



Right to Food activist
Jean Dreze detained
in Jharkhand, freed

page 7



NIA had failed to prove
charges framed against
Aseemanand, says court

page 10



Huge fire breaks out
in Dhaka office block,
at least 19 people killed

page 12



Rohit, Hardik and
Bumrah star in
MI's exciting win

page 15

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NEARBY



4 militants killed in Shopian and Handwara

SRINAGAR
Four militants were killed in two separate encounters in Kashmir on Thursday. Three militants, identified as Sajad Khanday, Aqib Ahmad Dar and Basharat Ahmad Mir, were killed in an operation at Yawran village of Keller in Shopian district. In a separate gunfight that erupted at Handwara in Kupwara district, one Jaish-e-Muhammad militant was killed.

NATION ▶ PAGE 7

FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 12 PAGES
(TABLET)
DELHI METRO ▶ 6 PAGES

U.S. circulates draft resolution on Azhar in Security Council

UN panel passes separate resolution on terror financing

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

The U.S. on Thursday took the lead in bringing sanctions against Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar at the United Nations by circulating a draft resolution among Security Council members.

The move comes weeks after the 1267 Sanctions Committee failed to designate Azhar as a terrorist, after China placed a hold on a listing request that the U.S., the U.K., and France had brought before the Committee.

That listing request – the fourth such unsuccessful



Masood Azhar

one in a decade – followed the February 14 suicide attack on a CRPF convoy in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir.

The draft resolution, which *The Hindu* has seen, borrows wording from UNSC press statements.

It condemns “in the strongest terms the heinous and cowardly suicide bombing in Jammu and Kashmir, which

China slams U.S. move

ATUL ANEJA
BEIJING

China on Thursday slammed the U.S. for circulating a draft resolution at the UN Security Council designating Masood Azhar as an international terrorist. “The U.S. has bypassed the 1267 committee and filed the

draft of the resolution to the Security Council. This is not in line with the resolution of the issue through negotiations,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

resulted in over 40 Indian paramilitary forces dead and dozens wounded on 14 February 2019, for which a member of JeM has claimed responsibility.”

‘responsibility of states’

In a related but separate development, the Security Council passed Resolution 2462 on terrorism financing. The resolution stresses

“the primary responsibility of Member States in countering terrorist acts and reiterating their obligation to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts as well as its call upon all States to become party to the international counter-terrorism conventions and protocols as soon as possible.”

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

SC to hear plea against 10% economic quota

Step in before it is too late, court told

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to expeditiously hear pleas for it to step in before government bodies like the Railways, one of the largest public sector employers, implement the 10% economic quota to make what the petitioners termed “massive appointments.”

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, for the petitioners led by NGOs such as Janhit Abhiyan and Youth for Equality, urged a Bench, led by Justice S.A. Bobde, to stay the implementation of the quota before it was too

late to turn the clock back. “Massive appointments will take place... There is indeed a certain degree of concern,” he said.

“The Railways have indicated that it [the 10% quota] will be implemented,” Mr. Dhavan said, adding that the need to address the after-effects was urgent. Agreeing to hear the petitions on April 8, Justice Bobde told Mr. Dhavan: “You address the issue then.”

On March 11, another Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, indicated that the petitions might be sent to a Constitution Bench.

Power point



Feeling the heat: A Kerala State Electricity Board employee winching up a bottle of drinking water while working under the scorching sun in Palakkad on Thursday. Kerala is experiencing a heat wave with temperature soaring above 40 degrees Celsius. *K.K. MUSTAFAH.

PM didn't seek nod for TV address: EC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday said a committee of officers was examining the responses received from Doordarshan and All India Radio (AIR) on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation on Wednesday, announcing India's successful demonstration of anti-satellite missile capability.

The committee, which has held two meetings so far, is likely to finalise its report by Friday evening on whether any content of the Prime Minister's speech violated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). Based on the findings, the EC will take the final decision.

At a press conference, Deputy Election Commissioner Sandeep Saxena said the Prime Minister's Office had neither informed nor sought any permission from the EC for broadcast of his address. After the issue was raised, the EC set up a committee to look into the matter.

Subsequently, the committee wrote to Doordarshan and AIR to know about the source of their feed.

It is learnt that the state broadcasters had taken the feed from a live broadcast made through private Internet video portal YouTube.

On the issue of the biopic on Mr. Modi, the EC said notice had been sent to the four film producers and the BJP seeking their comments by Thursday. The EC has also given conditional approval for the government's decision to review the wages under the MGNREGA from April 1.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10
POWER IN SPACE ▶ EDITORIAL

National security is Modi's pitch in U.P.

Talks of strikes on land, air and space



Making out a case: Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking at a rally in Meerut on Thursday. *R.V. MOORTHY

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Hitting back at Congress president Rahul Gandhi for mocking him with a “happy World Theatre Day” greeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said he didn't know whether to “cry or laugh” at those “intelligent people” who confused ASAT (anti-satellite) with a “set” used in theatre performances.

Mr. Modi punned to target Mr. Gandhi, a day after the Congress leader had in a tweet wished the Prime Minister a “happy World Theatre Day” following his address to the nation announcing a successful Anti-Satellite Missile test.

‘Achievement ignored’

Referring to the test at an election rally in Meerut, Mr. Modi accused Opposition parties of “ignoring” the country's “great achievement in space” and said their reactions raised questions about their intelligence.

“Yesterday, when I spoke of ASAT, they got confused. They thought I was talking of a theatre set,” quipped Mr. Modi, questioning those “who don't have any understanding of [the difference

between] a theatre set and a space anti-satellite ASAT missile.” However, Mr. Modi did not name anybody.

‘Surgical strikes’

While the government had shown the courage to conduct “surgical strikes” on land, air and space, he said, the Opposition was unable to accept that India was now capable of performing “chowkidari in space.”

National security was the dominant theme of Mr. Modi's speech, as he underscored the need for a “strong government” to ensure a “strong country.” The previous government had deferred the space satellite missile test, despite demands by the country's scientists, and weakened the national security apparatus, asserted Mr. Modi.

If the Opposition alliance – he referred to it as “mahamilavat” or adulterated – even got a sniff of power, it would not be long before India receded to its past state, including bomb blasts every other day and protection to terrorists, he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10
PM'S COMMENT UPSETS CONGRESS ▶ PAGE 10
‘WE WILL REMONETISE’ ▶ PAGE 10

Gadkari terms NYAY a gimmick, cites Congress record since '47

Union Minister questions source of funds for scheme

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari described the Congress's promise of a minimum income support for 20% of the poorest of poor as a “gimmick”. He quipped that the Opposition party had probably made the promise, confident that it would not be elected to power and hence called upon to account for the promise.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Gadkari, renominated by the BJP from Nagpur, said the Congress's record in poverty alleviation did not lead to trust in terms of imple-



Nitin Gadkari.

mentation of such programmes. “You just see from 1947, Prime Minister Nehruji assures the country that poverty will be alleviated, then Indiraji with 20 point programme etc, followed by Rajivji with almost the same things. But as far as econom-

ic policies that could address poverty are concerned, the result for Garibi Hatao is zero. There is no credibility with regard to the Congress on this issue,” he said.

“I feel that NYAY is a political gimmick. Where will you get the ₹3,54,000 crore budget for that. That too over and above all the welfare schemes that the NDA government introduced. And by distributing this, where will you get the money to spend on roads, irrigation, schools and other infrastructure...” he said.

INTERVIEW ON ▶ PAGE 7

Punjab & Haryana HC bars stating of caste in proceedings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has instructed Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh not to mention the caste of the accused, victims or witnesses in proceedings before the court.

A Bench of Justices Rajiv Sharma and Kuldeep Singh, while passing a ruling in a murder case where the Haryana police had mentioned the caste of the accused, witnesses and the victim during the proceedings, noted that the caste system was profoundly illogical and was also against the basic tenets of the Constitution.

“...it would be pertinent to mention here that during the course of investigation, the

police have used the caste of the accused, witnesses as well as of the victim. This is not permissible. Mentioning of the caste status separately in the criminal proceedings is a colonial legacy and requires to be stopped forthwith...The Constitution guarantees a casteless and classless society. All are born equal,” observed the court.

The court has directed the Secretaries (Home) of the governments to issue instructions to all investigating officers not to mention the caste of the accused, victims or witnesses in recovery memos, FIRs, seizure memos, inquest papers and other forms prescribed under CrPC and Punjab Police Rules.

Income Tax searches trigger political storm in Karnataka

Over 20 locations searched across the State, unaccounted cash seized

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Searches by Income Tax officials on premises linked to leaders of the Janata Dal (Secular) and their associates across six districts in south Karnataka triggered a political storm on Thursday. The searches, coming just 20 days ahead of the election, were conducted in Bengaluru, Mandya, Mysuru, Hassan, Chikmagalur and Shivamogga.

The ruling coalition – the JD(S) and the Congress – closed ranks and condemned the BJP government

at the Centre for misusing official machinery against the Opposition. Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy later led a protest in front of Income Tax Department offices in Bengaluru.

The action came within hours of Mr. Kumaraswamy predicting a “massive IT search” against JD(S) leaders on Wednesday evening, with I-T sleuths reaching the premises of politically connected businessmen around midnight in Bengaluru.

Soon, the searches expanded, with I-T officials reaching the residences of



Strong opposition: Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy leading a protest in Bengaluru on Thursday. *G.R.N. SOMASHEKAR

Minor Irrigation Minister C.S. Puttaraju at Chinakurali in Mandya district early on Thursday. The raids covered

the premises of Mr. Puttaraju's two nephews.

Others targeted were at least five contractors be-

lieved to be close to Public Works Minister H.D. Revanna, and two senior PWD engineers in Hassan. Sources said searches by officials continued late on Thursday and were likely to be widened. I-T sources said the searches were based on “credible information” that certain contractors had received favours while works were awarded, and the possibility of these funds being used during the election. In all, 20 locations were searched and a couple of crores of unaccounted money was seized.

CM LEADS PROTESTS ▶ PAGE 5
ALLIES CLOSE RANKS ▶ PAGE 5