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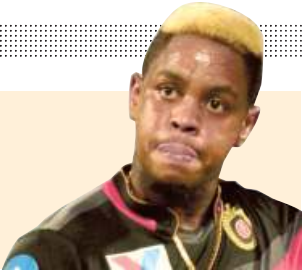


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NEARBY



PM alleges SP-Cong. ties behind BSP's back

NEW DELHI Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared at a rally in U.P.'s Pratapgah on Saturday that Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's remark that her party will play a spoiler for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh seats where the Congress did not have a strong candidate, applied only to Samajwadi Party seats and not to those contested by the Bahujan Samaj Party.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

India will answer bullets with bullets: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI BJP national president Amit Shah on Saturday said that bullets from "across the border" would be answered by "more bullets" from India while reiterating the party's focus on national security. Mr. Shah was canvassing for the party's North and North West Delhi candidates Dr. Harsh Vardhan and Hans Raj Hans at the Japanese Park in Rohini.

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Prakash Raj to campaign for AAP in the Capital

NEW DELHI Actor Prakash Raj on Saturday termed both the Congress and the BJP "jokers" after announcing that he will campaign for the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi for the upcoming Lok Sabha election. He will take out a 'padayatra' in the Capital on Sunday.

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MAGAZINE ▶ 32 PAGES (TABLOID)
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PMO 'monitoring' Rafale deal progress not interference: govt.

Centre's submission follows SC's directive to respond to review petitions

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was "monitoring" the progress of the deal to buy 36 Rafale jets but this could not be taken as "parallel negotiations" with the French side, the government told the Supreme Court on Saturday.

The submission follows the directive on Tuesday last that the government respond to the Rafale deal case review petitions by Saturday. The Centre had sought a whole month to respond.

"The monitoring of the progress by the PMO of this government-to-government process cannot be construed as interference or parallel negotiations," it said.

A series of reports published by *The Hindu* had re-

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This [April 10 judgment agreeing to hear the review petitions] could lead to the revelation of all closely guarded secrets relating to space, nuclear installations, strategic defence capabilities, operational deployment of forces, intelligence resources in the country and outside...

UNION GOVERNMENT IN THE SUPREME COURT

vealed that the PMO was conducting "parallel negotiations". A Defence Ministry note that was published said the "parallel parleys" had "weakened the negotiating position of MoD [the Ministry of Defence] and the Indian Negotiating Team".

But the government denied any reason for objection from the Ministry. It referred to how the then Defence Minister, Manohar Parrikar, himself had noted that "it appears that PMO and French President's office are monitoring the progress

of the issues, which was an outcome of the summit meeting".

The government said these "selective" reports, based on "some incomplete internal file notings, procured unauthorisedly and illegally", did not reflect the final decision of the competent authority. They could not form the basis for a review petition. The two affidavits filed by the MoD said the action of the review petitioners, who include former Union Ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie and senior lawyer Prashant Bhushan, was "tantamount to questioning the sovereign decision concerning national security and defence".

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CONCERN ADDRESSED ▶ PAGE 10

Bombers visited Kashmir, Kerala, Bengaluru: Sri Lankan Army chief

Lt. Gen. Senanayake says visits were for training, networking

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka Army's chief has said some of the suicide bombers who carried out the country's worst terror attack on Easter Sunday last month had visited Kashmir and Kerala for "some sorts of training" or to "make some more links" with other foreign outfits.

It is the first time a top security official has confirmed the militants' visit to India, which had shared intelligence inputs with Sri Lanka ahead of the attacks.

Nine suicide bombers, including a woman, carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and three luxury hotels on April 21, killing 253 people and in-



Mahesh Senanayake

juring over 500.

In an interview to the BBC on Thursday, Lieutenant General Mahesh Senanayake disclosed some details of the movement of the suspects in the region, and also international links. "They have gone to India, they've gone to Kashmir, Bangalore (Bengaluru); they've travelled to

Kerala State. Those are the information available with us," he said.

Asked what activities the attackers undertook in Kashmir and Kerala, the Army chief said: "Not exactly, but definitely in some sorts of training or to make some more links with the other organisations outside the country."

The terror outfit Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks, but the government blamed the local extremist group National Thowheeth Jamaath (NTJ). Colombo has since banned the NTJ and arrested over 100 people for the blasts.

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STUDENTS ARRESTED ▶ PAGE 12

Close shave



Slippery landing: A Boeing 737 skidded off the runway into a river after crash-landing during a storm in Florida on Friday. The plane from Guantanamo Bay in Cuba slammed into shallow water next to a naval air station in Jacksonville. ■ AP (REPORT ON PAGE 12)

Allegations have lowered my reputation: M.J. Akbar

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister M.J. Akbar on Saturday reiterated that the allegations levelled against him by journalist Priya Ramani had lowered his reputation in his family and among friends and colleagues.

"Following the allegations made in a tweet by the accused, I resigned from the Cabinet and moved the court for justice," he said. After he recorded his statement, Mr. Akbar was cross-examined by counsel for the accused in the criminal defamation case filed by him against Ms. Ramani.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 2

CM assaulted during roadshow in West Delhi

Attacker was upset with an AAP MLA

HEMANI BHANDARI
NIKHIL M. BABU
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was physically assaulted during a roadshow in West Delhi's Moti Nagar on Saturday.

The accused, whom the police identified as Suresh, was apparently incensed at a "comment made by an AAP legislator" recently. He was restrained by the other participants at the roadshow and later handed over to the police.

During preliminary interrogation, Suresh told the police that he too was a supporter of the Aam Aadmi Party, said sources.

Remark against PM

His wife, Mamta, told the media that about a week ago, an AAP MLA campaigning in the Kailash Park area had said something against Prime Minister Narendra Modi which upset Suresh. His family said he had attended another public meeting by the Chief Minister recently.

Mr. Kejriwal's roadshow continued even after the attack and passed through Patel Chowk and Karol Bagh among other areas. AAP blamed the BJP for the attack and said that the Prime Minister and BJP president



A video grab of a man slapping Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Amit Shah wanted Mr. Kejriwal "to be killed".

"Do Modi and Amit Shah now want Kejriwal to be killed? In five years, despite putting all your strength, you could not break his [Kejriwal's] morale, you could not defeat him in elections... Now you want to remove him in the manner! This Kejriwal is your end," Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia wrote on Twitter.

BJP leader and Union Minister Vijay Goel also took to Twitter to condemn the incident.

"I strongly condemn the attack on Mr. Kejriwal. But I also believe that it is completely wrong to blame Modi-Shah for everything. Such shifting of blame takes away from the seriousness of an incident like this. We don't understand this brand of politics," Mr. Goel tweeted.

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