanwhile her FM daddy sat on his file and allowed him to flee (sic). "She received money...."It's sad that media has blacked out this story. The people of India won't" ---Rahul Gandhi's tweet

Indian security force personnel carry the coffin containing the body of their colleague, who according to local media was killed in a grenade attack by suspected militants in south Kashmir's Tral town on Sunday evening, during his wreath laying ceremony in a camp in Srinagar ——Reuters

#MeToo: SC declines urgent hearing of PIL asking for FIRs based on allegations

NEW DELHI, OCT 22 /--/ The Supreme Court today declined urgent hearing on a PIL seeking registration of FIRs and prosecution against those accused of sexual misconduct and assault on women, who have called out names across sectors as part of the #MeToo movement in the country. A bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice S K Kaul said there was no need for an urgent hearing on the PIL and it would come up for hearing in regular course. "We have seen the writ petition. There is no need of urgent hearing," the bench told lawyer M L Sharma who has filed the PIL in his personal capacity and was seeking urgent hearing. The plea, which has made National Commission for Women and the ministry of home affairs as parties, has urged the apex court to take "suo motu" (on its own) action and order registration of FIRs on the basis of statements made by victim women on social media. It has also sought prosecution of men, whose names have been called out during the #MeToo movement, under relevant penal provisions dealing with offences of sexual assault, misconduct and rape.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj meeting Marija Pejcinovic Buric, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Croatia, in New Delhi on Monday

Cong accuses Centre of conniving with fraudsters, says Jaitley should be sacked

NEW DELHI, OCT 22 /--/ The Congress today accused the Narendra Modi-led Union government of conniving with fraudsters who had escaped the country and claimed "conflict of interest" to demand sacking of finance minister Arun Jaitley, saying his daughter and son-in-law, both lawyers, allegedly received a retainership of Rs 24 lakh from fugitive Mehul Choksi. Party president Rahul Gandhi today demanded Jaitley's resignation alleging that his daughter was "on the payroll" of Mehul Choksi, the prime accused in the multi-crore PNB fraud case. Taking to Twitter, Rahul alleged that Jaitley "sat on the file and allowed him (Choksi) to flee". The Congress chief claimed that the media had "blacked out" the story but the people of the country would not. He gave an ICICI bank account number from which money was allegedly transferred to Jaitley's daughter. "Arun Jaitlie's daughter was on the payroll of thief Mehul Choksi. Meanwhile her FM daddy sat on his file and allowed him to flee (sic). "She received money....."It's sad that media has blacked out this story. The people of India won't," he tweeted, using the hashtag 'Arun JaitlieMust Resign'. In the 44 months till January 2018, the Modi government witnessed an unprecedented 19,000 'bank fraud cases' involving Rs 90,000 crore, Congress leader Sachin Pilot said at a press conference along with party colleagues Rajiv Satav and Sushmita Dev. He also alleged that 23 fraudsters escaped India under the government's watch after duping the country of over Rs 53,000 crore. Pilot said a sinking economy, banking frauds and flying fraudsters form part of BJP's-Jaitley's 'New India' and demanded that the minister should resign on moral grounds. "Successive escapes of Vijay Mallya, Lalit Modi, Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and others reflect that Modi government is not a guardian of public money' but a travel agency' facilitating fraud, fleece and fly to foreign shores' of willful bank defaulters," the three leaders said in a statement. "Arun Jaitley, being Union minister for finance and corporate affairs, his daughter Sonali Jaitley and son-in-law Jaiyesh Bakhshi proceeded to accept a retainership of Rs 24 lakh from Mehul Choksi's fraudster company Gitanjali Gems Ltd in December 2017," Pilot alleged. However, Jaitley's son-in-law had earlier issued a statement stating that his law firm had returned the retainership the moment they came to know that the company was involved in a scam. "Is this not a clear-cut case of Collusion, Connivance' & Conflict of Interest' on part of FM Arun Jaitley? Why were FM Jaitley, his daughter and son-in-law neither summoned nor questioned by CBI/ED/SFIO?" the leaders asked in the statement. "Is it not a fit case to sack Shri Arun Jaitley and conduct a full independent investigation," they added. Pilot and the other leaders also sought to know why no action was taken against Mehul Choksi, Nirav Modi, Geetanjali Gems Ltd and others, despite FIRs and multiple complaints. "Who protected them," they questioned. "Why were daughter and son-in-law of FM Arun Jaitley paid Rs.24 lakh by Mehul Choksi's Gitanjali Gems Ltd. without doing any work, as admitted by them? Who else are the clients of Chambers of Jaitley & Associates' paying retainership of lakhs of rupees and why should their names not be made public, including amounts received? "As people who owed money to Mehul Choksi/Nirav Modi came forward & deposited the money with Govt after their fraudulent escape, why did FM Jaitley's daughter & son-in-law redeposit Rs.24 Lakh in the account of a company that had defrauded the banks & people of Rs.26,306 Cr? Why did they hide it?" the statement from the three leaders said. (PTI)

Punjab CM reviews Amritsar situation via video link from Israel, case filed against Sidhu's wife in Bihar court

CHANDIGARH/MUZAFFARPUR, OCT 22 /--/ Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh today asked state government officials to expedite the process of providing relief and compensation to the families of those dead and the injured in a tragic train accident in Amritsar last week. During a review meeting from Tel Aviv in Israel, where he reached earlier Monday on a five-day official visit, via a video link, Singh asked officials to ensure quick disbursement of the Rs 5-lakh compensation he had announced following the accident near Joda Phatak on Friday evening. At least 59 Dussehra revellers died after they were hit by a passing train. The officials, including chief principal secretary Suresh Kumar and Amritsar deputy commissioner Kamaldeep Sangha, informed Singh that the situation in the area was under control, according to an official release. People angry over the train accident had pelted stones and clashed with security personnel on Sunday. They sat on the railway tracks, where the accident happened, and protested. They were later removed by authorities. During the review meeting, the officials also told Singh that all victims, except one, had been identified. Kumar informed him that emergency assistance groups have been set up with NGOs and officers drawn from revenue and social welfare departments. These groups were visiting the affected families and providing them assistance and ration, blankets and clothes. Singh asked the officials complete the socio-economic data of the victims at the earliest so that their rehabilitation could be taken up. The officials said a process was underway to identify cases for jobs, pensions and educational support. The situation was peaceful and the train services on the route had been normalised, they added. Meanwhile, a complaint case was filed today against Punjab minister Navjot Singh Sidhu's wife, seeking registration of a case against her for failing to discharge her duties that led to the death of nearly 60 people in a train accident in Amritsar Friday. The complaint claimed that Navjot Kaur Sidhu, who was the chief guest at a Dussehra function in Amritsar, and the organisers were solely responsible for the incident and the court should therefore take cognizance of the matter and order a trial against her. The case was filed by social activist Tamanna Hashmi in the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate Arti Kumari Singh, who fixed November 3 as the date for its hearing. Four persons from Bihar were killed in the tragic incident. Hashmi, in his complaint, contended that a large crowd had gathered on the occasion of "Ravan Vadh" in Amritsar on the fateful day due to the presence of Navjot Kaur Sidhu, a former MLA and the wife of the minister, who is also a former India cricketer. Kaur's presence at the function and her emotive speech led to a surge in the crowd that spilled over to the railway track, the complaint said. Besides, all the security personnel present at the venue were engaged in providing safety and security to Kaur, instead of controlling the crowd, members of which mere mowed down by a train near the Joda Phatak, when they were watching the burning of a Ravan effigy while standing on the railway tracks, it added.