



**Veteran industrialist
Basant Kumar Birla
passes away**
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**England crushes
New Zealand, cements
its semifinal spot**
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PLAYING TODAY

Cricket: Afghanistan vs West Indies

VENUE: Headingley

Live on Star Sports 1, 2 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.



**Rayudu announces
retirement from all
forms of cricket**
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NEARBY



**Chawri Bazar normal;
six more arrested**
NEW DELHI
After three days, normalcy returned to Chawri Bazar which witnessed communal tension over vandalism of a temple on Sunday. Six more persons involved in the violence were arrested on Wednesday hours after Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik met Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

**DU second cut-off list
sees marginal dip**
NEW DELHI
Admissions to many popular undergraduate courses at Delhi University have closed after the first round of admissions. For the remaining courses, the second cut-off list released on Wednesday saw a marginal dip in the eligibility requirement.

**Centre defends existing
definition of rape**
NEW DELHI
Defending India's gender-specific rape law under which the perpetrator of the offence can only be a 'man', the Centre has told the Delhi High Court that "the existing definition of rape under Section 375 (rape) should be left untouched".

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CITY PAGE 4

Rahul Gandhi formally quits as party chief, makes letter public

Holds himself responsible for poll debacle; senior Cong. leaders go into a huddle

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Ending speculation about his continuance in office as Congress president, Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday formally resigned, holding himself responsible for the party's Lok Sabha poll debacle. He also maintained that accountability would be critical for the party's future growth.

Mr. Gandhi's decision to make his resignation public sent senior Congress leaders into a huddle.

Sources told *The Hindu* that senior leaders, including Ghulam Nabi Azad, Moti Lal Vohra, A.K. Antony, Ahmed Patel, Anand Sharma and Mukul Wasnik, among others, are believed to have met informally to decide the next course of action, including options available in the party constitution to deal with such a situation.

Asks CWC to form group
In a four-page open letter, Mr. Gandhi said he had empowered the Congress Working Committee (CWC) to constitute a group of people that could find his successor and distanced himself from the process of selecting the next chief.

Amidst reports that Mr. Gandhi and his mother, Sonia, could be travelling out of the country shortly, sources



Show of support: Youth Congress workers gather outside the residence of Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi last week to appeal to him to continue as party chief. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

said the CWC could meet as early as July 10 on a future course of action.

One of the options being discussed is once again passing a resolution asking Mr. Gandhi to continue. Party veterans claimed that he continues to be the president until the CWC formally accepts his resignation and appoints an interim president.

If the 49-year-old Congress chief does not relent, then the longest-serving general secretary, Mr. Azad, could be asked to take interim charge. Mr. Azad became a general secretary of

the CWC as far back as 1986.

Defends campaign

Mr. Gandhi – who has been firm on his decision to quit as party chief since May 25, two days after the results of the general election in which his party won 52 seats – defended the party's "strong and dignified campaign against the Prime Minister and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the institutions they have captured with."

"As President of the Congress Party, I am responsible for the loss of the 2019 election. Accountability is criti-

cal for the future growth of our party. It is for this reason that I have resigned as Congress President," he said in his letter that sounded both emotional and combative.

"Rebuilding the party requires hard decisions and numerous people will have to be made accountable for the failure of 2019. It would be unjust to hold others accountable but ignore my own responsibility as President of the party," he said in the letter shared on his Twitter account.

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NO TIME TO LOSE PAGE 13

Marginal hike in MSP for 14 kharif crops

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre has hiked the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy by less than 4% to ₹1,815 per quintal for the 2019-20 season. The ₹65 per quintal increase is much lower than last year's hike of ₹200 per quintal, but it will ensure that the MSP remains exactly 50% above the cost of production, not including land costs.

The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Tuesday. MSPs were hiked for 14 major crops of the kharif or summer season, to ensure they remain at a level that is 1.5 times the cost of production.

Lower returns

The only commodities with MSP that will ensure a higher than 50% return over input costs are bajra (85%), urad (64%) and tur dal (60%). However, even for these crops, returns are lower than last year.

The MSP is the rate at which the Centre procures these crops from farmers. However, there is no guaranteed procurement mechanism for most crops. Just over a third of the paddy harvest is bought by the Food Corporation of India for use in the public distribution system.

PROCUREMENT PLEA PAGE 12

Cattle traders move SC against 2017 rules

Claim it is being used to seize livestock

Livelihood worries

The petition concerns The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Care and Maintenance of Case Property Animals) Rules, 2017 notified on May 23, 2017

• The rules were framed in pursuance of the powers granted by Section 38 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960

• The petitioner challenged the validity of the rules on the following grounds:

i. Rule 3, 5 (1) to (8), 7, 8 (1) and (2) and 9 are ultra-vires Sections 29 and 35 of the parent Act

ii. The rules have not been passed by Parliament as required under Section 38A of the 1960 Act

• Alternatively, the petitioner sought a direction that the rules, having been withdrawn by the Centre, ought not to be implemented



LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An association of cattle traders and transporters has approached the Supreme Court against rules notified in 2017, which are being used to seize and forfeit their cattle.

A Bench led by Justice S.A. Bobde ordered the government to respond to a petition by the Buffalo Traders Welfare Association, represented by advocate Sanobar Ali Qureshi, on threats faced by them. They said they were being forcibly deprived of their cattle, which were then sent to gaushalas.

The traders told the court on Tuesday that the seizure

and forfeiture of their livestock, a means of livelihood for many, was happening on the strength of the 2017 rules against animal cruelty and cattle slaughter.

Two years ago, the Centre promised the top court that it would amend and re-notify these rules. Its notification had led to a public furor. But nothing has been done so far, and the rules were being employed to seize cattle, the petitioners said.

The law had emboldened "anti-social elements" to take matters into their hands and loot cattle traders, the petitioners said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

MLA murder case: Ansaris acquitted

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday acquitted Ghazipur MP Afzal Ansari of the Bahujan Samaj Party, his brother and Uttar Pradesh MLA of the party Mukhtar Ansari and others in the 2005 murder case of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai as all the eyewitnesses turned hostile. Besides the politician, six persons were also killed in the firing in the vehicle in which they were travelling.

"This is a gruesome case involving murder of seven persons. The investigation of the case was transferred from U.P. Police to CBI. The trial of the case was also transferred from U.P. to Delhi. Unfortunately, the case of the prosecution has suffered as all the eyewitnesses and other material witnesses turned hostile," Special Judge Arun Bhardwaj said.

DETAILS ON PAGE 5

23 feared dead after dam breaches in Maharashtra

Seven villages downstream flooded; 11 bodies recovered

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Twenty-three persons are feared dead as the Tiware dam in Ratnagiri in Maharashtra's Konkan region breached on Wednesday following incessant rain, officials said.

Bodies of 11 persons have been recovered so far. Additional Superintendent of Police (Ratnagiri), Vishal Gaikwad said.

The Tiware dam was built 14 years ago in Chiplun taluk, with a capacity of 20 lakh cubic metres.

The breach occurred late on Tuesday, a district official said, leading to flooding in seven villages downstream; 12 houses were swept away.

Search and rescue operations have been launched by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the State police. A police officer said rescue operations were



Force of nature: Water flowing out of the breached Tiware dam in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. • RAJU SHINDE

hampered initially due to darkness and the sudden influx of water.

Relatives of the victims said they had asked the district administration to repair the dam as they had spotted cracks in the structure in November last year. There was an issue over the jurisdiction of which tehsil the Tiware

dam falls in, with both Chiplun and Dapoli tehsil offices ignoring the villagers' petition, said a family member of one of the dead.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis has ordered an inquiry into the incident.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12
MUMBAI MAROONED PAGE 9
MALAD TOLL UP PAGE 9

First investors' summit to be held in J&K

NISTULA HEBBAR
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir will host its first-ever investor summit in September-October of this year in Srinagar – with a chapter in Jammu – to attract investment and counter perceptions about the State.

Government officials said they are expecting participation from at least eight countries, besides the rest of India.

The State is presently under President's Rule, which was extended by another six months last week after a vote in Parliament.

"The strong points of the State are, of course, tourism, horticulture and handicrafts.

"The stress would be on some of these sectors, along with the power sector and manufacturing," said an official.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

SC notice to Centre, Assam on plea by paralysed man declared foreigner

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Central and Assam governments to respond to a petition filed by a paralysed man languishing in detention for over two years after being declared a foreigner by a tribunal in an ex parte proceeding.

Azizul Hoque, represented by senior advocate Sanjay Hegde and advocate Anas Tanwir, was declared a foreigner by a Foreigners Tribunal in Assam and he has been in detention since March 24, 2017.

He sought a stay on the ex parte order as he feared being deported to Bangladesh any time.

No relief from HC
Mr. Hoque had failed to appear before the tribunal to present his defence due to lower limb paralysis. He could not depute anyone to appear on his behalf. He approached the SC after the Gauhati High Court denied him relief despite accepting his medical certificate.

Mr. Hoque submitted that neither the tribunal nor the High Court had appreciated

the fact that he had produced 'jamabandi' documents in the name of his grandfather, issued in 1941-1942, along with the voter list excerpts of 1965 showing the names of his grandparents, father and mother.

His school certificate stated his date of birth as March 5, 1978.

The petitioner said his name appeared in the draft National Register of Citizens for Assam. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi ordered the Centre and the State to respond within two weeks.

Soon, read SC judgments in your language

New app, similar to Google's translation software, is likely to be launched this month

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

In a novel measure, the Supreme Court will translate its judgments into all vernacular languages for the benefit of the public and litigants across the length and breadth of the country.

The software application is intended to be launched by mid-July.

In single phase

The app, similar to Google's text translation, is likely to be launched in a single phase and cover "all vernacular languages," a source said.



Sathesh Vellinezhi

The court was taking the help of the High Courts in making the move a success. Most likely, the new app would be launched in the

inaugural function of the Supreme Court's new office buildings at Appu Ghar.

President Ram Nath Kovind is expected to preside

over it, the source said.

The move is the brainchild of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi.

CJI gave the idea

The CJI, in an informal interaction with Supreme Court journalists in November last, where he was accompanied by the court's number two judge Justice S.A. Bobde, mooted the idea of translating the court's judgments into regional languages.

The CJI had said the project included not only translating the apex court judgments into Hindi and other

vernacular languages but also to provide summaries of the apex court's verdicts. This, he had said, was to benefit litigants, who after fighting their cases for years, were left unable to read the judgments in their own cases for the sole reason that they did not know English.

In the Constitution Day function last year, President Kovind took the opportunity to laud the CJI for proposing the initiative to provide certified copies of judgments, translated from English to regional languages, to litigants.

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