



A kite vendor shows kites at his shop full of colourfull kites ahead of Makar Sankranti celebrated as kite-flying festival in Mumbai on Thursday.

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AT A GLANCE

Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas observed in Chicago

WASHINGTON: The immense contribution of the Indian American community in strengthening India's partnership with the US was highlighted during Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas celebrations in the Indian Consulate in Chicago this week. In her key note address, Consul General Neeta Bhushan highlighted the efforts being made by the Indian government to reach out to the Indian community settled abroad. She also talked about some of the ongoing flagship programmes of the government aimed at strengthening engagement with the Indian diaspora. (Details on Page 5)

Execution date set for 1st Indian-origin prisoner in US

WASHINGTON: The execution date of the first death-row Indian-American prisoner convicted of killing a baby and her Indian grandfather has been set for next month. Raghunandan Yamdamuri, 32, in 2014 was given death penalty for kidnapping and killing a 61-year-old elderly Indian woman and her 10-month grand-daughter. It was seen as part of a botched kidnapping-for-ransom plot. Yamdamuri's execution date has been set for February 23 by local correctional authorities. However, he is likely to get a reprieve because of a 2015 moratorium on death penalty by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf. Yamdamuri is the first Indian-American to face death penalty. Federal authorities alleged that killings were part of a botched kidnapping-for-ransom plot.

NSA met Pak counterpart in Thailand: MEA

NEW DELHI: India today said National Security Advisor Ajit Doval met his Pakistani counterpart Lt Gen Asim Khan Janjua (ret'd) last month in Thailand, noting that "talks can go ahead". Raveesh Kumar, the spokesperson of the ministry of external affairs, told newsmen that the focus of the "operational-level talks" was "cross-border terrorism" and ways to ensure the elimination of terrorism from the region. "India and Pakistan have a dialogue process and we have said terror and talks cannot go together."

CU confers honorary DLitt on Mamata

■ CM announces Rs 100 cr aid for varsity ■ Chancellor asks state to make educational system more accessible

DEBANJAN MUKHERJEE

KOLKATA, JAN 11 /-/- Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today turned emotional while receiving the honorary DLitt, which was conferred on her by Calcutta University. Addressing the gathering after receiving the certificate from Governor Keshri Nath Tripathi, who is the Chancellor of the varsity, Mamata said: "I will remain indebted to you forever for giving me such a big honour. You have given recognition to my work. Throughout my life, I have faced disrespects from various quarters. Even you had to face disrespect for deciding to confer this honorary Doctorate on me. You have filled my life up with respect today."

Apparently keeping in mind the university's decision had generated, the chief minister said that she was in dilemma about attending the event but "being a part of this ambience, now I feel skipping the programme would have been a huge miss for me". "I was in doubt about receiving this honour and had a serious debate with education minister Partha Chatterjee but finally Parthada persuaded me to attend this glorious event", the chief minister said. Making a veiled attack on the NDA government, Mamata said: "history could never be distorted and forces that are trying to do so should be stopped".

The chief minister today described the Calcutta University as the blooming point of all movements that have taken place in the state. "No movement can deny the role of Calcutta University. It is an integral part of Bengal's tradition. I wish to see Calcutta University as World's number 1 university," she said and added that the state government will extend to it an assistance of Rs 100 crore for developing infrastructure for innovative courses and research-based studies. Chancellor Tripathi hailed the Calcutta University for honouring people for their significant contributions in various fields. However, he said that the state government must make efforts to make the educational system more accessible to people.

In initial remarks, a senior university official mentioned that the honorary DLitt was being conferred on chief minister Mamata Banerjee for her outstanding contributions to the world of public affairs. Former Governor M K Narayanan was also honoured today with Ashutosh Mukherjee medal.



Governor and Chancellor of Calcutta University Kesarinath Tripathy handing over the certificate of honorary D. Litt to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee —Shyamal Maltra

Hearing on PIL to resume today

KOLKATA, JAN 11 /-/- Hearing of a PIL against Calcutta University's decision to confer honorary DLitt on chief minister Mamata Banerjee remained inconclusive today and would resume on Friday. As the function was in progress at Nazrul Mancha, the university's counsel Sakinath Mukherjee said the senate is the final authority in deciding a DLitt award and he was not an outsider having no authority to challenge the decision. Petitioner Ranjugopal Mukherjee, a former professor of the university, has moved the high court, claiming the decision issued by the senate on the chief minister was "arbitrary and opaque". His counsel, Bikas Bhattacharya, had on Wednesday submitted that the issues relating to the university and education itself were of public interest and as such the petition should be treated a PIL. State Advocate General Kishore Dutta had earlier in a division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice J Bhattacharya and Justice Arijit Banerjee that the decision to confer the honorary degree was taken by the syndicate and senate of the university and there was no sufficiency of public interest. (PTI)

New SIT to supervise probe in 186 anti-Sikh riot cases set up

NEW DELHI, JAN 11 /-/- A three-member special investigation team (SIT) headed by former Delhi High Court judge Justice S N Dhirga was set up by the Supreme Court today to supervise further probe into 186 anti-Sikh riot cases in which closure reports were filed earlier.

Besides Justice Dhirga, Abhishek Dular, a serving 2006 batch IPS officer of Himachal Pradesh cadre, and retired IG rank officer Rajdeep Singh would be part of the SIT, which was asked by a bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra to submit its status report in two months. The matter will be heard next on March 19. The top court zeroed in on the names after the ministry of home affairs and counsel for petitioners G S Kahlon submitted that they have arrived at a consensus with regard to the persons who could be appointed in the fresh SIT. The apex court had on Wednesday held that the previous SIT had not carried out further probe into these 186 cases in which closure reports were filed, and had directed setting up of a fresh SIT comprising a former High Court judge and two police officers. Large-scale riots

Delhi High Court, had dealt with several high-profile cases including the 2001 Parliament Attack case as trial judge. He was recently in the news for heading a one-man panel that probed Haryana land scam allegedly involving Robert Vadra, the son-in-law of UP chairperson Sonia Gandhi. Justice Dhirga as the judge of the trial court had dealt with 1984 anti-Sikh riot cases and in about 16 cases, his judgement had resulted in conviction of accused persons.

An advocate, who has been associated with the cases, said Justice Dhirga as a trial court judge had in 1990's conducted the trial of a riots case in Trilokpuri area of East Delhi and had awarded death sentence to main accused Kishori Lal and another. The High Court had confirmed the death sentence on Kishori Lal which was later commuted to life by the Supreme Court. The death sentence of another accused was commuted to life sentence by the High Court itself.

Country to have 10k seaplanes in next 2 years, says Gadkari

THANE, JAN 11 /-/- Urging the state governments to adopt new modes of transport like waterways, Union minister Nitin Gadkari today announced that 10,000 seaplanes would be brought into operation in the country over the next two years. Gadkari also said that in the next three months, rules and regulations would be put in place for operating seaplanes in the country. "The state govern-

ments should take to new modes of transportation, including inland waterways to avoid pollution and related issues arising out of road transport," the minister said. He was speaking at the 'bhoomi

pujan' ceremony of the new breed on Versova creek that will connect Mumbai to Ahmedabad. The project is worth Rs 3,000 crore. "Around 10,000 seaplanes would be brought into the country in the next two

Gurung 'ready for talks' with Mamata

NEW DELHI, JAN 11 /-/- Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) leader Bimal Gurung today expressed his willingness to hold dialogue with West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee to defuse the crisis in Darjeeling and asserted that his fight was for Gorkha identity. In his first direct interaction with reporters following a long and violent agitation in Darjeeling last year, Gurung also rejected Banerjee's accusation that he was a separatist, saying his party's demands were within the purview of Indian Constitution and he believed in national integrity. He claimed that the state police had implicated him and his party's workers in false criminal cases and sought an independent enquiry into the matter. His party leaders said Gurung was booked in over 350 cases and had been on a run before the Supreme Court asked the police to not take any coercive measure against him after he filed a plea there. Asked if he was willing to hold dialogue with the chief minister, he answered in affirmative. "I'm ready for dialogue. Dialogue is the way ahead," Gurung said. Though his party has been demanding a separate state Gorkhaland to be carved out of West Bengal, he did not touch upon the issue in his today's comments. "Our agitation is for Gorkha identity," he said. He said he had nothing against the people of Bengal but the language and culture of Gorkhas were distinct from them and whatever they were demanding was within the ambit of the Constitution. Gurung accused the state government of acting in an "one-sided" manner following the start of an agitation in Darjeeling in June last year. Eleven Gorkhas died in police and other violent action, he said. Gurung also appealed for peace and asked his supporters to stay away from any illegal activity.

Nilekani sees 'orchestrated campaign' to malign Aadhaar

BENGALURU, JAN 11 /-/- Former Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) chairman Nandan Nilekani said there was an "orchestrated campaign" to malign Aadhaar. Nilekani was reacting to filing of an FIR on The Tribune newspaper report relating to Aadhaar data breach. "This is hundred per cent an orchestrated campaign to see how Aadhaar gets maligned, yes absolutely," Nilekani told ET Now on the sidelines of the Infosys Science Foundation Award here. Delhi Police had on Monday registered the FIR on a complaint by an UIDAI official following the newspaper report on data breach of more than 1 billion Aadhaar cards, naming the journalist behind the story. The police was informed by the official that the correspondent, posing as a buyer, had purchased a service being offered by anonymous sellers over WhatsApp that provided unrestricted access to details of Aadhaar numbers. According to the former UIDAI chairman, the issue has been blown out of proportion as Aadhaar have built far too many security layers and it is not possible to randomly pore it. Further referring to FIR filed in the Tribune case, he said negative views on Aadhaar will have negative actions and hence, it would be better for people to have a constructive view on it. "If you are just taking a negative view and not a constructive view, then you also have other (negative) reactions. I think, everybody has to accept Aadhaar is here to stay." The former UIDAI chief said.

TMC made 'false promises' to minorities: State BJP chief

KOLKATA, JAN 11 /-/- The West Bengal unit of the BJP has accused the state government of doing nothing for the minorities of the state and asked the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) to publish data on the number of jobs offered to Muslim youths over the last six years. The Mamata Banerjee-led government has made false promises for political benefits, state BJP president Dilip Ghosh said today at the party's minority convention at Rani Rashmoni Road, in the central part of the city. "I want to ask her about the measures she has taken in the last six years for the Muslims of the state. She (chief minister Mamata Banerjee) has only made false promises... Whenever election approaches she tries to project herself as the messiah of Muslims by branding the BJP as demons," Ghosh said. Listing various development projects that the Narendra Modi-led central government has initiated since 2014, Ghosh asked the state government to enumerate the projects it has taken up for minorities. The BJP is serious about development of Muslims as it believes in the policy of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' (Development for all), he said. Echoing similar sentiments, BJP leader Mukul Roy criticised the chief



Dilip Ghosh at the rally —Arijit Ganguly

minister for not taking a stand on the 'triple talaq' issue. "She (Banerjee) is saying that the triple talaq (bill) is defective... How is it defective, she wouldn't say. When a discussion was held on the bill in Parliament, her party remained silent," Roy said, adding "a clear stand" on the issue might anger a section of her party leaders. Roy, once the second-in-command in the TMC, joined the BJP in November last year. "She (Banerjee) is claiming that she has given jobs to lakhs of youths of this state. I want the state government to give us the data regarding it...," he said. The chief minister had last week described the bill which makes instant triple talaq a criminal offence as "defective" and said it would do Muslim women more harm than good. The newly-inducted BJP leader also dug up the 2007 Rizwanur Rehman case, while speaking about the "double standards" of the TMC, and said the party after coming to power has rewarded police officers involved in the incident with plum postings. Rizwanur Rehman was found dead by a railway track on September 21, 2007. His family members had alleged the pressure had been put on him by his wife's family and some police officials to annul the marriage. (PTI)

Collegium clears 2 senior advocates as judges of SC

NEW DELHI, JAN 11 /-/- The Supreme Court collegium has recommended two senior advocates as judges of the apex court. Along with her, Uttarakhand High Court Chief Justice K M Joseph, who was part of the bench which in 2016 had quashed the imposition of President's Rule in the state, has also been cleared for elevation to the apex court. At a meeting held on January 10, the collegium also recommended the name of Justice Sheo Kumar Singh J, presently an Additional Judge, for appointment as a Permanent Judge of the Allahabad High Court. Justice Joseph was appointed as Permanent Judge of the Kerala High Court in 2004 and later transferred to Uttarakhand High Court where he assumed charge in 2014 as Chief Justice. Malhotra, who was designated as a senior advocate in 2007, would be the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a judge of the top court, instead of being elevated from a high court. She will be the seventh woman judge since independence to make it to the Supreme Court. At present, Justice R Banumathi is the lone woman judge on the apex court. Since Independence, only six women judges have made it to the apex court as judges and the first appointment was of Justice M Fathima Beevi in 1989, 38 years after she served as a judge of the Supreme Court in 1950. Justice Fathima Beevi was elevated to the apex court as a permanent judge as Justice of the Kerala High Court. After serving the top court till April 29, 1992, she was later appointed as the Governor of Tamil Nadu.