

IN BRIEF



**Petition filed against Chandrababu Naidu**  
MUZZAFFARPUR  
A petition was filed before a court here on Saturday against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for calling Janata Dal (United) vice-president Prashant Kishor a "Bihari dacoit". The petitioner said the remark smacked of "regional bias". PTI

**IAF airlifts 187 stranded passengers in J&K**

JAMMU  
The IAF on Saturday airlifted 187 stranded passengers in separate sorties between Kargil-Srinagar and Kargil-Jammu, an official said. PTI

**Man dies in clash over temple-gurdwara land**

KAITHAL  
A 50-year-old man died and 15 people were injured in a clash over the demarcation of a plot of land between a temple and a gurdwara in Haryana's Kaithal district, the police said on Saturday. The clash broke out between two groups in the Guhla area of Badsui village on Friday. PTI

**Jet grounds seven more planes as crisis deepens**

Only 42 of its 119 aircraft in operation

ADITYA ANAND  
MUMBAI

Jet Airways grounded seven more aircraft on Saturday amid deepening crisis over non-payment of lease rentals.

This takes the total number of planes grounded to 77. The airline now has only 42 of its fleet of 119 aircraft in operation. "65% of the Jet Airways fleet is grounded as of Saturday," aviation analyst Ameya Joshi said.

In a statement, an airline spokesperson said: "Jet Airways is currently operating a curtailed schedule, having made certain proactive adjustments, bearing in mind the likely, yet interim non-availability of some aircraft in its fleet in the near future."

**'Low margins'**

Meanwhile, Air India Chairman and Managing Director Ashwani Lohani said he would hate to see Jet Airways going under.

Mr. Lohani said in a social media post that competitive businesses could never be sustainable with margins as



The airline has so far grounded 77 aircraft.

low as in India's airline industry. Twenty years ago, the average price of a Mumbai-Delhi air ticket was the same as it is today, while the cost went up substantially, he said. "The fragility of the aviation business, especially the airline sector, has to be viewed in this backdrop. Competitive businesses can never be sustainable with margins as low as in the airline industry in India," he said.

"A singular strand of negativity, and the businesses come crashing down as we have been witnessing regularly in the last more than two decades."

"The sector needs to help itself proactively," he said.

**Vice Admiral Karambir Singh is next Navy chief**

He will supersede senior-most officer Bimal Verma

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday appointed Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the next Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS). With the announcement, the government has for the second time overlooked the seniority principle in service chief appointments.

Vice Admiral Singh will take over as the 24th Navy chief from incumbent CNS Admiral Sunil Lanba, who is set to retire on May 31 on completing three years in office. He is currently the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of Eastern Naval Command headquartered at Visakhapatnam.

**39-year service**

"Vice Admiral Singh is the senior-most naval aviator. He will be the first helicopter pilot of the Navy to become CNS," a Navy officer said.

In a service spanning nearly 39 years, he has served in a variety of com-



Vice Admiral Singh will take over as the 24th Navy chief from incumbent CNS Admiral Sunil Lanba.

mand, staff and instructional appointments. "Commissioned into the Indian Navy in July 1980, Vice Admiral Singh earned his wings as a helicopter pilot in 1982 and has flown extensively on the Chetak and Kamov helicopters in support of fleet operations," the Navy said in a statement.

Vice Admiral Bimal Verma would be the senior-most officer in the Navy once Admiral Lanba retires. But Vice Admiral Singh will now supersede him.

Vice Admiral Verma – the

younger brother of former Navy chief Admiral Nirmal Verma – is the chief of the Andaman and Nicobar-based tri-service command. His name figured in the investigation into the infamous naval war room leak case as he was the principal director of naval operations at that time. His name was later cleared and he went on to get higher appointments.

The government had earlier overlooked a senior officer in the appointment of General Bipin Rawat as the Chief of Army Staff in 2016.

**Govt. to seize properties of terror financiers**

13 persons identified by NIA, ED: MHA

VIJAITA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said it has initiated the process to seize properties belonging to terror financiers.

So far 13 persons and their properties have been identified by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED), a senior official said. Ongoing investigations over the past two years have determined and quantified assets valued at more than ₹7 crore as proceeds of terror-funding crimes, the official said.

**Used by separatists**

The official said funds obtained through these channels were being used by major secessionist outfits, particularly the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC).

"These funds are used for maintaining top APHC leadership and also the massive propaganda machinery being used to arouse disaffection among the people of J&K against the Government

of India. It is also being utilised to sustain the spreading of false information through media contacts, newspapers and social media," the official said.

The official said Zahoor Watali, a Kashmiri businessman arrested in 2017 by the NIA, was the main conduit for channelling terror finances in India. A plush bungalow owned by Watali in Gurugram was attached by the ED earlier this month. The official said the property was purchased using funds provided by Pakistan's ISI and the Lashkar-e-Taiba's (LeT) Hafiz Saeed.

"Documents seized by the ED clearly indicate that he has been receiving money from Hafiz Saeed, Syed Salahuddin, ISI and the Pakistan High Commission at New Delhi directly," he said.

"Apart from Watali, another 10 top leaders have also been brought into the dragnet of terror funding and multi-agency surgical strikes on terror funding have been launched against them in a concerted manner," the official said.

**Elections uphold values of democracy: Hamid Ansari**

Experts laud role of Election Commission, EVMs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Vice-President Hamid Ansari on Saturday expressed concern over the "inefficient" functioning of institutions like Parliament when it came to holding the rulers of the day accountable.

Speaking at the launch of former Chief Election Commissioner Navin Chawla's book *Every Vote Counts-The Story of India's Elections*, Mr. Ansari said: "Democracy is all about certain values and institutions. Values are easily put across, that in periodical intervals the electorate elects the rulers. Over the decades we have polished that system and made it truly commendable."

However, he said, the institutions – the elected bo-



Former Vice-President Hamid Ansari presenting a copy of Navin Chawla's book to CEC Sunil Arora on Saturday. N. Ram, Chairman, The Hindu Group of Publications, looks on. \*R.V. MOORTHY

dies from which the actual rulers of the day emerged – were functioning "very inefficiently".

The book launch followed a conversation between Mr. Chawla and N. Ram, Chairman of The Hindu Group of Publications.

Mr. Ram said the Election Commission had over the years adopted technology

and innovation, particularly the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM).

On EVMs, Mr. Chawla said though controversy was sought to be created by losing candidates or parties periodically, he was convinced they could not be tampered with. He said all High Courts and the Supreme Court had upheld its use.

**Attach Mallya's properties, orders court**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has ordered attachment of liquor baron Vijay Mallya's properties in Bengaluru in a case relating to FERA violations.

Chief metropolitan magistrate Deepak Sherawat issued fresh directions after the Bengaluru police, through Enforcement Directorate's special public prosecutor N.K. Matta and advocate Samvedna Verma, sought more time to execute its earlier order in this regard.

The court directed the State police to attach the properties by July 10, the next date of hearing.

The Bengaluru police had earlier informed the court that it had identified 159 properties belonging to Mr. Mallya, but had not been able to attach any of them.

**'Purification' ritual sparks row in Goa**

4 priests allegedly conducted the ceremony at site where Parrikar's body was kept

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PANAJI

Goa's Art and Culture Minister Govind Gaude ordered a probe on Saturday after posts on social media claimed that four Hindu priests performed a *shuddhikaran* (purification) ceremony at the government-run Kala Academy, where late Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar's mortal remains were placed for the public to pay their last respects.



Manohar Parrikar

activities. "I have taken a strong note of some activities carried out in the Kala Academy premises as rituals today... We cannot promote or patronise unscientific activities inside government buildings," Mr. Gaude said in his post on Saturday.

**'Om mantra chanted'**

The Member Secretary, Goa Kala Academy, Gurudas Pilernekar, said the priests had apparently been called by a

staffer. "The Minister has already ordered a probe, but prima facie it appears that the rites the pandits performed were not a purification ceremony, but chanting of the Om mantra," Mr. Pilernekar said. He, however, could not explain why the chanting of the mantra was conducted.

Parrikar, 63, died on March 17 after a prolonged battle with advanced pancreatic cancer.

**SC asks High Courts to act on police vacancies**

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has asked High Courts across the country to take suo motu cognisance of large number of vacancies in State police forces and monitor the situation.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi recently observed in an order that "one of the central issues" canvassed in a PIL was the "large number" of vacancies in different posts in the police forces across States.

The apex court said the High Courts, rather than the Supreme Court, would be in a better position to effectively monitor the filling up of these vacancies. It said the problem was State-specific. "The issue and problems are State-specific and can be appropriately dealt with by the respective High Courts," the apex court observed.

The PIL was filed by Manish Kumar seeking a series of directions, including the constitution of a Police Commission to deal with allegations of police action, redressal of grievances of police officers and their welfare.

It also wanted the court to direct the Centre to evolve a mechanism to prevent violent mass agitations and destruction of life and property.

**'Used old song of Javed Akhtar'**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Producer Sandip Singh, whose film *PM Narendra Modi* is embroiled in a controversy after Javed Akhtar expressed shock at getting credit for a song in the biopic, said the noted lyricist could have "shared his grievance personally".

"Javed *sahab* is a senior writer... We have grown up listening to his songs. We used one of his old songs 'Ishwar Allah' from 1947. *Earth* and gave him credit."