



NEARBY



Mayawati rebuffs Congress on seat offer

LUCKNOW
In a rebuke to the Congress after it declared it would not field candidates on seven seats for key leaders of the SP-BSP-RLD alliance in U.P., BSP chief Mayawati on Monday asked the grand-old party to refrain from creating misconceptions. She said the SP-BSP-RLD combine was "fully capable" of defeating the BJP in U.P. and did not need the Congress creating any "misconceptions," a sentiment echoed by her alliance partner SP chief Akhilesh Yadav.

NEWS PAGE 10

5 U.P. cops held guilty of torturing man to death

NEW DELHI
A Delhi court has held five Uttar Pradesh police personnel and a property dealer guilty of torturing a broker's friend to death at Noida's Sector 20 police station in 2006. The accused police personnel, in connivance with the property dealer, had arrested the victim at his house on the charge of robbery on a complaint. The police had lodged a case in the matter on a complaint by the victim's father.

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Pramod Sawant to succeed Parrikar as Goa Chief Minister

BJP overcomes initial hiccups after hectic parleys with regional allies

PRAKASH KAMAT PANAJI

Following a frenetic day of political wrangling and uncertainty, BJP leader Pramod Sawant (45) was picked to be the next Chief Minister of Goa on Monday. At the time of going to press, Mr. Sawant said he was heading to the Raj Bhavan for the swearing-in. Union Minister for Road Transport and Shipping Nitin Gadkari along with BJP leaders and their allies met Governor Mridula Sinha and staked claim to form the government.

Mr. Sawant, who is now Assembly Speaker, will succeed Mr. Parrikar, who was cremated with full state honours in the presence of a galaxy of Union Ministers and thousands of his supporters.

The hopes of the Congress, which had said it would stake claim to form the government late on Sunday night, dissipated as the BJP and its two regional allies held hectic parleys through the day, and settled on Mr. Sawant's name after a prolonged deadlock.

The negotiations, headed by Union Minister for Road Transport and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari, with the Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) and the Goa Forward Party (GFP), appeared to have initially hit a wall, and a swearing-in programme for the new CM at 3 pm, as promised by the BJP earlier in the day, was missed.

Late in the night, the second attempt at swearing in a BJP CM was also postponed, after Deputy Speaker Michael Lobo informed that



Final journey: Hundreds of people accompanying the funeral procession of former Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar in Panaji on Monday. ■ ATISH POMBURFEKAR

the scheduled ceremony would not take place. Mr. Lobo did not clarify whether it had been called off or postponed. "There are many things which are to be discussed among the allies and BJP leaders," the BJP MLA from Calangute told the media at a city resort, explaining why the swearing-in did not come off as planned.

BJP president Amit Shah, who attended the late CM's cremation, met the allies at a city hotel.

A former Minister from among the two allies told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity that the BJP pushed for Mr. Sawant as its Chief Ministerial candidate but the allies took time to en-

dorse the name. The Congress has 14 MLAs in the 36-member House, while the BJP has 12.

Horse-trading: Congress Congress Leader of Opposition Chandrakant Kavlekar and State Congress chief Girish Chodankar too went to the Raj Bhavan to stake a claim to form the government. They were, however, not granted an appointment by the Governor's office.

The party later accused the Governor of "allowing the BJP to carry on horse-trading" and ignoring its repeated requests to allow it to form the government, being the single largest party.

Meanwhile, the final rites of the four-time

Goa Chief Minister and former Defence Minister were performed at Miramar near here with full military and state honours in the evening. A 21-gun salute was given to the BJP stalwart.

Mr. Parrikar's elder son Utpal lit the pyre, as thousands bid a final adieu to the leader, affectionately referred to as 'Bhai' across Goa.

The final journey of Mr. Parrikar began from Kala Academy in the city with thousands joining the cortege. Earlier in the day when the body wrapped in tricolour was brought from his private residence in Dona Paula to the Panaji BJP headquarters, hundreds of party workers, leaders and supporters of Mr. Parrikar became emotional.

TRIBUTES PAID PAGE 10

Anil avoids jail as RCom pays up ₹460 crore

PIYUSH PANDEY MUMBAI

Anil Ambani, chairman of the debt-ridden Reliance Group, on Monday avoided a three-month prison term as Reliance Communications (RCom) paid ₹460 crore to the Swedish telecom equipment maker Ericsson, a day ahead of the March 19 deadline set by the Supreme Court.

Failure to pay the amount would have meant a jail term for Mr. Ambani.

Acknowledging the payment, an Ericsson official said, "We have received ₹458 crore net of tax by RCom today. Earlier, they had paid ₹118 crore."

FULL REPORT PAGE 13

Encounters in U.P. were not fake: Yogi

Chief Minister backs police action

VARGHESE K GEORGE LUCKNOW

The police respond with force if criminals attack them or innocent people, but no encounter in Uttar Pradesh on his watch was staged, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said. "The police open fire where they are fired at....It is the rule of law," he said in an exclusive interview *The Hindu*.

Around 80 people have been killed in police encounters since he took over two years ago on March 19.

The Chief Minister said he considered all people equal and his vision for governance was inspired by his faith. He reiterated the



Yogi Adityanath

point when asked if he was trying to effect an image makeover – from being an exclusive Hindu leader to a champion of development. "A Hindu is interested in the welfare of all, not merely humans, but all living beings," he said.

INTERVIEW OPED PAGE

Gunman kills 3 on Dutch tram; terror motive being probed

Turkish-born suspect held after massive manhunt

ASSOCIATED PRESS UTRECHT

A gunman killed three people and wounded nine on a streetcar in the Dutch city of Utrecht on Monday morning in what the Mayor said appeared to be a terror attack.

The Dutch police later arrested the Turkish-born suspect Gokmen Tanis, 37 after a massive manhunt.

The head of the Dutch national counter-terrorism service, Pieter-Jaap Aalbersberg, confirmed "the arrest of the main suspect."

He said authorities had lowered the threat level in Utrecht from the maximum



Police personnel inspecting the tram at Utrecht in the Netherlands where the shooting took place on Monday. ■ AFP

level five as a result of the arrest. The incident came three days after 50 people were killed by a white supremacist at two mosques in New Zealand.

"We assume a terror motive," Utrecht Mayor Jan van Zanen said.

'SUSPECT HAS A HISTORY OF RUN-INS WITH POLICE' PAGE 12

Testing the waters



Boat campaign: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra greeting supporters at the start of her three-day boat trip to Varanasi on the Ganga as part of the Lok Sabha election campaign, near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh on Monday. ■ AFP (REPORT ON PAGE 10)

Two killed in violence at Odisha's Vedanta refinery

Locals seeking jobs clashed with security personnel; prohibitory orders clamped

STAFF REPORTER BHUBANESWAR

An agitation by locals seeking jobs in the Vedanta Alumina Refinery at Lanjigarh in Odisha's Kalahandi district took a violent turn on Monday with clashes between security forces and protesters resulting in two deaths.

Residents of Rengapalli village staged a demonstration in front of the main gate

of the refinery in the morning seeking jobs in the industrial project and an opportunity to admit their children to the English-medium school being run by the company.

Scuffle breaks out

When Odisha Industrial Security Force personnel, deployed on the company premises to maintain law and

order, asked the protesters to disperse, an argument ensued and a scuffle broke out.

The situation soon spiralled out of control. While the agitating villagers and other workers tried to enter the premises, security personnel resorted to lathi charge in an attempt to chase them away.

Two persons died and 20 suffered serious injuries in

the clashes.

The deceased have been identified as 45-year-old Dani Batra and an OISF Sub-Inspector, Sujit Kumar Minz, who was attacked by the protesters. The injured have been shifted to hospitals in Lanjigarh and Biswanathpur.

Following the clashes, the authorities clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC in Lanjigarh.

UAE helped defuse India-Pak tensions: envoy

'Crown Prince spoke to Prime Minister Modi and Pakistani PM Imran Khan'

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE NEW DELHI

In an announcement that goes against India's steady official narrative, the envoy of the United Arab Emirates declared on Monday that his country has played a major role in de-escalating tension between India and Pakistan after the Pulwama terror attack and Balakot strike.

Speaking at an event at IIT Delhi, UAE ambassador Dr Ahmed Al Banna said, "We have played an important role in reducing tension be-



Ahmed Al Banna

between India and Pakistan. On the day of the huge escalation, our Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed Bin

Zayed had a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Modi and the Pakistani PM Imran Khan. Our role was to sort out differences between two sides in a peaceful manner through negotiations."

The envoy's declaration regarding the Crown Prince's conversations with PM Modi is at variance with India's statements on the issue.

An official statement issued on March 11 had no mention of the UAE's role to help with the de-escalation

process.

However, Mohammed Bin Zayed had himself stated in a social media message on March 1 about his conversation with the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan about the "recent events".

The envoy pointed out that the role of UAE was not in the nature of mediation but more in the nature of reducing an emergent crisis that grew out of "escalation of tension" following the Pulwama terror attack and India's Balakot strike.

AAP to lodge complaint against Prime Minister Modi with Lokpal

Questions decision to appoint Lokpal after poll announcement

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

With former Supreme Court judge Pinaki Chandra Ghose set to become the country's first Lokpal, the Aam Aadmi Party on Monday said it would file complaints of corruption against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Rafale fighter jet deal and the 'Sahara-Birla diaries scam' with the ombudsman.

Addressing a press conference, AAP leader Gopal Rai questioned the Modi government's decision to appoint a Lokpal after the announcement of the general election, asking what was it doing in the past five years.

While criticising the delay and timing of the decision, Mr. Rai welcomed the appointment of Justice Ghose, saying that AAP would lodge complaints against Mr. Modi in connection with the "Rafale scam and the Sahara-Birla diaries bribery scam". The diaries refer to documents recovered during the Income Tax Department's raids on Sahara and Birla businesses in 2013 and 2014 that allegedly contained details of bribes paid to politicians.

"It is no hidden fact that first the Congress-led UPA government and then its successor, the BJP-led NDA go-

vernment at the Centre, both resisted the appointment of a Lokpal to prevent investigations into corruption by those occupying high offices," an AAP statement read.

The party noted that there were "many lacunae in the present law and the entire appointment process has been shrouded in secrecy", which, it said, it would bring to the public domain soon.

Meanwhile, the BJP said its legislative wing would raise the issue of non-declaration of assets and liabilities by AAP MLAs with the ombudsman.

Grand alliance in a fix as RJD, Cong. talks fail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

A good 24 hours after the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), which is helming the Opposition alliance in Bihar, offered a reduced number of seats to the Congress, the grand old party is yet to respond. According to top sources, there has been a virtual breakdown of communication between the major two parties.

The RJD had first offered 11 seats to the Congress, but after complaints from other allies, the party asked the Congress to concede two more seats in favour of its regional partners.

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