

short stories

MHA TO HAVE A SATELLITE OF ITS OWN

NEW DELHI: The Union home ministry (MHA), responsible for guarding borders along Bangladesh, Myanmar and parts of Pakistan will have a satellite of its own for better domain awareness and border guarding, an MHA statement said. The satellite will be made and launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). "This project will strengthen island and border security and facilitate the development of infrastructure in border/ island areas," the MHA statement said. Putting up a satellite and using space technology to improve border management was part of recommendations by a task-force. The recommendations have been accepted by home minister Rajnath Singh. "Some of the key recommendations included building capacity in border guarding forces, using space resources for security, operation, planning and border infrastructure development," the home ministry statement said. "The satellite is being launched by the ISRO for the exclusive use of the MHA," it added.

Two time CPI(M) legislator joins Trinamool Congress

BERHAMPORE: Two-time MLA from Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI(M), Abdur Razzak Mandal, joined the Trinamool Congress on Thursday. Mandal (60), a school teacher, was elected twice in Jalangi assembly constituency in Murshidabad district in 2011 and 2016 on a CPI(M) ticket. He became the 40th MLA to switch to Mamata Banerjee's party from opposition outfits since she came in power in May 2011. "Razzak saheb expressed his desire to attend Mamata Banerjee's rally in Kolkata on January 19. With consent from Mamata we have inducted him in Trinamool Congress," said state transport minister Subhendu Adhikari.

2 cops injured in attack at Srinagar's Zero Bridge

SRINAGAR: At least two traffic personnel were injured Thursday in a grenade attack by militants on a security picket at Zero Bridge in the city, police said. "Militants hurled a grenade at a security forces' picket near Zero Bridge on Rajbagh side. At least two cops were hurt...", a police official said. He said security forces have cordoned off the area and launched a hunt for the attackers. The attack took place less than 100 metres from National Conference headquarters and the local office of the All India Radio.

Lies being spread over Citizenship Bill: Ram Madhav

GUWAHATI: The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national general

secretary Ram Madhav on Thursday said "lies and misinformation are being spread" over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, which seeks to grant Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Madhav said: "There are some who have genuine concerns and we respect those concerns. But there is also a section that wants to create trouble and disturb peace in Assam and other states for political gains."

Rival Cong factions clash as new Himachal unit chief joins

SHIMLA: Supporters of two Congress factions exchanged blows and flung chairs at each other in a brawl at the Himachal Pradesh Congress headquarters shortly after a new state unit president assumed charge. The clash allegedly took place between supporters of former chief minister Virbhadra Singh and outgoing state unit president Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu. Eyewitnesses said at least two Congress workers were hurt in the fight.

Two NPP MLAs join Cong in Arunachal Pradesh

ITANAGAR: Two National People's Party (NPP) legislators in Arunachal Pradesh Thursday quit the party and joined the Congress. At an event here, the two NPP legislators - Tapang Taloh and Rajesh Tachoj joined the Congress and expressed their faith in leadership of Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and PCC chief Takam Sanjoy. Congress has only three MLAs in Arunachal assembly.

IS MODULE CASE

NIA conducts more raids in UP, Punjab

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NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency on Thursday conducted searches at seven places in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab in connection with its ongoing probe into the Islamic State (IS)-inspired module - Harkat-ul-Harb-e-Islam, officials said.

On December 28, the NIA announced that it had busted an IS-inspired module consisting of members from Delhi and western Uttar Pradesh. The agency has arrested about a dozen accused in connection with the case. Officials said the module was allegedly headed by a preacher working at a mosque in Amroha, Uttar Pradesh. "Searches (on Thursday) were conducted at Rampur, Bulandshahr, Meerut, Hapur, Amroha in Uttar Pradesh and Ludhiana in Punjab," said an agency spokesperson.

NIA officials also rounded up 50-year-old Mohammad Habib, a resident of Kaloli village in Bulandshahr district. The general store owner had spent over 25 years in Saudi Arabia and can be brought to NIA office in Delhi for questioning, an official said.

The fresh searches come five days after the probe agency arrested a suspect named Muhammad Absar from Hapur district for having alleged links to the global outfit. Earlier, on January 4, Naem, the alleged arms supplier of the Harkat-ul-Harb-e-Islam, was arrested from Meerut.

TAX RAIDS ON KEY UP HOSPITALS

LUCKNOW/MEERUT: The Income Tax department carried out simultaneous searches on several prominent hospitals and doctors across Uttar Pradesh early on Thursday following a tip off that they were evading taxes, officials said. "Unaccounted tax receipts and tampering/fudging of record books and accounts are some of the things we are investigating," an official said. Dr Mahesh Chandra Sharma of SPM Hospital & Trauma Centre in Kanpur, Lucknow's SIPS Hospital, Dr Ratan Kumar Singh of Charak Hospital, Lucknow, and Dr Prem Kumar Khanna of JPMC Hospital and Path Lab in Moradabad are among those raided, said an official. **HTC**

Arrests in connection with the case began on December 26, when 10 members, including an alleged mastermind Mufti Mohammad Suhail of the new IS module, were arrested from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh during raids at 17 places. (With agency inputs)

History postgrad plotted Raj idol theft: Cops

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JAIPUR: A 35-year-old man with a master's degree in history has been arrested along with eight others within 10 days of carrying out an alleged theft of three 12th century idols from a temple in Rajasthan's Sirohi district he had planned for over four years. Praveen Rajpurohit and his gang were arrested Tuesday after carrying out the theft on January 5, according to police investigators. He had allegedly been plotting the theft since 2015 with the help of his 25-year-old friend Vikram Rajpurohit after learning that the idols were worth about ₹1 crore in the international market. "Both of them worked at a local cement factor in Pindwara," said Sumer Singh, in charge of Pindwara police station, under whose jurisdiction



Praveen Rajpurohit (extreme left), along with eight others, was arrested on Tuesday.

HT PHOTO

and Sanwlaji were stolen. The recovered idols, which are made of sapphire or Neelam, were stolen along with ornaments. Singh said Vikram Rajpurohit introduced Praveen Rajpurohit to Suresh Rawal, 36, in 2015 to carry out the theft. He added Rawal has been arrested earlier

TMC says Oppn rally to be Bengal's biggest since '77

JAN 19 EVENT 20 LCD screens to be installed on rally ground, over a million likely to attend

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KOLKATA: With the coming Lok Sabha polls in mind, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) will hold a "show of Opposition unity" in Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground on January 19, party leaders said on Thursday, claiming that it will be the biggest rally in "post-Independence Bengal".

"It will be a historic rally. Leaders of almost every opposition party will be present," West Bengal chief minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee said, after reviewing preparations for the event. "Regional parties will be a deciding factor in the LS polls... Opposition rally in Kolkata will sound the death knell for the BJP which will not get more than 125 seats in LS elections," she claimed.

Samajwadi Party (SP) national president Akhilesh Yadav, Bahunjan Samaj Party's S C Mishra, Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu, Congress's Lok Sabha leader Mallikarjun Kharge and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) chief M K Stalin are among the leaders who confirmed their participation.

Akhilesh, who has skipped all meetings in the past aimed at forging Opposition unity against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, would participate in the rally, SP



West Bengal CM said the rally will be a 'historic' one. 'Leaders of almost every opposition party will be present,' she said.

HT FILE

spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary confirmed.

Apart from them, National Conference leaders Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah, Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar, Karnataka chief minister and Janata Dal (Secular) leader H D Kumaraswamy, Tejashwi Yadav of the Rashtriya Janata Dal and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal have also confirmed their participation, TMC leaders said.

Former Union ministers Arun Shourie, Yashwant Sinha and Shatrughan Sinha—all of whom had served in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's cabinet, but have been bitterly opposed to the Narendra Modi regime—and former Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Gegong Apang, who quit BJP ear-

lier this week, will also attend the rally, TMC leaders said.

However, Left parties, including the Communist Party of India (Marxist), that are bitterly opposed to TMC will not attend the event. They have called a separate rally on the same grounds on February 3. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to address a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rally at Parade Ground on February 8.

Trinamool supporters have started arriving in Kolkata from Wednesday night, three days ahead of the rally. There will be 20 giant LCD screens on the rally ground. Bengal food minister Jyoti Priya Mallick said more than a million people are expected to attend the rally, claiming that it will be bigger

LIKELY ATTENDEES

- SP chief Akhilesh Yadav
- BSP leader SC Mishra
- Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu
- Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge
- DMK chief MK Stalin
- NC leaders Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah
- NCP chief Sharad Pawar
- Karnataka chief minister HD Kumaraswamy
- RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav
- Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal
- Former Union ministers Arun Shourie, Yashwant Sinha and Shatrughan Sinha
- Former Arunachal Pradesh CM Gegong Apang

than the 1977 one on the same ground that was attended by the likes of Jyoti Basu and Jayaprakash Narayan.

Political analysts are sceptical. "The biggest rally in Kolkata was the 1955 meeting at Brigade Ground where Jawaharlal Nehru felicitated Soviet leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin. It was massive, spontaneous and unsurpassable," said Amal Mukhopadhyay, political analyst and former principal of Presidency College.

must read

CONG'S 2017-18 INCOME LOWEST IN 11 YEARS

NEW DELHI: The Congress party has declared ₹199 crore of income for 2017-18, a 12% decline from the previous year and its lowest in 11 years, according to the annual audit report filed by the party with the Election Commission of India (ECI) and data compiled by election watchdog Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The ECI made the audit report public on Thursday. ADR data is available on its website. The Congress party's income for the year is a fifth of the ₹1,027 crore declared by its key opponent, the ruling BJP. The Congress party earned more income than the BJP every year between 2001-02 and 2012-13.

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face to face

SISTER ANUPMA, Missionaries of Jesus nun

'They want to split us and isolate the victim'

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Five nuns of the Missionaries of Jesus congregation fell from the grace of their superiors after they supported one of their fellow nuns when she levelled rape charges against former bishop of Jalandhar Franco Mulakkal. The nuns have since been hounded, asked to vacate their convent in Kuravilangad (Kottayam) and proceed to their previous vocations by their mother superior.

Talking to HT, the leader of the five nuns, Sister Anupma Kelamangalathuvillyil, said this, too, is part of an effort at silencing them:

You said the latest move to transfer you is aimed at weakening the case? No doubt about it. They want to split us and isolate the victim so as to weaken the case. It is a fight to finish and we will never leave our fellow sister alone. Ever since we raised our fingers, there were attempts to defrock us and expel us. Even in Kerala, there were many attempts on us. I used to drive a two-wheeler and its brake wires were cut twice. If we go to faraway places in Bihar or Punjab it is easy for them to liquidate us. Even in Kerala, our congregation never stood with us so we can imagine our plight in faraway places. Come what may we will not



A joint rescue operation involving nearly 200 NDRF personnel, the Navy as well as state agencies, has been on at a "rat-hole" mine at Khloo Rynghsan in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills since Dec 13.

Body spotted in Meghalaya mine, retrieval hard

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GUWAHATI: The Indian Navy's underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV) Wednesday evening spotted a body during the search for 15 workers trapped in an illegal coal mine in Meghalaya since December 13, according to officials involved in the rescue operation. However, there is no clarity as to how long it will take to retrieve the body, which could be in a decomposed state, the officials said.

A joint rescue operation involving nearly 200 personnel from the National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF), Indian Navy as well as state agencies, has been on at a "rat-hole" mine at Khloo Rynghsan in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district for the past one month. The rat-hole mining involves digging of small holes into the ground to extract coal.

Illegal mining is rife in the district and a National Green Tribunal ban on such activities has been in place for four years.

"Yes, the Navy-operated ROV has found a dead body," S S Syiemlieh, additional deputy commissioner, East Jaintia Hills said on Thursday. The Navy also confirmed the development on Twitter: "The depth is 160 feet (and not 60 feet) and the body has been pulled up to the mouth of rat-hole mine and shall be extracted out of the mine under the supervision of doctors."

According to East Jaintia Hills district administration officials, deputy commissioner FM Dophth has invited five families of trapped miners to watch the footage captured by the ROV. The officials said the body could be in a decomposed state and efforts to retrieve it could lead to disintegration of the body parts.

Relatives will give their opinion on Friday whether they

want the body to be pulled out, the officials said.

Meghalaya deputy chief minister Prestone Tynsong, said, "Operation is on and we have not given up yet."

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, an NDRF official involved in the operation said that the body—the dead miner is seen wearing a "red T-shirt and a torn blue jeans" in the footage—was spotted around 6.30 pm on Wednesday.

The official also said the body is stuck in a rat-hole into which Navy's ROV cannot enter. A Chennai-based company, which arrived at the spot a few days ago, is operating smaller ROVs in the main shaft, the official added.

The official said the agencies including the NDRF and the Navy were desperately looking for information on the rat-holes at the bottom of the main pit, which was flooded when water from the nearby Lytein river gushed into it while workers were digging it to extract coal. "We requested district administration to get in touch with Sayeb Ali, one of the survivors," the official said.

Ali, a resident of Chirang district in neighbouring Assam, had claimed on December 18, that he along with three others managed to get out of the mine on December 13 itself.

The NDRF official said he got in touch with Ali and three others survivors to extract information inside the mine. "It was on the basis of their inputs that this body was spotted in a rat-hole," the official said, adding that they are now hopeful of detecting others as ROVs would now search beyond the depth of 210 ft where the body was first spotted.

The Supreme Court last week pulled up the Meghalaya government for its inaction against illegal miners while saying that rescue efforts must continue.



Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh

Dera chief gets life imprisonment for journalist's murder

Yuvraj Kaushal and Surender Sharma

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PANCHKULA: A special CBI court on Thursday awarded life sentence to Dera Sacha Sauda head Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh and three others for the murder of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati in 2002.

The 51-year-old self-styled godman, along with three others—Nirmal Singh, Kuldeep Singh and Krishan Lal, appeared before the court through video conferencing. Singh appeared from Rohtak's Sunaria jail, where he is currently serving a 20-year-sentence in a rape case. The three others appeared from Central Jail in Ambala. The jail term for the Dera head would start once his 20-year sentence is completed.

Chhatrapati was shot at a point-blank range at his Sirda home on October 24, 2002, months after his newspaper "Poora Sach" published an anonymous letter, alleging that women disciples were being sexually harassed and raped by Singh in the Dera headquarters at Sirda. Three weeks later, Chhatrapati succumbed to his injuries.

Anshul Chhatrapati, son of deceased journalist said that the family was satisfied with the judgment. "This is the triumph of truth over falsehood," he said.