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HURRIYAT CHIEF RESPONDS TO J&K GOVERNOR'S SIGNAL If talks are initiated, there will be positive response: Hurriyat

Mirwaiz says meaningful dialogue only way forward; NC & PDP welcome move

NAVEED IQBAL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 23

A DAY after Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik said that Hurriyat leaders were ready for talks with New Delhi, Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said Sunday that if "meaningful" talks are initiated, "there will be a positive response".

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Mirwaiz said that they have always been ready for a meaningful dialogue to resolve the Kashmir issue. "We are convinced that a way out can only be achieved through talking," he said.

"I can tell you that if meaningful talks are initiated, there will be a positive response. Dialogue is the only way and that is our consistent stand," he said.

"Hurriyat has always been in favour of talks as the means of resolution. We have not said anything new. We have always been saying this. As the most affected party with daily killings of our young, we would naturally want peaceful resolution of the issue."

He said, "From the time when all parties came together under one umbrella to form Hurriyat, (we) have maintained and reiterated that engagement and dialogue among stakeholders is the best and most peaceful means of resolution of the Kashmir issue and not (use of) force".

Mirwaiz also said that the "Hurriyat has engaged with both India and Pakistan in the past" and "are always ready to engage". His remarks came after Governor Malik, in the presence of Union Minister for



Always ready to engage, says Mirwaiz



Security personnel near the encounter site in Shopian, J&K, Sunday. *Express*

4 militants linked to al-Qaeda affiliate killed in J&K gunfight

ADIL AKHZER
SRINAGAR, JUNE 23

FOUR MILITANTS affiliated to the Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGH) were killed Sunday in a gunfight with security forces in South Kashmir's Shopian district. The AGH claims to be an affiliate of al-Qaeda.

According to the Jammu and Kashmir Police, the encounter broke out at the Panzar area of Shopian in the morning after security forces launched a cordon and search operation following reports that militants were present in the area.

"During searches, terrorists fired upon the search party. The fire was retaliated leading to an

encounter," said police. In a statement, Colonel Rajesh Kalita, Srinagar-based defence spokesperson, said: "Total four terrorists eliminated... weapons recovered."

The militants killed in the encounter were identified as Rafi Hassan Mir of Kralchak, Shopian; Suhail Ahmad Bhat of Batmuran, Shopian; Showkat Ahmad Mir of Rajpora in Pulwama; and, Azad Ahmad Khanday of Bamnoo, Pulwama.

Police sources said that the operation took place in an orchard and the gunfight began at around 6 am. "...no collateral damage happened during the encounter," said police.

In a statement, police said that among the four killed mili-

itants, Showkat had a "long history of terror crime records since 2015". "He was initially part of the proscribed terror outfit HM (Hizbul Mujahideen)," police said, adding that several cases were registered against him.

According to police, Showkat Mir was also instrumental in recruiting "Azad Ahmad, Rafi Hassan and Suhail Ahmad who had recently joined the terrorist fold". Recently, pictures of Suhail and Rafi holding weapons surfaced on social media in the Valley, which also mentioned that the duo had joined the AGH outfit.

A senior police officer in South Kashmir told *The Indian Express* that they believe

India scraps Israel anti-tank missile deal after DRDO says will deliver \$500-mn deal was for Spike missiles

AMITAVRANJAN
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

INDIA HAS scrapped a \$500-million deal with Israel for the purchase of Spike anti-tank missiles from defence contractor Rafael Advanced Defense Systems after indigenous developer Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) claimed that it could deliver an alternative within two years.

Government officials associated with the approval of the deal said Israel has been informed about the contract being abandoned in favour of DRDO, which claimed that it was developing a similar missile at a lower price in partnership with VEM Technologies Ltd.

Officials said domestic production of the missile was favoured as DRDO's effort in creating a man-portable anti-tank

guided missile (MPATGM) was "progressing fast" with the second stage of testing concluded. The DRDO claimed it successfully test-fired the MPATGM at the Ahmednagar range last September.

Although Army officials were sceptical of DRDO's claim on meeting its promised deadline and operational requirements, the Defence Ministry opted for DRDO as it would fulfil the government's "Make-in-India" initiative. The ministry, said officials, now prefers a home-grown anti-tank missile rather than depend on time-consuming imports.

Officials said India last year delayed the purchase of Spike missiles from Rafael for fear of being dragged into another controversy at a time when the purchase of the French fighter jet Rafale was being disputed by the main Opposition Congress party

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

CUTTING FLAB NOT EASY FOR PAK ARMY
BY AYESHA SIDDIQA
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BUSINESS AS USUAL



By UNNY

Have you budgeted for the water to wash down the halwa?

RBI to DRI: We can't ask banks to share customer information

KHUSHBOONARAYAN
MUMBAI, JUNE 23

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has said it has no power to ask banks to share information on customers with third parties, including investigative agencies of the government, even if it is in the interests of the bank.

The banking regulator's response followed a request by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), which sought RBI's assistance in obtaining information from two state-owned banks on the alleged Rs 29,000-crore overvaluation of coal imports from Indonesia by Indian companies, including the Adani Group, ADAG and Essar Group among others.

"...it may be stated that there is no statutory provision which en-

ables RBI to decide about the permissibility of sharing of customer information by any bank with third parties, irrespective of whether it is in the interests of the bank or otherwise," said a letter dated May 24 sent by the RBI to D P Dash, Director General, DRI.

The RBI said the decision to share information lies with the banks, which would be responsible for their actions in case of any dispute.

While two private banks, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank, have shared all information with DRI on the case citing national interest, government-owned State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of Baroda (BoB) have declined to do so citing the confidentiality clause. The DRI has been asking the regulator and the banks to share information since 2016.

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EXPLAINED

Hurdle in coal probe

THE DRI had sought import documents negotiated by SBI's Singapore branch and BoB's Dubai branch with Indonesian suppliers in its probe into alleged overvaluation of coal imports. The agency says these documents contain the actual price of coal before it was allegedly inflated.

Ansal U-turn on loss of cheques: PDCs issued, regret error

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

FOUR DAYS after it denied that Ansal Hi-Tech Townships had issued post-dated cheques (PDCs) to secure investments by Peninsula Brookfield through subscription of non-convertible debentures (NCDs), the Ansal Group has accepted that the PDCs were indeed issued and that it "regretted" the "error".

On June 13, *The Indian Express* reported that a firm linked to IL&FS had mysteriously "lost" PDCs issued by Ansal Hi-Tech Townships against investments of around Rs 200 crore by PenBrook Capital in 2014-15. IL&FS Trust Company Ltd — now called Vistra ITCL, post-acquisition by Vistra in 2016 — was the trustee company that held these cheques.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Mystery loss of post-dated cheques: one more Ansal, IL&FS link

SANDEEP SINGH
NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

IL&FS FINANCIAL Services MD
Ramesh Bawa allegedly bending

Express report on June 13

13 yrs later, 15 families back in Bastar: 'Happy but leave us alone'

DIPANKAR GHOSE
MARAIGUDA (SUKMA), JUNE 23

TO HIS left, is his past. All that remains is a wooden stump, charred black and lifeless. To his right, a hundred metres away, is a fresh start. The wood is fresh and brown, and his hut is well on its way to becoming a home. Thirteen years ago, he had fled, taking his family with him. He has now returned, happy but hesitant. He is one of the refugees of Maraiguda in Bastar, his life governed by fear, then and now.

The year was 2006, the month escapes his memory. But that day, as he walked back from the forest, firewood in one arm, his wife behind him, he remembers the smoke rising from the village. "The Salwa Judum had come to



Site of a home burnt in Maraiguda. *Dipankar Ghose*

the village. The *dadalog* (Maoists) were there too, and there were gunshots. Our house was among the many that were burning. We ran, until we couldn't run

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Despite its rules, BSP gives top jobs to Maya kin

AVANEESH MISHRA
LUCKNOW, JUNE 23

A YEAR after announcing amendments to her party's constitution that no relative of the national president would hold party positions, BSP chief Mayawati Sunday appointed her brother Anand Kumar as the party's national vice-president and his son Akash Anand as its national coordinator.

The decision was taken at an all-India meeting of BSP leaders in Lucknow that included most party office bearers, members, legislators and MPs.

Anand was appointed BSP vice-president after the 2017 assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, but in May 2019,

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Rlys removes 20-year hitch: Smoother travel now on premium trains

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

TWO DECADES after the German-made Linke-Hoffmann-Busch (LHB) coaches were introduced, the Railways has managed to get rid of the all-too-familiar jolts and swaying that passengers experience while travelling on board even premium trains.

The solution: retrofitting a new version of the Centre Buffer Couplers (CBC), the equipment used to link coaches in a train. By late April this year, the Railways managed to retrofit all its LHB stock — over 5,000 coaches, including all the 42 Rajdhani rakes.

Premium trains running with the LHB stock, like

Rajdhanis, have been notorious for the jolts that passengers experienced, especially at high speeds and also while braking, taking away the comfort such trains promised.

From teacups spilling over to passengers being jolted from berths and even losing balance while walking in the aisles of Rajdhanis, these are among the common complaints on board these trains. For decades, they have been attributed to a fault in the couplers with no solution in sight. The unstable nature of the couplers also posed a safety issue. The issue had even led to questions being raised in both Houses of Parliament and its committees.

The solution eluded Railways for 10-15 years, Rajesh Agrawal,

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In Muktsar, fight against plastic bags starts with ₹5

Team of residents, led by a doctor, is making a difference in vegetable markets, dairies and langars

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

RAAKHI JAGGA
MUKTSAR, JUNE 23

IN PUNJAB'S Muktsar, the people's fight against plastic is all about a number: Rs 5. That's what a team of five residents, led by a doctor and assisted by two college students, is asking dealers at vegetable markets to pay for every cloth bag it distributes to replace plastic bags.

The money goes into expanding its drive against plastic bags and plates to dairies and langars, and on Facebook and YouTube. So much so, local offi-

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Dr Seema Goyal (right) distributes cloth bags at a vegetable market in Muktsar. *Gurmeet Singh*

polybags are a great headache as they cannot be disposed of and lead to the death of cattle that eat garbage in these bags at dumps,"

says Dr Seema Goyal, a medical officer at the civil hospital, who is the face of this campaign.

Also on the team are govern-

ment teachers Harpinder Kaur Rana and Navdeep Sukhi, and shopkeeper Gursewak Singh. On call are Jashandeep Jimmy and Anurag Sharma, the students who help the group reach out on social media through Facebook Live sessions and YouTube videos. "We got the first batch of cloth for free from a Bathinda tent house and a Muktsar trader. We got multi-compartment bags stitched and charged a nominal price — only so that people don't take us for granted. So far, we have distributed over 10,000 bags after making people aware of the harmful effects of plastic," says Rana.

Today, district officials say, the use of plastic bags in the city

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