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NEARBY



Cabinet nod for more judges in Supreme Court

NEW DELHI
Acting at the request of the Chief Justice of India, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to increase the number of Supreme Court judges from 31 to 34. The move comes against the backdrop of the rising number of cases in the top court, which stands at nearly 60,000. At present, the sanctioned strength of the court is 30, excluding the Chief Justice of India.

NEWS ► PAGE 12

DERC cuts fixed charges, hikes energy rates

NEW DELHI
The Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission on Wednesday announced a slew of changes in power tariffs, including reduction in fixed charges of various categories, an increase in energy charge rates and other changes, which will be applicable starting Thursday.

CITY ► PAGE 3

Siddhartha cremated in family estate

Body was recovered from Nethravati river near Mangaluru; thousands pay their last respects

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HASSAN/MANGALURU/
CHIKKAMAGALURU

Café Coffee Day founder and billionaire entrepreneur V.G. Siddhartha, whose body was traced in Nethravati river near Mangaluru 36 hours after he went missing, was on Wednesday cremated in his family's coffee estate in Chathanahalli village in Hassan district.

His eldest son Amartya Hegde lit the funeral pyre after the last rites were performed in an atmosphere marked by quiet grief, as his mother Malavika Hegde and grandfather and former Chief Minister S.M. Krishna struggled with their emotions.

Earlier in the day, thousands of people paid their last respects to Siddhartha at Coffee Day Global Ltd, a firm owned by him in Chikkamagaluru. Siddhartha's biggest entrepreneurial innovation, CCD, had its roots in the coffee-growing hilly districts of Chikkamagaluru and Hassan, where his father owned large estates.

Mobile phone recovered
It was in the early hours of Wednesday that the body of Siddhartha was found by a group of local fishermen in Nethravati river.

He had gone missing from the bridge across the river on Monday evening and an intensive, all-day search by a



Search ends: The body of V. G. Siddhartha being removed from the banks of the Nethravati river near Hoigebazar on Wednesday. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

300-strong team on Tuesday had failed to find the body. Three fishermen found it floating near the Hoigebazar area, where the river joins the Arabian Sea, at 6.30 a.m. They brought it ashore and informed the police. The police have also recovered his mobile phone.

The police are continuing investigations into the circumstances leading to his death, with a letter purportedly written by him blaming the Income Tax Department for his "succumbing to the situation".

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SIDDHARTHA'S DEATH RAISED
IN LOK SABHA ► PAGE 13

Wife may take over as CMD of Coffee Day

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

Malavika Hegde, wife of billionaire coffee entrepreneur V.G. Siddhartha Hegde, who died under mysterious circumstances in Mangaluru, may be appointed as chairperson and managing director of Coffee Day Enterprises.

"She is already on the board of the company, and the board will have to discuss the possibility of delegating to her bigger respon-

sibilities. But all these things can happen only when she recovers from the personal trauma she's suffered," said a top company source.

Siddhartha was the CMD of the company, and on confirmation of his death, the board on Wednesday appointed former IAS officer and a member, S.V. Ranganath, as interim chairman.

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TRIBUTES POUR IN AS COFFEE
KING BIDS ADIEU ► PAGE 15

CDE tanks 20% for second day

The shares of Coffee Day Enterprises were locked at their lower circuit of 20% for the second successive day on Wednesday. On the BSE, the company's shares dropped 20%, or ₹30.80, to close at ₹123.25, a new low for the company. ► PAGE 15

Oppn. targets probe agencies

Several Opposition leaders questioned the role of investigating agencies in V.G. Siddhartha's death. A letter, supposedly written by him a few days before his death, "discusses tax terrorism, an ugly face of politically motivated institutions..." Congress leader Siddaramaiah said. ► PAGE 8

Letter as dying declaration?

The letter V.G. Siddhartha supposedly wrote, blaming the I-T Department for his decision, will have to be treated as a dying declaration after its veracity is checked, say legal experts and police officials. ► PAGE 8

SC takes note of complaint by rape survivor's family

Letter to CJI surfaced after accident



Taking to the streets: Students organising a protest march at Delhi University on Wednesday. ■SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on July 31 took *suo motu* cognisance of a letter written by the family of the Unnao rape survivor on July 12 to Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi on the threats received from the accused persons.

It came to light two days after a truck collided with her car, causing serious injuries to her and her lawyer.

'Volatile situation'

The CJI called it a "highly volatile situation". He said he was informed about the letter only on Tuesday (July 30). He asked why the registry had not brought it to his attention. He listed the case for hearing on August 1, pro-

missing that an order would be passed to ensure the safety of and better conditions for the rape survivor.

The accident, which happened near Rae Bareilly on July 28, claimed the lives of two of her aunts. Kuldeep Singh Sengar, four-time BJP MLA from Uttar Pradesh's Bangermau, is an accused in the rape case and was arrested last April.

The letter narrates the incidents of July 7-8 when some people allegedly associated with Sengar threatened her family. It also sought a direction for registration of an FIR against them.

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CBI FORMS TEAM ► PAGE 13

When retirement is a flight of fantasy

Govt. school staffer takes a three-km helicopter ride home after farewell



Kude Ram (right) along with his brother after alighting from the helicopter at Sadpura village. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ASHOK KUMAR
FARIDABAD

Kude Ram was only 20 years old when he landed a government job, no mean feat for someone from a family of landless farmers. Through over four decades of working as a Class IV employee at Government Higher Secondary School, Neemkaa, he harboured a dream of finishing his service life on a high. On Tuesday, the day of retirement, the dream was literally lived sky-high: farewell over at school, Mr. Ram, along with his brother, took a three-kilometre helicopter ride from the Raja Jait Singh ground nearby to his village, Sadpura.

Rousing reception

Sporting a turban and a white kurta-pyjama, flower garlands and wads of currency notes slung around his neck, he stepped out of the helicopter to loud cheering and the beating of drums.

"I have seen politicians reaching rally grounds on helicopters since childhood but this was the first time I sat in one. It was a proud moment,"

said Mr. Ram.

His family, comprising 24 members, later took rounds of the village in the helicopter.

Months of preparation

The grand retirement plan didn't come cheap. It took months of preparation and a tab of ₹3.25 lakh to hire the helicopter for two-odd hours, besides securing a whole host of permissions from several departments.

"We started preparing for it in March. We sought the permission of the Public Works Department, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Ballabgarh, the Deputy Commissioner and fire brigade among others. We paid around ₹40,000 as fees to the PWD and fire brigade," said younger brother Shiv Kumar, 49, also the village sarpanch.

The flight may have ended in minutes but it has ensured the retired man his fifteen minutes of fame.

"I have been getting calls from media persons since last [Tuesday] evening. I got a couple of calls from Delhi too," said Mr. Ram, basking in his post-retirement glory.

Food doesn't have a religion, tweets Zomato

'Request for specific delivery man rejected'

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

A man from Jabalpur on Tuesday night took to Twitter to state that he had cancelled an order on food aggregator Zomato as he was assigned a non-Hindu delivery executive.

Using the handle @Na-Mo_SARKAAR, Pandit Amit Shukla, at 8.26 p.m. wrote: "Just cancelled an order on Zomato they allocated a non hindu rider for my food they said they can't change rider and can't refund on

cancellation I said you can't force me to take a delivery I don't want don't refund just cancel."

Stating that he would take up the issue with his lawyer, he shared screenshots of his chat with Zomato. He complained that he didn't want his order to be delivered by "a Muslim man."

Zomato's handle responded: "Food doesn't have a religion. It is a religion."

DETAILS ON ► PAGE 9

Officials keep vigil as Godavari rises at Bhadrachalam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHADRADRI-KOTHAGUDEM

Telangana irrigation officials are maintaining a vigil on the water levels in the Godavari with the river at the famous temple town of Bhadrachalam reaching 39 feet, just 4 feet below the first flood warning level, on Wednesday evening.

The level is likely to rise further with water being released from five dams in north and western Maharashtra into the Mutha and Godavari rivers. The reservoirs have recorded good inflows owing to heavy rain in catchments, officials said. Warnings have been issued



Touching danger levels: Following heavy rain in the upstream areas, water in the Godavari touched 50 feet in Rajahmundry on Wednesday. ■S. RAMBABU

to villages on the banks of the two rivers.

An official of the Maharashtra Water Resources De-

partment said, "All gates of the Hatnur dam in Jalgaon and the Gangapur dam in Nashik district [both in

north Maharashtra] have been opened to release excess water into the Tapi and Godavari rivers," he said. Rain in Madhya Pradesh led to the Hatnur dam filling up, he said.

"The water from the Gangapur dam (across the Godavari) would flow downstream into the Jayakwadi dam near Aurangabad," he added. Heavy rain in the Godavari catchments and release of flood waters from the Taliperu reservoir in Telangana have added to the increase in the level.

(With PTI inputs)

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