



**BJP WILL LOSE 100 SEATS IN UP, BIHAR, J'KHAND, TEJASHWI SAYS AFTER MEETING AKHILESH | 14**

**RAJNATH-LED HOME MINISTRY MULLS SOPS FOR MIGRANTS IF THEY SETTLE OUTSIDE ASSAM | 9**



## 'Op Lotus' plunges K'taka into crisis

Cong-JD(S) Fears BJP Trying To Poach MLAs, Saffron Party Shifts Its MLAs To Haryana

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bengaluru/Mysuru:** An intense political drama is unfolding in Karnataka with BJP shifting all its 104 MLAs to the National Capital Region over the last two days even as CM H D Kumaraswamy alleged that as part of 'Operation Lotus 3.0', the opposition party was conspiring to poach Congress-JD(S) MLAs to dislodge his government. The BJP MLAs were scheduled to meet party chief Amit Shah in Delhi on Sunday and return to Bengaluru on Monday.

But in an attempt to keep the flock together and thwart any counter-action by Congress-JD(S), they were on Monday shifted to ITC Grand Bharat in Hasanpur Tauru in Nuh district adjoining Gurgaon. The BJP MLAs will now miss



the Sankranti fervour as they stay in the NCR has been indefinitely extended. 'Operation Lotus' refers to BJP's successful poaching of MLAs from other parties during B S Yeddyurappa's first stint as CM.

A senior MLA who is in Yeddyurappa's inner circle claimed the party has already enlisted the support of 12 Congress MLAs and is waiting for the support of another four to five legislators. "This time, you will see some result," he said, expressing

**Kumaraswamy alleged that BJP was offering a JD(S) MLA Rs 50 crore, a ministerial berth and Rs 30 crore to contest the elections**

confidence that BJP will succeed in either forming its government or forcing a mid-term assembly election along with the Lok Sabha polls.

Attacking BSY, Kumaraswamy said in Mysuru, "There is no doubt Operation Lotus 3.0 has started. BJP has been desperately trying to lure our MLAs. I know how much money and what gifts are being offered. I also have the information in whose name BJP had booked rooms in Mumbai."

The CM implied that three

Congress MLAs who are currently in Mumbai were being wooed, but did not specify names. "They are in touch with me. They're my friends. Even the 104 BJP members are my friends. The MLAs who are in Mumbai had brought it to my notice before leaving. They have gone to the neighbouring state on personal reasons and there is no necessity to add political colour to it," he added.

Kumaraswamy alleged BJP is tapping JD(S) MLAs, too. The CM told TOI that BJP leaders Jagadish Shettar, C N Ashwantharayan and Aravind Limbavalli had contacted a JD(S) MLA on Monday evening. "The offer is Rs 50 crore, a minister's post and Rs 30 crore to contest the polls as the JD(S) MLA has to resign and contest again. This indicates the

extent to which BJP is stooping to lure MLAs," he said. "Don't (you) think I cannot make some BJP MLAs resign? But I don't want to misuse my power," the CM said.

Rebutting the charges, BSY said: "It is not us but they who have started horse trading using money and power. They have been trying to contact our MLAs. One of our MLAs from Kalaburagi district has been offered a ministerial berth by Kumaraswamy himself." He asserted that all 104 BJP MLAs are united.

Claiming that most of the ruling alliance MLAs were unhappy, Yeddyurappa said: "Let Kumaraswamy keep his flock together instead of pointing fingers at BJP."

Congress leader Siddaramaiah, however, dismissed any dissent within Congress.

## 'Improper touch' sparks India-Pak diplomatic row

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** An incident of alleged misbehaviour by a Pakistani high commission staffer with a woman at the popular Sarojini Nagar market on Monday set off yet another diplomatic row with India and Pakistan alleging harassment by local authorities in Islamabad and New Delhi.

While Pakistan accused India of violating the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations by detaining a Pakistani high commission official in New Delhi, government sources recalled the harassment being faced by Indian diplomats in Islamabad, including attempts to hack their email and social media accounts.

The Pakistani official was detained by police for his involvement in an altercation with a woman who alleged that he had inappropriately touched her. The official was later let off after he apologised in writing to the woman. The woman didn't press charges against him after this.

The Pakistani official identified as Shaikat, is posted as an assistant of the naval



adviser. Police sources said the incident happened on Saturday evening when a DU student alleged that he had touched her inappropriately in a crowded shop.

Police denied that the official was detained for hours. "We had to wait for the woman to decide on whether she wanted to register a formal complaint during which the official was asked to sit in the SHO's office," said a police officer. The official too was made comfortable and his version was heard by police.

"Pakistan strongly protested this violation of the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations and reserves the right to respond," Dawn quoted an official from the Pakistan foreign office as saying. Official sources here said

**Pakistan accused India of violating the Vienna pact by detaining the Pakistan high commission official, while India recalled harassment faced by its diplomats in Islamabad**

the incident was not a case of harassment as the woman had herself called police and asked them to take action. According to Indian authorities, most of the cases of harassment were being reported from Islamabad.

In a note verbatim on January 10, a source here said, India pointed to attempts to hack social media accounts of a senior Indian diplomat in Islamabad by people impersonating as his relative.

A fake account similar to that of one of his relatives was used to hack the account. Another senior diplomat, the government said, received an email from the Facebook administration saying several attempts were made to hack his account.

Full report on [www.toi.in](http://www.toi.in)

## First woman to scale Kerala's men-only peak today

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**Thiruvananthapuram:** Agasthyarkoodam peak will be scaled by a woman for the first time on Tuesday. Dhanya Sanal, along with 99 male trekkers, will start her trek to Kerala's second-highest peak from the Athirumala base camp.

Sanal is an Indian Information Service officer working with the defence ministry. Her batch had proceeded to the base camp, 16km away from the entry point at Bonacaud, on Monday morning. The trekkers are expected to finish the 8km steep climb by Tuesday noon.

Of the 4,700 people who have registered for the sought-after annual wild trekking expedition, 100 are women. Per day, only 100 people are allowed to undertake the trek. Another batch, which includes three women, will proceed to Athirumala on Thursday.

Like in Sabarimala, there have been protests against a 'ban' on women to trek Agasthyarkoodam for 'breach of rituals similar to that in Sabarimala'. Only men, above the age of 14, are allowed the trek. The trek is led by Agasthyarkoodam Kshetra Kanikkar Trust.

The Kerala HC, on November 30 last year, allowed women to be a part of the trek to this 1,868-metre peak.

Antharashtriya Hindu Parishad held a protest, declaring solidarity with the Kani tribe saying that a group of atheists, with the support of the CPM government, were trying to breach traditions and rituals in Sabarimala and Agasthyarkoodam. Members of Kani community also staged a protest.

## At 77, 'Mullaji' lights up famed Juna Akhara, and hearts too

Anindya Chattopadhyay



A sadhu at the Sangam during the 2019 Kumbh Mela in Allahabad

Harveer Dabas | TNN

**Bijnor:** Money has taken a back seat for Mohammad Mehmood, now 77. Stretching his legs on a rather rickety plastic chair on the banks of the mighty Ganga in Allahabad, Mehmood says his priorities have changed now. "I now look for spirituality and respect," he says after a day of hard work.

For the last 33 years, Mehmood had been illuminating the tents of the famed Juna Akhara. Drastic changes in technology failed to deter the old man's determination to light up the king-size tents of the Akhara, which "stand apart from others".

Talking about his work, Mehmood says, "I am an elec-

trician. And my skills can be seen in the night during the Kumbh when the entire area where sadhus have pitched their tents is dazzling with bright lights of all colours."

Reminiscing about his journey, Mehmood says, "I came in contact with the *sadhus* of Juna Akhara about 33 years ago. At that time, I was young and had very little experience and knowledge of Akhara culture. But after some time, I became familiar with the environment and friendly with the saints. Whenever the Kumbh draws close, they inform me about the work of illumination," he said.

"They respect me like a family member. Though I earn money here, but spiritu-

al contentment is more important now. I also learn good things from the company of *sadhus*," Mehmood says, adding "I feel proud and happy to be a part of the Kumbh."

Mehmood also said he has been given space to offer 'namaz' by the saints at the Kumbh site. "There is no discrimination here. They treat me well. They give me the same food which they eat," he said. Mehmood, a resident of Muzaffarnagar,

When asked about his life back home, Mehmood says, "I have an electric shop at Sarbar Gate in Muzaffarnagar. There are six members, including a son and three daughters, in my family. My son helps me in this profession. We set up lights in festivals also. I am known as 'Mulla Ji Light Wale' there."

## Major fire at mela site after cylinder blast inside tent

A cooking gas cylinder exploded in a tent at the Digambar Anil Akhara at the Kumbh Mela site on Monday, triggering a massive fire, prompting CM Yogi Adityanath to direct officials to compensate the loss immediately. There was, however, no report of any injuries, police said. The CM also directed the fire department to inspect all tents and take precautions, an official spokesperson said. The head of the Akhara claimed that the fire broke out in an adjoining tent and spread to the kitchen tent of their camp, triggering the blast. **TNN**

## CBI officer in Akhilesh case investigation transferred

**New Delhi:** In a fresh round of reshuffling at the CBI, DIG Gagandeep Gambhir, who was supervising the investigation into the alleged role of former Uttar Pradesh CM Akhilesh Yadav in the illegal mining case, has been transferred, sources said on Monday.

Gambhir has been shifted to the unit which is probing the Srijan scam and a case against journalist Upendra Rai. She will also have the additional

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charge of DIG in the special investigation team (SIT) headed by joint director Sai Manohar, the sources said. The SIT, which was earlier headed by Rakesh Asthana, is probing important cases like that of Vijay Malviya and Agusta Westland. It is also probing some coal scam-related cases, among others.

The changes have been effected by M Nageswara Rao, who was made CBI's interim chief after a high-powered committee comprising PM Modi, Justice A K Sikri and leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge had transferred Alok Verma out of the CBI in a split verdict on Thursday.

The probe in the illegal mining case will now be supervised by DIG Anish Prasad, who was earlier deputy director (personnel and admin). **TNN**

## App to give mela crowd weather info 3 days in advance

The Centre launched special weather services on Monday for people visiting Allahabad during the Kumbh Mela. It will help pilgrims and local authorities get weather info (temperature, humidity, rainfall and wind speed) three days in advance. An exclusive mobile application for the Mela - 'Kumbh Mela Weather Service' - was also launched on the occasion for dissemination of weather-related information. The app will be available for download on Google Play Store. It's a real-time location-specific forecast and warning system. **TNN**

## MP dy speaker has close shave, cops probe Reds

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bhopal/Jabalpur:** Four policemen in the escort car of Madhya Pradesh deputy speaker Hina Kawre were killed after a truck rammed into their vehicle on Sunday night at Saleetka village.

Hina's driver swerved in the nick of time. "If my driver weren't alert, the truck would have rammed our car also," Hina told TOI.

Police arrested the truck driver, who told them he had received a message from the government hospital in Budhi (45km from the accident site) that his wife had gone into labour; hence he was anxious to reach there as soon as possible. His wife delivered a child past midnight.

Hina, 34, was on her first visit to Balaghat, MP's only Maoist-affected district, af-

ter being elected as the deputy speaker. Police are probing a possible insurgent angle because Hina had received extortion letters from an alleged Maoist outfit, Sangram Dalam, on January 3 and 8, threatening to kill her on January 16 unless she paid up Rs 20 lakh.

"We don't think there is any conspiracy angle to this. I was awake at the time of incident. It was the truck driver's fault," she told TOI.

Hina's father, Likharam Kawre, a minister in the Digvijay Singh-led Congress government of MP, was killed by Maoists on December 16, 1999. It was one of the most brutal murders of a politician in Indian history with the head of Likharam sawed off and the body left in front of his residence. Police never got the killers.

## 16 puppies pounded to death at Kolkata hospital

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**Kolkata:** The 16 puppies found dead on the NRS Medical College and Hospital campus on Sunday were bludgeoned with blunt weapons, a preliminary post-mortem report said on Monday, with the animals—all a few inches in length—dying of internal bleeding either from the brain or the stomach region.

A video of the mindless assault, shot from the second floor of R Ahmed Dental College Hostel on the campus, has helped investigators "identify a strong suspect"—an NRS

Medical College and Hospital nursing student. The 28-second mobile video clip shows two women beating up the puppies behind the nurses' hostel.

Police and a team of hospital officials probing the case confirmed the place of assault shown in the video and visited the NRS Nurses' Hostel backyard on Monday and spoke to students and staff living there.

Police have slapped stringent non-bailable sections but against yet-to-be-identified people following separate complaints from animal lovers, activists and the Kolkata municipal corporation.

## System to predict lightning, thunderstorms by April

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The Centre will launch an end-to-end system by April for predicting thunderstorms and lightning across the country.

Prediction tools for this purpose are being developed by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and India Meteorological Department (IMD) in the backdrop of last year's pre-monsoon episodes of thunderstorms and very high wind speed-led dust storms that claimed over 200 lives in different north Indian states.

Union minister of earth

sciences Harsh Vardhan said IITM had already installed 48 lightning sensors across the country which could locate thunderstorm/lightning activities on real time.

Besides, IITM, with the help of IMD and Mumbai Municipal Corporation, is installing a new dense rain-gauge network over Mumbai with 200 instruments. "This facility will help the city administration and general public know the prevailing rainfall situation in the city on real time basis. A mobile application for this purpose has already been developed," said Vardhan.

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