



## NEARBY

### Triple talaq Bill to be sent to Parliament again

NEW DELHI  
The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019, paving the way for the legislation to be introduced in the upcoming session of Parliament.

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### Sitharaman, Jaishankar to get JNU's Alumni Award

NEW DELHI  
JNU on Wednesday said it would confer its Distinguished Alumni Award on Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

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# Coimbatore man held for ties with Easter attack mastermind

## NIA probe nets six-member module propagating IS ideology on social media

VIJAYA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday arrested a Facebook friend of Zahran Hashim, the mastermind of the Easter attacks in Sri Lanka, and detained five others in Coimbatore.

NIA alleged that the prime suspect Mohammed Azharudheen, 32, and his associates were "propagating the ideology of proscribed terrorist organisation Islamic State on social media with the intention of recruiting vulnerable youth for carrying out terrorist attacks in South India, especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu."

NIA claimed Azharudheen was highly radicalised and was running a Facebook page called "Khilafah GFX." "We do not know if Azharudheen's acquaintance with Hashim was only limited

## Cross-country links

■ Six suspects have been named in an FIR registered on May 30, when an NIA team was in Colombo. It was probing possible links between two IS-related cases registered by it in 2015 and 2018 with the Sri Lankan Easter attacks

■ Prime suspect Mohammed Azharudheen, 32, is a Facebook friend of Zahran Hashim, said to be the mastermind of the Easter attacks

■ Azharudheen was running a Facebook page called "Khilafah GFX", IS-inspired logos made by him were very popular on social media

■ Azharudheen and his associates were "propagating the ideology of Islamic State to recruit vulnerable youth for terrorist attacks in south India, especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu"



ZAHRAN HASHIM

■ 14 mobile phones, 29 SIM cards, 10 pen drives, 3 laptops, 6 memory cards, 4 hard discs, an internet dongle, 13 CDs/DVDs, a dagger, an electric baton and 300 air-gun pellets have been seized from the premises of the suspects

to interactions on Facebook or went beyond it. We are questioning him but have named him and five others in the FIR. His online activities were under watch for a few months now," said

an NIA official. The residence and offices of the suspects were searched on Wednesday.

The other suspected members of the module have been identified as Ak-

ram Sindhaa, 26, Y. Shiek Hidayathullah, 38, Abubacker M., 29, Sadham Hussain, 26, and Ibrahim Shah, 28, all residents of Coimbatore.

## Houses searched

The NIA conducted searches at seven places in Coimbatore, including the houses of the accused.

Mobile phones, an electric baton, 300 air-gun pellets and a large number of documents along with a few posters of the Popular Front of India (PFI) and SDPI pamphlets were seized during the search, the agency said. Agency sleuths also interrogated the accused during the raids that lasted for several hours.

(Inputs from Wilson Thomas and R. Akileish)

HE DESIGNED IS-INSPIRED LOGOS, SAYS NIA ► PAGE 12

# Five CRPF jawans killed in militant attack in Kashmir

## Security forces fired on in Anantnag



CRPF men shifting the body of their colleague at Anantnag in south Kashmir on Wednesday. • REUTERS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Five CRPF personnel were killed and one police officer was among four injured in a militant attack on security forces in south Kashmir's Anantnag on Wednesday afternoon. An unidentified militant was also killed.

A senior police official said two militants attacked a joint deployment of the CRPF and the police. The militants, who came on a motorbike, fired at the security forces

and lobbed grenades on a busy stretch near Oxford School on K.P. Road around 4.55 p.m. "Five CRPF jawans were killed and the body of one Pakistani militant was recovered from the spot. Another militant is believed to have escaped," said Inspector General of Police (Kashmir) S.P. Pani.

Another senior police official said one of the attackers was immediately spotted and "engaged in a stand-off fire".

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# Neither azaadi nor autonomy possible: Malik

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik on Wednesday said the ruling elite involved in corruption in the State "will face action soon".

Speaking at a press conference on the achievements of his government, the Governor also urged the youth to give up arms as "neither azaadi (independence) nor autonomy was possible".

"People of J&K were never told the truth by the leadership. Political parties exploited the people in the name of autonomy, azaadi etc. Neither autonomy nor azaadi is possible," Mr. Malik said.

"Now, in the name of jannaat (heaven), radicalised youth are being exploited," he said. "Kashmir is also a heaven, nurture it first," he added.

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# Congress leaders meet sans Gandhis

## Discuss upcoming Assembly polls

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

A group of senior Congress leaders met here on Wednesday to discuss the upcoming Assembly elections in Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir. Briefing the media after the meeting, chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala asserted that party president Rahul Gandhi would continue to lead the party.

"An informal meeting of Congress leaders was held today under the guidance of A.K. Antony," Mr. Surjewala said. "The preparations for the four election-going States - Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir - were discussed. We did not discuss anything else," he added.

Chaired by Mr. Antony, the meeting was attended by party treasurer Ahmed Patel, P. Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh, leader of the



Ahmed Patel arriving for a party meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. • PTI

Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, Deputy Opposition leader in the Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma, Mallikarjun Kharge, general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal and Mr. Surjewala.

Mr. Gandhi and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi did not attend the meeting. Asked if Mr. Gandhi was out of town, Mr. Surjewala declined comment.

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# New Agra Bar Council president shot dead

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

Darvesh Singh Yadav, the newly elected president of the Bar Council of Agra, was on Wednesday shot dead by a fellow lawyer on the premises of the Agra civil court. She was elected just two days ago.

Additional DGP (Agra zone) Ajay Anand said Ms. Yadav was shot dead by her associate Manish Sharma at a welcome ceremony in the Bar Council chamber.



Darvesh Singh Yadav

When the programme was on, Sharma stood up and fired thrice at Ms. Yadav with his licensed pistol. He

then turned the gun on himself. Ms. Yadav was rushed to a hospital, where she was declared dead. Sharma is in a "critical" condition.

## Compensation sought

The Bar Council of India condemned the murder and demanded security for its members. It sought a minimum compensation of ₹50 lakh to the family of the victim, reported agencies.

Samajwadi Party chief

Akhilesh Yadav took a dig at the Yogi Adityanath government for the incident and said rapes, murders and political killings were increasing at an alarming rate.

"The CM is chairing meetings upon meetings but the law and order situation is only deteriorating. Now the first woman head of the bar council of Agra has been shot. Even upholders of the law are not safe," Mr. Yadav said on Twitter.

# Retail inflation at a 7-month high of 3.05%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Retail inflation in May moved marginally up to 3.05% mainly due to a rise in food prices, notably vegetables. This is a seven-month high; inflation in April was 2.99%.

## Good news

However, there was good news on the industrial growth front with factory

output rising by 3.4%, which is a six-month high.

The growth was mainly driven by the electricity and mining sectors, with manufacturing growing by 2.8%.

"If you look, most of this growth [in factory output] would have been due to public expenditure," said D.K. Srivastava, chief policy adviser, EY India.

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# Cyclone Vayu to be very severe: IMD

## Wind speeds of 175 km per hour likely



To safe shores: Fishermen moving a boat from the Veraval port in Gujarat. • VIJAY SONEJI

MAHESH LANGA  
AHMEDABAD

With cyclonic storm 'Vayu' inching closer to Gujarat, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) classified it as a "very severe" storm and predicted wind speeds of up to 175 km per hour during landfall on the Saurashtra coast around noon on Thursday.

An IMD update on Wed-

nesday evening said, "Vayu is about 280 km south of Veraval in Gujarat and likely to cross Gujarat coast between Dwarka and Veraval."

According to the Gujarat government, the cyclonic storm is likely to be extremely severe when it will hit the coast between Veraval and Dwarka.

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