



CONGRESS IS FREE TO GO TO PAKISTAN AND COUNT BODIES, SAYS RAJNATH SINGH | 21

SRINIDHI ENTERS 'BACKSTAGE' POLITICS FOR HUSBAND KARTI CHIDAMBARAM | 25

## Pak sending team for Kartarpur talks

### Announcement Being Seen As Bid To De-Escalate India-Pakistan Tension

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New Delhi: Despite the prevailing tensions, India and Pakistan will go ahead with the March 14 meeting between officials to finalise the modalities for the opening of the Kartarpur corridor. Significantly, India had last week declared that it was not just in favour of going ahead with the Kartarpur initiative, which is meant to facilitate pilgrimage to Kartarpur Sahib gurdwara in Pakistan...



It is perhaps significant that Pakistan conveyed its decision to send a delegation to India on a day it seemed to be acting finally, even if ostensibly, trying to assuage concerns over terrorism

India in the next few days.

Pakistan conveyed to Ahluwalia that its delegation will visit India "followed by the return visit of the Indian delegation to Islamabad on March 28 to discuss the draft agreement on Kartarpur Corridor". Pakistan had earlier agreed to send its delegation to India on the condition that the next meeting is held in Islamabad.

India had last week said, even before the release of Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, that it was not going to cancel the Kartarpur meeting and accused Pakistan of creating war hysteria by shutting down its airspace. The government has all along maintained that its Balakot air strikes were a "limited, counter-terror" exercise.

"It is Pakistan which created the impression that the two countries were going to war, not us. There was never any effort by India to cancel the meeting on Kartarpur," said a government source.

It is perhaps significant that Pakistan conveyed its decision to send a delegation to India on a day it seemed to be acting finally, even if ostensibly, trying to assuage concerns over terrorism. It detained 44 members of internationally proscribed organisations, including Masood Azhar's brother Rauf Asghar, who is one of the main accused in the Pathankot attack case. Also significant was Pakistan PM Imran Khan's decision to sack a Punjab minister for his derogatory remarks against Hindus.

## Green crackers ready for production, SC informed

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New Delhi: Almost four months after the Supreme Court banned manufacture of polluting firecrackers and allowed bursting of only 'green' crackers, the chemical formulation of these crackers have been finalised and bulk manufacturing could start from May after getting the necessary approvals from Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation by April 30.



Final approvals are expected on April 30. Production can start in May

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, which were entrusted with the task by the court to formulate the chemical composition of green crackers, said trial samples had been developed and tested.

They told a bench of Justices A K Sikri and S Abdul Nazeer, "After the joint work in various fireworks manufacturing factories situated in and around Sivakasi and

after observing materials, analysis/assessment of the manufacturing process and testing performance efficiency, it appears that the above mentioned manufacturing shall reduce the emission of pollutants PM2.5 at least by 25-30% and it will be a win-win situation in the interest of all stakeholders in public interest," it said.

Advocate Gopal Shankaranarayanan, appearing for the petitioners, however, objected to the new composition

and told the court that the Centre had earlier opposed using barium in crackers but the minutes of the meeting said barium nitrate and potassium nitrate would be used in the new formulation. He pleaded the court to seek response from the Centre on the issue. The bench adjourned the hearing to March 12 and asked the Centre to file its response on whether it was agreeable to the proposed chemical composition of green crackers.

## 'Kill Modi' clip leaves Congress red-faced

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A video of former MLA Belur Gopalakrishna taking a jibe — rhetorically — at right wing supporters, to kill PM Narendra Modi instead of celebrating the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, at an event organised by the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee last month, went viral on social media on Tuesday.

After BJP kicked up a storm over the comments made on February 4 at Shivamogga, Gopalakrishna apologised, saying he didn't intend to disrespect the PM's chair.

The Shivamogga rally by Congress was organised to condemn Pooja Pandey, a Hindu Mahasabha member, for posing with a gun aimed at a photo of Mahatma Gandhi.

The video shows Gopalakrishna saying: "I tell those who are celebrating Nathuram Godse, the person who murdered Mahatma Gandhi,

## CPM Maha secy hails Modi, suspended

Communist Party of India (Marxist) Maharashtra secretary Narsayya Aadam has been suspended from the central committee of the party for three months for praising PM Modi and Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnis. Aadam had praised Modi and Fadnis on January 9 at a public rally in Solapur. The CPM committee felt that it had "hurt party's image".

if you are trying to kill the democratic set up of the country then have the guts to first kill PM Narendra Modi."

"My intention was to convey to them that if they were training their guns on Gandhi, then they should first point it at their national leader Modi. I never asked anyone to kill the PM... If I have hurt the post of PM, I apologise," he said.

## Major alleges sex harassment by Brigadier

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Jaipur: A single-judge bench of the Rajasthan high court has issued notice to the defence secretary on a case of sexual harassment filed by a woman Army officer of Major rank. She was allegedly harassed by an officer of Brigadier rank.

The HC has sought replies also from the general officer commanding-in-chief, headquarters, south-western command, chief of staff, headquarters, south-western command and presiding officer/chairperson, internal complaints committee on sexual harassment.

The bench of Justice Ashok Kumar issued the notices following the petition filed by the Major. "The petitioner stated that during her tenure of first posting, the behaviour of a Brigadier was indecent, unwarranted and qualified to be an action oriented towards sexual harassment," Yadav told TOI.

## Set on fire, woman grabs rapist, kills him

Malda: A 35-year-old man was burnt to death in West Bengal's Malda district after a woman he allegedly raped and set on fire, grabbed him while still ablaze, police said.

The woman is now under treatment at the Malda Medical College and Hospital with burn injuries in her face and hands, officials said.

She claimed that the accused used to disturb her and entered her house on Monday evening when no one was there. The woman, a widow, said he then raped her and set her on fire, and she then grabbed him tightly.

Police said locals rushed to her house after noticing smoke and found both of them on fire. A jar of kerosene was also found in the room, officials said.

They took both of them to a local hospital from where they were referred to the Malda Medical College and Hospital. The man suc-

## 21 yrs on, Jhabua nun rape accused held

Twenty one years after four nuns were raped by 26 people in Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh, a 45-year-old absconding accused in the case has been nabbed, police said Tuesday. Kalu Limji was arrested from Aamba village in the district on Monday, a police said. In 1998, the accused raped the nuns at the Priti Sharan Mission at Naupara village in the predominantly tribal district. Of the 26 accused, 24 were arrested immediately after the incident, police said. Nine were awarded life imprisonment, while 13 others were acquitted.

cumbed on Tuesday morning there, police said.

The woman lived at Subhas Colony under Manikchak police station limits. She has three daughters.

## Can estranged couples be forced to cohabit, asks PIL

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New Delhi: Citing the Supreme Court's landmark judgments giving primacy to an individual's privacy and autonomy, two PIL petitioners have challenged a provision of Hindu Marriage Act that empowers courts to force an estranged couple to cohabit and resume marital relations.

Section 9 of the Act allows one of the spouses, living separately, to move court seeking restitution of conjugal rights. If a court of law orders restitution of conjugal rights and an unwilling partner refuses to live with his/her spouse,

then he/she faces confiscation of personal property for dishonouring a court decree.

Appearing for two law students, Ojaswa Pathak and Mayank Gupta, advocate Sanjay Hegde cited constitution bench judgments declaring privacy as a fundamental right in the Aadhaar case, terming autonomy of sexual preference integral to right to privacy while decriminalising Section 377 and making adultery a ground for divorce rather than a criminal offence.

A bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Sanjiv Khanna decided to post the matter before a three-judge bench.

The petitioners said though Section 9 was gender neutral, in practice it was mostly used by men to get decrees from courts to force their wives to resume conjugal relationship. Such coercion through judiciary under Section 9 leads to serious violation of rights of women.

The petitioners said, "Constitution guarantees to every individual the right to be left alone — even within the framework of a family. Any provision which forces an individual to have sexual relations or even cohabit a home without her will violates the right to privacy..."

Full report on www.toi.in

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