



Protests erupt in Valley over minor's rape

SRINAGAR
Violent protests erupted in the Kashmir Valley on Monday over the rape of a three-year-old girl, leaving scores of people, including security personnel, injured. The clashes brought life to a standstill in the Valley.

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EC orders repolling at Faridabad booth

GURUGRAM
The Election Commission on Monday ordered repoll at a booth in Asaoti, Faridabad, a day after a BJP polling agent was arrested on charges of influencing voters.

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Rain brings relief from scorching heat in Delhi

NEW DELHI
Rainfall in parts of the Capital on Monday night brought some relief to Delhiites from the scorching heat even as duststorms hit some areas of the city.

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Missing women force a rethink at Cannes

NAMRATA JOSHI
CANNES

A routine press conference on the eve of the Cannes Film Festival on Monday turned controversial with general delegate of the festival Thierry Fremaux on the defensive over the award of the honorary Palme d'Or to legendary French actor Alain Delon, despite his archaic views on homosexuality and his admission of having slapped women.

"We are not giving the Nobel Peace Prize," said Mr. Fremaux, when questioned about the criticism heaped against Cannes on the issue.

While talking about the "contradictions in history", Mr. Fremaux said the festival was honouring Mr. Delon for his years as an actor. He stressed on the significance of "context", saying that the actor came from a different generation but was being judged with the eyes of the new and young.

He felt that Cannes was criticised more than other organisations when it came to societal and political issues, and there was this expectation by the media that the festival should be "impeccable and perfect".

Only the best
Mr. Fremaux asserted that the selection of films at the festival would not be on the basis of gender.

"The films that are there deserved to be selected; they are not there simply because they have been made by women," said Mr. Fremaux. "We are looking at the end of chain," he said, while, according to him, it is the beginning – the fostering at film schools, training and exposure that need to be widened.

Cannes has traditionally been criticised for its gender



Cannes film festival general delegate Thierry Fremaux at a news conference. • REUTERS

skew. Till last year, there had been 1,600-odd competition titles from men in the entire history of the festival as against just 82 from women. It had made 82 women film professionals stage a silent protest on the red carpet on May 12 last year, perhaps the most memorable image of Cannes 2018. Jane Campion remains the only female director to have won the Palme d'Or for her 1993 film *The Piano*.

This year has seen a marginal improvement with four women directors competing for the Palme D'Or – Mati Diop for *Atlantique*, Jessica Hausner for *Little Joe*, Céline Sciamma for *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* and Justine Triet for *Sibyl* – and 13 in the overall selection.

The Un Certain Regard section has six films directed by seven female directors.

Last year in a '50:50 by 2020' pledge, Cannes took upon itself to record the gender of the cast and crew of all films submitted, to make public the names of selection committee members and work towards gender parity on the board of the festival management and the programming teams.

In a start, the selection committee for the films this year was gender balanced with an equal number of women and men.

Tit-for-tat

China hit back at the U.S. decision last week to raise tariffs on \$200 billion of its goods. It will impose higher tariffs on most U.S. imports, with a \$60 billion target list

The escalation, from rates of 5% and 10%, was announced hours after U.S. President Donald Trump warned China not to retaliate against the latest U.S. tariffs hike

The additional tariff of 25% will be levied on 2,493 goods, including liquefied natural gas, soy oil, peanut oil, petrochemicals, frozen vegetables and cosmetics

A total of 5,140 U.S. products will be subject to additional tariffs of 5%, 10%, 20% and 25%, starting June 1

A tariff of 20% will be levied on 1,078 U.S. products



China's adjustment on additional tariffs is a response to U.S. unilateralism and protectionism — CHINESE FINANCE MINISTRY

"China should not retaliate-will only get worse!" the U.S. President wrote in a series of tweets on trade.

But Beijing appeared to dig in. "China will never surrender to external pressure," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular briefing on Monday.

In addition to tariff hikes, China could use other measures to hit back at the U.S., as it imports fewer U.S. products – which limits its ability to match tariffs dollar-for-dollar.

"China may stop purchasing U.S. agricultural products and energy, reduce Boeing orders and restrict U.S. service trade with Chi-

na," Hu Xijin, Editor of China's state-run *Global Times*, wrote on his verified Twitter account.

"Many Chinese scholars are discussing the possibility of dumping U.S. Treasuries and how to do it specifically."

Both sides have indicated that talks will continue, with Beijing's top trade negotiator Liu He saying on Friday that they would take place in the Chinese capital at an unspecified date. In a previous round of tit-for-tat moves, the U.S. imposed 10% tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese imports in September.

Beijing announced shortly after that it was hitting over 5,000 categories of U.S. pro-

ducts with tariffs of 5% to 10%.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow told U.S. media on Sunday that Mr. Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping could meet next month on the sidelines of the G20 summit to thrash out their differences on trade, although no new talks are scheduled.

"The two Presidents maintain contact through various means," the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said, without confirming a possible meeting between the two leaders.

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Stalin remains unswayed by KCR on ties with Congress

B. KOLAPPAN
CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Monday told Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) that "he [Stalin] would remain a link between him and the Congress party".

When Mr. Rao, who earlier visited the Srirangam temple in Tiruchi, called on Mr. Stalin at his Alwarpet residence in the evening, the

DMK leader made it clear that it would not augur well for the country if the BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi returned to power at the Centre.

While Mr. Rao left without talking to waiting media personnel, sources in the DMK said that the Telangana Chief Minister, who had propounded the idea of a Federal Front, was insistent that regional parties have their

voice heard in the future government.

"Throughout the meeting, Mr. Stalin stuck to his stand on the Congress. Mr. Rao urged him and the DMK to ensure prominence for regional parties, and look at the political situation not just from the point of view of the Congress," the sources added.

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Auto sales plunge 16% across segments to a 10-year low

Demand hit by political uncertainty and liquidity crunch

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The new financial year kicked off on a disappointing note for the Indian automobile industry with sales declining across all four segments. The demand was impacted by a weak consumer sentiment due to factors such as political uncertainty, high insurance costs, liquidity crunch and a rise in commodity prices that forced carmakers to increase vehicle prices.

According to data released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), total sales across all categories fell by nearly 16% to 20.01 lakh units from 23.80 lakh units in April 2018. "In the last 10 years, we have not seen anything like this when all the segments are down. The start of the new financial year has not turned out to be very good for the industry," SIAM deputy director general Sugato Sen said.

8-year low for PVs

Domestic wholesale passenger vehicle (PV) sales dipped 17.07% – the steepest fall in nearly eight years, to 2.47 lakh. Within this category, cars sales declined nearly 20% to 1.60 lakh units, while

Free fall

Domestic wholesale passenger vehicle sales dipped 17.07%, the steepest fall in nearly eight years



Category	April 2018	April 2019	% Decline
Cars	2,00,183	1,60,279	-19.93%
Utility vehicles	79,136	73,854	-6.67%
Vans	19,185	13,408	-30.11%
Passenger vehicles	2,98,504	2,47,541	-17.07%
CVs	73,049	68,680	-5.98%
Two-wheelers	19,58,761	16,38,388	-16.36

Source: SIAM

utility vehicle sales fell 6.67% to 73,854 units and van sales were down 30% to 13,408.

"The sentiment in the market is not very good... It is not only in the auto sector...the FMCG segment is also witnessing a slowdown. Discretionary spends are being held up. Maybe things will improve after the election is over and a stable government is formed. We expect things to get better in the second half," SIAM director general Vishnu Mathur said. He pointed out that the retail sales were better than wholesale during the last month.

Sales of commercial vehicles (CVs), which are usually

seen as an indicator of economic growth, declined almost 6% to 68,680 units. While the medium and heavy commercial vehicle segment fell 13.56% to 24,725 units, sales of light commercial vehicles were down 1.1% to 43,955.

Likewise, two-wheeler sales plunged 16.36% during the month under review to 16.38 lakh units. While scooter sales sank 25.89% to 4.89 lakh units, those of motorcycles and mopeds declined by 11.81% to 10.84 lakh units and 5.88% to 63,725 units respectively. Three-wheeler sales, too, were down by 7.44% to 46,262 units.

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Sweden to seek Assange's extradition

REUTERS
STOCKHOLM

Sweden reopened an investigation into a rape allegation against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on Monday and will seek to extradite him

from Britain, a potential setback to the U.S. efforts to put him on trial over a huge release of secret documents.

Deputy Chief Prosecutor Eva-Marie Persson said she would continue a preliminar-

ary probe that was dropped in 2017 without charges being brought after Mr. Assange took refuge in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.

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