



Hindu devotees performing rituals at Vinhyavasini temple on the first day of Navratri festival, in Mirzapur on Wednesday.

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## SC wants to know decision making process gone through for Rafale deal

Makes it clear to Centre it's not interested in pricing info and technical details

**NEW DELHI, OCT 10 /--/** The Supreme Court today asked the Centre to provide details of the decision making process in the Rafale fighter jet deal with France in a sealed cover but clarified that it does not want information on pricing and technical particulars.

The bench, comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices S K Kaul and K M Joseph, also made it clear that it was not taking into account the allegations on corruption in the deal made in the petitions. The Centre opposed the PILs in court and sought that the Centre on two PILs filed by two separate lawyers seeking a court monitored probe in the deal. The apex court sought informa-

tion from the Centre on the decision making process in the deal in a sealed cover by October 29 and fixed the next hearing on the PILs for October 31. The top court was hearing various petitions seeking directions, including asking the Centre to reveal details of the deal and the comparative prices during the UPA and NDA rule in a sealed cover to the apex court. Congress leader and RTI activist Tehseen Poonawala withdrew his PIL against the fighter jet deal. His plea had sought a direction against the Centre on why the Union Cabinet's approval was not sought as part of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) before signing the procurement deal with France on September 23, 2016. The Rafale deal is

a defence agreement signed between the governments of India and France for the purchase of 36 Rafale fighter aircrafts in a fly-away condition as a part of the upgrading process of Indian Air Force equipment. The Rafale fighter is a twin-engine, fly-by-wire, medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) manufactured by French aerospace company Dassault Aviation. Indian Air Force had advanced a proposal to buy 126 fighter aircraft in August 2007 and floated a tender. Following this, an invitation was sent to various aviation companies to participate in the bidding process. The Congress today accused Narendra Modi-led Union government of "manipulating" the process of Rafale fighter jet agreement by

"punishing" bureaucrats who raised objections to the deal and rewarding "obliging officials". The Opposition party also reiterated its demand for a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe. Congress spokesperson S Jaipal Reddy said defence deals of this magnitude are first examined by departments, approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security and then sealed. Reddy alleged that in 2016, the then joint secretary was overruled by the Director General acquisition for the go ahead to the deal, after a new officer was brought in the post, in place of person who had the reputation of being unbending. "To manage this process, bureaucrats were bulldozed, bullied, punished, promoted, the whole process of ratification was fabricated, stage-managed, and manipulated. Such a thing has not happened in the history of independent India," Reddy alleged, claiming that "obliging officers" were "rewarded" later. (PTI)



### Flipkart arm to set up Rs 991 cr logistics hub in state

**KOLKATA, OCT 10 /--/** Instakart Services Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of online retail major Flipkart, would set up a logistics hub at Haringhata in Nadia district, West Bengal finance minister Amit Mitra said today. The proposed hub, with an investment proposal of around Rs 991 crore, would come up within two-and-a-half years. Mitra told newsmen at the state secretariat here. The project will be set up on 100 acres of land in the 358-acre Haringhata Industrial Park and provide direct employment to 18,310 people, he said.

"The West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC) passed the proposal of Instakart on Wednesday and it will be later sent to the Cabinet Standing Committee for in-principle passage, which is a formality," Mitra said. The finance minister said Instakart had been scouting for land for the logistics hub in different eastern region states before zeroing in on West Bengal. "They (Instakart) will perform the role of anchor investor in the industrial park, which will in turn attract other investors into the park," the minister said. On the state Cabinet granting 98.53 acre to The Chatterjee Group (TCG) on Tuesday for a new plant at Haldia, Mitra said: "From chemical products, they will go for continuous polymerisation plant - processing fibre, spinning and cotton yarn. The facility will lead to big employment opportunities, he added.

### AT A GLANCE

#### Explainer: Gonto Akbar

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress today said Union minister M J Akbar must either offer a satisfactory explanation on the allegations of sexual harassment against him or resign immediately. The party also demanded an inquiry into his conduct. As the #MeToo campaign gathered momentum in India, some women journalists have come out against Akbar, a former editor and now the minister of state for external affairs, of sexually harassing them during his stint as a journalist.

### BHILAI STEEL PLANT BLAST

## CEO removed, 2 other officials suspended

**RAIPUR, OCT 10 /--/** The chief executive officer (CEO) of the Bhilai Steel Plant was removed and two other senior officials were suspended today, a day after a blast at the plant which claimed the lives of 11 employees. This was stated by Union steel minister

Chaudhary Birender Singh (safety department) TPandya Raja and Deputy General Manager (energy department) Naven Kumar have been suspended, Birender Singh told newsmen. Earlier, Inspector General of Police (IGP Durg Range) G P Singh had said that after receiving the postmortem report of the deceased, a case under the Indian Penal Code Section 304 (A) (causing

death by negligence) will be registered followed by an inquiry into the incident. Union minister of state for steel Vishvudoo Sai had said Tuesday that a four member high-level committee was constituted by SAIL to probe the incident. The explosion had taken place in the gas pipeline connected to the coke oven section of the plant during a maintenance job, the SAIL had said. Meanwhile, steel minister Chaudhary Birender Singh today announced compensation of Rs 30 lakh each to the families of workers who lost their lives in a blast at SAIL's Bhilai Plant in Chhattisgarh, the

families of the deceased will receive statutory compensation ranging from Rs 33 lakh to Rs 90 lakh in addition to the compensation announced by the minister, the statement said. The steel minister also directed SAIL to provide employment to next of kin who died in the accident and free education to children up to graduation level. Two more employees succumbed to their injuries, taking the total death toll in the explosion to 11. Ten persons continue to receive treatment in the burns ward of Bhilai Steel Plant Hospital and two persons are admitted in the ICU in critical condition. The minister reached Bhilai Wednesday morning and visited the hospital to enquire about the treatment being given and condition of those injured in the blast incident. On Tuesday, nine people had died and 14 others were injured in the gas pipeline blast at the plant. Of the 14 injured people admitted to the burns unit of the Jawahar Lal Nehru Hospital in Bhilai, two succumbed Tuesday late night, a public relations officer of the steel plant told PTI. (PTI & EOIC)



■ Death toll rises to 11  
■ SteelMin announces compensation of Rs 30 lakh each to families of victims



Rescuers move the damaged engine of the passenger train after it derailed in Harchandpur, Uttar Pradesh — Reuters

## 5 killed, 9 hurt as New Farakka Express derailed near Rae Bareilly

PM condoles deaths; RailMin, UP gov announce compensation

**LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI, OCT 10 /--/** Five coaches and the engine of the New Farakka Express derailed near Rae Bareilly early today, killing at least five people and seriously injuring nine, officials said.

The accident on the New Farakka Express (1403) that was on its from Malda in West Bengal to New Delhi took place in Harchandpur area of Rae Bareilly district at 6:10 am, Uttar Pradesh Additional Director General (ADG) Law and Order, Anand Kumar said. About 30-35 people received minor injuries, Kumar, who had put the toll at seven in earlier in the day, said. Confusion prevailed for hours among senior police and railway officials over the death toll and the number of coaches that had derailed. While initially the death toll was said to be six, then seven, it was finally fixed at five by early evening. There was similar confusion over the number of coaches that had derailed. The railways said five coaches went off the tracks after earlier putting their number at nine. According to railways officials, five people, including a one-year-old and a seven-year-old, were killed. All of them were from Bihar. Ten women and six minors are among the injured, the officials said. "It is a fluid situation and updated information is being provided by Northern Railways periodically," said railway spokesperson Smita

Vats Sharma. Four of the seriously injured are being treated at the trauma centre of Lucknow's King George Medical University and two at the city's Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, UP government spokesperson Shrikant Sharma told newsmen.

The other injured were taken to Rae Bareilly, about 80 km from the state capital Lucknow, for treatment, officials said. A special train, which was arranged for the stranded passengers, left Lucknow for New Delhi at 2:45 pm with 1,369 passengers on board, railway officials said, adding that they were given food packets to sustain them through the journey. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his anguish at the loss of lives. "Condolences to the bereaved families and I pray that the injured recover quickly," the Prime Minister's Office tweeted quoting Modi. He said the UP government, railways and the National Disaster Response Force were ensuring all possible assistance at the site of the accident. Railways minister Piyush Goyal announced compensation of Rs 5 lakh for the kin of the dead, Rs 1 lakh for the injured and Rs 50,000 for those with minor injuries. To offer my deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and those injured in the accident near Rae Bareilly, I am in touch with officials for relief work," Goyal

tweeted. The minister has ordered an enquiry to be conducted by the Commission of Railway Safety, Northern Circle. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also announced Rs 2 lakh compensation for the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 for those seriously injured. The chief minister, who headed a cabinet meeting to conole the loss of lives, directed the Director General of Police, district magistrate, the superintendent of police, health authorities and the NDRF to provide all possible assistance for relief and rescue operations. Railway Board chairman Ashwani Lohani reached the accident site and visited those admitted in hospitals in Rae Bareilly. An NDRF team, comprising 40 personnel, and senior officials from the state and the railways, also reached the spot. According to ADG Kumar, the reason for the derailment will be known after an Anti-Terrorism Squad is sent for on the spot probe. Emergency helpline numbers were set up at the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya junction, Mughalsarai, officials said. All up and down lines on the route were blocked and officials suspect that the number of casualties may rise. The investigation related to the derailment will be conducted by Chief Commissioner, Railway Safety, Shalesh Pathak, who also probed the derailment of the Puri-Hardwar Utkal Express last year in which 22 people died. (PTI)

## Funds to puja committees: Calcutta HC refuses to interfere in state's decision

**KOLKATA, OCT 10 /--/** The Calcutta High Court today refused to interfere in the West Bengal government's decision to give Rs 10,000 each to 28,000 Durga puja committees in the state, and said the legislature is the appropriate forum to decide on such expenditure.

An interim stay granted by the court on disbursement of funds stands vacated as the court disposed of the public interest litigation challenging the state government's decision to give funds to the puja committees. A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Debashish Kar Gupta and Justice Sampa Sarkar said the court does not want to interfere in the government's decision to disburse funds to Durga puja committees at this stage. The legislature is the appropriate forum to decide on expenditure by

the state government, it said. The bench, however, said that the court can interfere in expenditure by the government at a later stage if and when the



scope arises. Advocate General Kishore Dutta had submitted before the division bench that the funds are to be used for assisting police under its traffic safety campaign and not for any religious purpose. The petitioner had challenged the government's decision to dis-

burse funds to the tune of Rs 28 crore, claiming it was a sole public purpose, and had no public purpose. The petitioner also claimed that providing funds to Durga Puja committees is a violation of the secular structure of the Constitution. The state government on Tuesday told the division bench that it cannot interfere in a legislative decision on granting funds to Durga Puja committees. Dutta told the court that the funds are to be used for assisting police under 'Safe drive save life' campaign of the state government and also for sanitation and public safety. On September 10, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee declared that Rs 10,000 would be given to each of the 28,000 puja committees across the state. 3,000 in the city and 25,000 in the districts, costing the government an amount of Rs 28 crore.

## Titti gaining strength, Gangetic Bengal to get heavy to very heavy rainfall

**KOLKATA, OCT 10 /--/** With the very severe cyclonic storm Titti gaining strength in the Bay of Bengal, the Met department today warned of heavy to very heavy rainfall in the Gangetic West Bengal and Bihar. Under the impact of the cyclone, coastal and overland areas of East and West Midnapore, Thargam, South and Parganas districts in Bengal will experience squally

wind, with speed reaching up to 60 kmph from Wednesday evening onwards, the weatherman said. Tourists at seaside resort towns of Digha, Sankarpur, Mandarmani and other places along the coast in the state have been advised "not to undergo any seawater-bound activities during this period," the Met department said. The weatherman warned fishermen not to venture into the

sea along and off the coasts of West Bengal, Odisha, deep sea areas of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Bay of Bengal till October 12. Following the forecast, the Indian Railways decided to halt train services between Khurda Road in Odisha and Vizianagaram in Andhra Pradesh. SER spokesman Sanjay Ghosh said: "It has been decided to suspend train services between Khurda Road



and Vizianagaram from both directions after 10 PM Wednesday till further advice. "Long distance trains slated to pass through East Coast Railway jurisdiction between Khurda Road and Vizianagaram on Howrah-Chennai main line may be diverted via Kharagpur-Jharsuguda-Nagpur route, he said. (PTI)