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NEARBY



Election of Vardhan, Hans challenged

NEW DELHI
The election of Union Minister Harsh Vardhan, BJP MPs Hans Raj Hans and Meenakshi Lekhi to the Lok Sabha was challenged before the Delhi High Court on Thursday on various grounds, including giving false information in their affidavits. The three separate petitions came up for hearing before three judges. While notices were issued to Dr. Vardhan and Mr. Hans, the plea against Ms. Lekhi's election has been listed for further hearing on August 18.

CITY PAGE 2

BJP MLA's daughter moves HC for protection

DELHI/LUCKNOW
The daughter of a BJP legislator from U.P. on Thursday sought protection from the Allahabad High Court, alleging a threat to her life from her father after her marriage to a Dalit man. The judge posted the next hearing for July 15 since the couple was not present in court.

NORTH PAGE 5

GS Foundation-2020
Assured Prelims & Mains
15th July 3:00 pm
MALUKA IAS
011-47340741, 99101 33084
51/6, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi-60
FRIDAY REVIEW 8 PAGES (TABLOID)

Can't be pushed into a decision: Speaker

Ramesh Kumar meets 10 Karnataka rebel MLAs following the Supreme Court's direction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

Hours after the Supreme Court on Thursday asked Karnataka Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar to meet 10 rebel legislators from the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) and take a decision on their resignations, he held a meeting with them.

However, Mr. Ramesh Kumar insisted that he had a responsibility to understand whether the resignations were genuine and voluntary, as prescribed in the Constitution, and said the process could not be rushed. "In the current political situation, I have to enquire whether they are voluntary. If I do not do it, I would have committed a mistake," he told journalists after the nearly hour-long meeting with the rebel legislators, who flew to Bengaluru from Mumbai and rushed to his chamber just after 6 p.m., following the court order.

Article 190

Mr. Ramesh Kumar cited Article 190 of the Constitution as the basis for his decision to follow the procedure to enquire whether the resignations were genuine and voluntary.

"I am not responsible for it, nor am I connected with the political instability in Karnataka... I am not under anybody's obligation. I am obligated to the people of the State and the Constitution,"



Rush hour: Byrathi Basavaraj, one of the rebel MLAs, rushing to the Speaker's chamber in Bengaluru on Thursday to meet the 6 p.m. deadline set by the Supreme Court.

he said, adding that he could not specify a time frame for a final decision on the resignations.

Mr. Ramesh Kumar confirmed that all the 10 fresh resignation letters tendered by the rebel legislators were in accordance with Rule 202 of the Rules and Procedure of Conduct of Business in the Assembly. He, however, said he had not given dates for hearing to these legislators.

"During the session, I will ask the Deputy Speaker to sit in the chair during afternoon sessions to hear the rebel

legislators," he said.

Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court became the site of the latest face-off between the Speaker and the rebel legislators.

Hours after a Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, asked Mr. Ramesh Kumar to meet the 10 rebel MLAs and take a decision on their resignations "forthwith or in the course of the remaining part of the day", the Speaker urged the court to recall its order.

In an urgent application filed in the afternoon, the

Speaker said the court could not ask him to decide on the resignation of the legislators in a particular manner. Mr. Ramesh Kumar said the order hindered his probe against the MLAs under the anti-defection law.

However, the Chief Justice of India said the Speaker's application would be heard on July 12. The court had fixed the July 12 hearing to be apprised of the Speaker's decision on the resignations.

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ASSEMBLY SESSION PAGE 8

Speculation as Minister meets BJP leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The ongoing political drama took a new twist with JD(S) leader and Minister Sa.Ra. Mahesh being spotted with BJP national general secretary P. Muralidhar Rao and the party's senior leader K.S. Eshwarappa at a government-run guesthouse late on Thursday.

While both parties and leaders, including Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, described it as a "chance meeting", the incident set off speculation that there could be back-room negotiations between the BJP and the JD(S), even while the latter appeared to be fighting tooth-and-nail to save the coalition government with the Congress.

Sources said the JD(S) was exploring "Plan B", given the precarious position of the coalition government.

After visuals of the meeting were aired on television channels, Mr. Muralidhar Rao told *The Hindu* that it was a "mere coincidence" and denied that any politics was discussed.

JOINT PROTEST PAGE 12

SC likely to hear Ayodhya appeals from July 25

Seeks report from mediation panel

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, on Thursday decided to commence hearing the Ayodhya title dispute appeals tentatively from July 25 on a day-to-day basis in case a conclusion is reached, on the basis of a mediation committee report, that the talks with Hindu and Muslim parties to heal minds and hearts is making no headway. The Bench asked Justice F.M.I. Kalifulla (retired), heading the court-appointed mediation committee, to submit the report on the progress made so far by July 18, the next date of hearing. The court's order in a way jump-starts the Ayodhya case. The committee had been granted time till August 15 to engage in talks.

No headway: petitioner

The immediate trigger for Thursday's hearing is an urgent plea made by a claimant to the disputed Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land that the mediation proceedings were making no headway whatsoever.

The mediation committee is in the thick of its second round of talks. It fin-

It is difficult to settle disputes like this and the Supreme Court should authoritatively decide the matter
K. PARASARAN, COUNSEL FOR THE PETITIONER

ished the initial round and filed an interim status report dated May 7 in the court, seeking more time.

On July 9, however, an application filed by Gopal Singh Visharad, an original claimant to the disputed site who filed a title suit way back in 1950 through his survivor Rajendra Singh, said the mediation was making no progress.

Visharad asked the CJI to stop the mediation and start adjudication on the appeals. The appeals have been pending in the court for the past eight years. Visharad said, "He is entitled to offer worship without any obstruction according to the rites and tenets of his religion at the birthplace of Lord Shri Ram Chandra".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

England dethrones Australia, roars into the final

Roy powers the hosts to victory after Woakes and Archer put the skids on the Aussies



One step closer: England produced a clinical display to dethrone Australia with an eight-wicket win in the second semifinal at Edgbaston, Birmingham, on Thursday. DAVID ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
BIRMINGHAM

England qualified for the World Cup final in emphatic fashion. In a lopsided semifinal here at Edgbaston on Thursday, Eoin Morgan's men defeated defending champion Australia by eight wickets with 107 deliveries to spare. Yet to win cricket's premier trophy, England last played a World Cup final in the 1992 edition at Melbourne, and will now take on New Zealand in the summit clash at Lord's on Sunday.

Trailing Australia's 223, England posted 226 for two in

32.1 overs. Openers Jason Roy (85) and Jonny Bairstow set a frenzied pace through their 124-run partnership in 17.2 overs. Be it pace or spin, Roy plundered five sixes and Australia's hopes waned. Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon and Steve Smith were caned, and the resultant momentum was enough for the host to cruise despite the dismissals of Bairstow and Roy.

Earlier, the Australian innings suffered a crisis as skipper Aaron Finch, David Warner and Peter Handscomb fell within the first 10 overs. Chris Woakes (three for 20) and Jo-

fra Archer extracted tentative shots and the visitor's decision to take first strike backfired.

Much hinged on former captain Smith who, besides the England attack, had to contend with an aggressive crowd booing him. Smith remained oblivious to the pressure and his 85, along with a 103-run fourth-wicket stand with Alex Carey, lent some respectability to the Australian total. But in the end, it wasn't adequate to prevent England's regal march.

ENGLAND RIDES ON ROY'S ASSAULT PAGE 17

Centre redefines child porn, moots stiff penalties

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Watching, possessing or circulating animations or cartoons that depict a minor engaging in a sexually explicit conduct could land you in jail.

The Cabinet has approved

a new definition for child pornography in its amendments to the POCSO Act, which is likely to be introduced in Parliament next week.

The new definition reads, "Any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involv-

ing a child which include photographs, video, digital or computer generated image indistinguishable from an actual child and an image created, adapted or modified but appear to depict a child."

DETAILS ON PAGE 9

CBI teams search premises of Lawyers Collective

FIR filed for FCRA violations



Facing the heat: Anand Grover's premises in Delhi and Mumbai were searched on Thursday. REUTERS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday conducted searches at five places in Delhi and Mumbai in connection with a case of an alleged Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) violation by the Lawyers Collective (LC), its president Anand Grover and others.

After CBI officials concluded the search at their Nizamuddin East residence in Delhi, senior advocate Indira Jaising said she and Mr. Grover were being targeted for the human rights work they had been doing for the past several years.

"The searches have been

carried out on the residential and official premises of Mr. Grover in Delhi and Mumbai," said a CBI official, clarifying that it was not against Ms. Jaising.

The CBI registered the case last month on a complaint from the Home Ministry. It invoked IPC provisions related to criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and cheating, besides criminal misconduct under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The LC, which was earlier registered under the FCRA, had received ₹32 crore in foreign donations between 2006 and 2015.

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