



Citizens urge Prime Minister to act on religion-based violence

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India may cite Imran Khan's remark on active militants in Pak. at FATF

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Probe on Russia did not exonerate Trump, says special counsel Mueller

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Murtagh grabs five as Ireland bowls England out for 85

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NEARBY



Ajay Bhalla to be new Home Secretary

DELHI/ AHMEDABAD
The Modi government on Wednesday reshuffled over a dozen Secretaries. Ajay Kumar Bhalla, a 1984-batch IAS officer and currently Secretary, Ministry of Power, has been appointed Officer on Special Duty to the Ministry of Home Affairs with immediate effect.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 13

In safe hands



Army personnel shifting villagers from flood-hit Sotiabari in Nalbari district of Assam on Wednesday. Over 60 people have died and 33 lakh affected due to the deluge in the State. •PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 9)

BJP plans to stake claim sooner than later

Rebel MLAs in Karnataka have said they will be patient

NISTULA HEBBAR
B.S. SATISH KUMAR
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

A day after the H.D. Kumaraswamy-led Janata Dal (S)-Congress government in Karnataka lost the vote of confidence, the BJP, with its status as the single largest party in the Assembly, indicated that it will be proceeding towards staking claim sooner rather than later.

A meeting of the State legislature party will be called in a day or two.

The BJP, having postponed a meeting of its legislature party and of the parliamentary board in New Delhi as it sought more clarity about the prospects of providing a stable government after last week's unsettling events, has decided, sources said, that since much depends on Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar on the question of rebel MLAs, no purpose would be served by allowing the grass to grow.

"We mulled over the matter and while earlier we were treading a little cautiously, we have come to the conclusion that now things will move a little faster in terms of staking claim. Rebel MLAs of the Congress have assured us that they will maintain the patience they have shown till now and we have a window of over a



Waiting game: Karnataka BJP chief B.S. Yeddyurappa outside his residence in Bengaluru on Wednesday. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Will first rebuild JD(S)'

Karnataka caretaker CM H.D. Kumaraswamy on Wednesday said his first priority was to rebuild his party. "I do not know about the future of the alliance with the Congress," he told reporters. ▶PAGE 8

Congress yet to decide

Karnataka PCC president Dinesh Gundu Rao said the party central leadership would take a decision on continuing the alliance with the JD(S). The leaders were yet to discuss the issue, Mr. Rao said. ▶PAGE 8

Opposition wants select panel scrutiny of key Bills

Leaders meet to decide joint strategy

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

In a show of strength, Opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha told the government that they wanted seven key legislation, including the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019, the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019, and

the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019, to be sent to a Select Committee of Parliament for further scrutiny.

All three Bills have been cleared by the Lok Sabha in the current session of Parliament.

The decision to insist on scrutiny of the Bills came at a meeting of floor leaders of Opposition parties in the Upper House on Wednesday. Sources said Opposition leaders were also working on

a joint letter that would oppose the way the two Houses of Parliament were being run and the stifling of their voices. "A draft has been prepared and we are in the process of getting signatures from everyone," a senior Opposition leader said.

In disarray after the results of the general election in May, the Opposition parties have regrouped in the last few days of the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha. On Tuesday, they held two

meetings. Sources said Opposition MPs would meet again on Thursday to formulate a coordinated strategy for the Rajya Sabha, where they have the numbers to counter the government.

On Wednesday, a first round of meetings was called by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi. It was attended by MPs from the DMK, the NCP, the BSP and the two Left parties among others.

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RTI Bill not moved in RS

The government did not introduce the Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2019, in the Rajya Sabha, though it had listed it for Wednesday, as the numbers are stacked against it. It was cleared by the Lok Sabha on Monday amid strong protests by the Opposition. ▶PAGE 12

Power poles should have spikes to keep away jumbos: panel

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Electric poles in forests and wildlife sanctuaries need to have spikes to discourage elephants from uprooting them and getting electrocuted, a committee set up by the Union Environment Ministry has recommended. Its suggestions were presented to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), an apex advisory board.

Elephant deaths from electrocution have emerged as a major challenge. *The Hindu* reported last November that 461 elephants were electrocuted from 2009-2017, or about 50 a year.

Tragedy in A.P.

An elephant calf was electrocuted in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday and its mother, according to a report from a forest official, uprooted cables and power transformers, ostensibly in an act of rage, on Monday. The power was turned off and this didn't harm the adult pachyderm.

The committee's report, which was deliberated upon by NBWL members on July 18, recommends that as far as possible transmission lines should be buried underground and those overhead ought to be insulated and kept out of reach of elephants.

"A nationwide strategy should be developed and supported to undertake the long-term planning of electricity grid networks as a priority. Planning should include the use of state-of-the-art wildlife protection equipment, and burying low to medium-voltage transmission lines below ground where feasible," the report notes.

The Power Grid



The elephant calf that was electrocuted in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Corporation of India Ltd., (PGCIL), Central Electricity Authority (CEA), and State Electricity Boards (SEBs) have been asked by the committee to "immediately" fix sagging transmission lines and cables in protected areas. There ought to be a joint inspection of every transmission/distribution line passing through the protected areas or passing through the vicinity of protected areas frequented by wild animals) by officials of the Electricity and Forest Departments at least thrice a year, once before the onset of monsoon and once after monsoon to identify potential problem stretches, the committee says.

Underground cable

"To prevent death of animals in the forest areas due to electrocution by the distribution lines, the distribution companies shall preferably use ABC (aerial bunched cables) or underground cable. In case of overhead lines, the clearance above ground of the lower conductor of 11 KV/33 KV overhead lines should be as per the CEA regulations," it says.

Chandrayaan-2 gets first orbit boost

To head for the moon on August 14

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The lunar craft Chandrayaan-2 had its first orbit raising manoeuvre on Day 3 since its launch on Monday, July 22.

At 2 p.m. on Wednesday, teams handling the spacecraft's movement did a 1.5-hour-long burn of an on-board motor.

They raised the orbit to the present 241.5 km x 45,162 km around earth, the Indian Space Research

Organisation said. Engineers conducted the exercises from ISTRAC (ISRO Telemetry, Tracking & Command Network) at Peenya in Bengaluru.

Chandrayaan-2, which is carrying a lander and a rover, will head for the moon on August 14.

"The spacecraft is scheduled to reach moon by August 20," the update said.

REAL TEST ON SEPT. 7 ▶ PAGE 9

In M.P., two BJP MLAs back Congress

They voted in favour of an amendment to the CrPC in the Assembly

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Stunning the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is exulting over the collapse of the government in Karnataka, two of its MLAs on Wednesday voted with the ruling Congress in favour of an amendment to the Criminal Procedure Code in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly.

Terming it a *ghar wapsi* (homecoming), Maihar legislator Narayan Tripathi told presspersons, "In the previous government, Shivraj Singh Chouhan had made tall promises in my consti-



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath addressing the media in Bhopal on Wednesday. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tuency, but delivered nothing. There was also an attempt within the party to sabotage my election. The Congress is my old home,

and I am headed back to it. I will do whatever is the best for my constituency." The MLA had switched to the BJP in 2014.

With the positive vote of Beohari MLA Sharad Kol as well, the Criminal Law (Madhya Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2019, was passed in the Assembly with the support of 122 MLAs, even though the ruling coalition has the support of 121 MLAs, including Speaker N.P. Prajapati, who did not vote.

The Congress enjoys the support of one Samajwadi Party, two Bahujan Samaj Party and four Independent MLAs, whereas the BJP has 109 MLAs in the Assembly.

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