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NEARBY



Chinmayanand quizzed for seven hours

SHAHJAHANPUR (U.P.)
The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing a student's rape allegation against BJP leader Swami Chinmayanand questioned him for seven hours and sealed the bedroom at his home here, sources said on Friday. The SIT also brought the college student to the former Union Minister's home and continued the search for evidence in her presence.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 6

Govt. has failed to bring in Uniform Civil Code: SC

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court said the nation has still not endeavoured to secure for its citizens a Uniform Civil Code. The government has till date taken no action, a Bench of Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Bose observed in a judgment delivered on Friday.

NATION ▶ PAGE 9

Sonia reviews performance of Congress-ruled States

NEW DELHI
Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Friday chaired a meeting of Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Puducherry to review the functioning of the State governments in fulfilling promises made by the party.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 12

312 Indian-origin Sikhs removed from post-militancy 'adverse list'

Home Ministry's list had debarred them, kin from applying for Indian visa

VIJAJTA SINGH
VIKAS VASUDEVA
NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

At least 312 Indian-origin Sikhs living in foreign countries have been removed from a Ministry of Home Affairs "adverse list", enabling them to apply for an Indian visa and visit the country, a senior Ministry official said on Friday. Only two persons still remain on the list.

The official said that in future, Sikhs mentioned in the list could eventually apply for registration as Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) after they have applied for and held normal visa for a period of two years.

The Congress-led government in Punjab and the opposition Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) both claimed credit for the Centre's move.

"The Government of India has reviewed the 'adverse list' containing 314 foreign nationals belonging to the Sikh community and brought it down to just two," the Home Ministry official said. The two cases where individuals are still on the adverse list pertain to overstaying of visa.

An official explained that in the 1980s, when Sikh militancy was at its peak, many members of the community in India and abroad were influenced by anti-India propaganda.

Off the blacklist

Names of 312 Indian-origin Sikhs were removed from a list that prevented them from getting Indian visa



Based on intelligence inputs, the Home Ministry was maintaining an "adverse list" of Sikh persons living abroad

The list was prepared after the anti-Sikh riots in 1984, following which many young men from the community took part in secessionist movements

Indian missions abroad used to decline visa to persons on the list. Many in the list live in the U.S., the U.K., Germany and Canada — in most cases with foreign citizenship

"Some Sikhs fled India to escape the authorities, acquired foreign nationality and took asylum outside the country. They were placed in the adverse list till 2016, making them ineligible to avail visa services to visit India," said the official.

Missions informed

The list prepared by the intelligence agencies was available with all Indian missions and was a major roadblock for persons seeking visas even for their family members who were not on the list.

"This practice has also been discontinued," the official said.

"Consequently, all Indian missions have been advised to grant appropriate visa to all categories of asylees and

derivative asylees (family members) whose names do not figure in the Central Adverse List, in line with the procedure followed for other categories of applicants of that nationality," said the official.

"This review is a continuous and dynamic process and part of a regular exercise. Such a review will afford an opportunity to such Sikh foreign nationals to visit India, meet their family members and reconnect to their roots," said the official.

Amarinder's welcome

Responding to the Centre's decision, Punjab Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh said his government had worked actively with the Centre for scrapping the list.

"Every Sikh has the right to visit Punjab and Darbar Sahib, including those who had gone astray in the surcharged atmosphere of the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in the wake of the Operation Bluestar and the anti-Sikh riots," he said.

"Conceding the demand and argument of the State government, the Centre has virtually done away with the list that comprised 314 Sikh foreign nationals, with only two names of men not connected with Punjab now left on it. The Central government has also discontinued the practice of maintenance of local adverse lists by the respective Indian missions in various countries," Capt. Singh said.

Appreciating the Centre's decision, the Shiromani Akali Dal said the efforts of the party and its president Sukhbir Singh Badal had yielded positive results.

"We welcome the decision. Our party president had taken up the issue with the Centre and we are happy that the demand has been accepted," said Daljeet Singh Cheema, former Minister and Akali Dal spokesperson. "We request that the names of the remaining two should also be dropped from the list," he added.

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Odd-even scheme back in Delhi from November 4-15

Part of a seven-point action plan to combat air pollution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The odd-even vehicle rationing scheme will return to the Capital for the third time in November, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said here on Friday.

The scheme, Mr. Kejriwal announced at a press conference, will be enforced from November 4 to 15 as part of a seven-point action plan mainly aimed at combating the detrimental effect that stubble and residual crop burning in neighbouring States such as Punjab and Haryana has on the Capital's ambient air quality in winter months.

The scheme entails allowing private vehicles whose registration number ends in even digits to ply on even dates and those with odd last digits to ply only on odd dates, with violators drawing a ₹2,000 fine. Women drivers and two-wheeler riders were exempted from the scheme on both the previous occasions.

"Studies conducted on the effect of the scheme say that when it is enforced, air pollution in Delhi is reduced by 10%-13%," the Chief Minister said.

Oppn. flays move

The announcement triggered an immediate attack on the Aam Aadmi Party Delhi government from the Opposi-



The vehicle rationing scheme will return to the Capital for the third time. FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

tion BJP, with its Delhi unit chief Manoj Tiwari accusing Mr. Kejriwal of "harassing" the people of Delhi through the implementation of the scheme. Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari also reacted from Nagpur stating that there was "no such need" for the move.

Other measures

The Chief Minister also announced other measures of the 'Parali Pradushan' plan such as the distribution of free anti-pollution masks to citizens.

"The Delhi government will make large-scale procurement of around 50-60 lakh of the best quality N-95 anti-pollution masks which will be distributed among the people in October, before the spike in air pollution the next month," he said.

Other components of the seven-point plan include mechanised sweeping and wa-

ter sprinkling on roads, tree plantation, and special measures to be put in place at 12 pollution hotspots in Delhi.

Mr. Kejriwal also appealed to Delhiites to avoid bursting crackers on Diwali in late October, and urged them to make more use of public transport.

The Delhi government, he said, will also hold a mega laser show on the eve of Diwali. While the burning of waste and garbage will be checked by deploying two 'environmental marshals' in each municipal ward, the Delhi government, will also set up a dedicated control room to monitor complaints related to air pollution.

The announcement comes a day after the Chief Minister met environment experts for suggestions on combating the air pollution spike the Capital faces in winter.

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 5

CBI summons former Kolkata police chief

HC withdraws protection from arrest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Friday vacated the interim order providing protection from arrest to IPS officer and former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar by the CBI in the Saradha scam.

Within hours of the order, a team of CBI officers arrived at Mr. Kumar's residence at 34 Park Street and issued summons asking him to appear before the investigating agency on Saturday.

According to sources, Mr. Kumar, who is serving as Additional Director General, CID, is on leave.

Delivering the order, Justice Madhumati Mitra said a "blanket protection of not arresting is not available in law and would amount to unnecessary interference with the investigation".



Rajeev Kumar

The court observed that counsel for the petitioner had failed to substantiate that the investigating agency [CBI in this case] was harassing him or trying to injure his reputation.

Justice Mitra said the allegation that Mr. Kumar had been singled out cannot be admitted before the court, since officers superior in rank to him had been interrogated by the CBI.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Setting the bar high



Aspirants undergo a physical test on the last day of an Army recruitment drive in Patna, Bihar, on Friday. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

Shivpal's disqualification from U.P. House sought

SP moves plea under anti-defection law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party has moved an application seeking the disqualification of Shivpal Singh Yadav from the Uttar Pradesh Assembly under the anti-defection law.

Mr. Shivpal, the estranged uncle of SP president Akhilesh Yadav, was elected from the Jaswantnagar Assembly constituency in the 2017 State elections.

New party

He then floated a new party, Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia), and had contested the recent Lok Sabha elections on its symbol.

The application from the leader of the SP in the Assembly, Ram Govind Chaudhary, has been received and a letter seeking Mr. Shivpal's reply has been issued, sources in the Assembly said.



Shivpal Yadav

Speaker Hriday Narain Dixit will take a decision on the matter after receiving Mr. Shivpal's reply, they said.

PSP(L) spokesman C.P. Rai said before contesting the Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Shivpal had informed the Speaker about his new party, and he will reiterate the same in his reply.

Mr. Shivpal had contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from the Firozabad seat.

Rajasthan launches information portal

In a first for a State, citizens can access details pertaining to 13 departments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

In a pioneering step, the first-ever public information portal was launched in Rajasthan on Friday promising to provide information about government authorities and departments suo motu to the public in the true spirit of the Right To Information Act. The portal has brought yet another distinction to Rajasthan, where the RTI movement had started in 1990s.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot inaugurated the portal at B.M. Birla Auditorium here in the presence of former Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah, former Law Commission



Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, second from left, inaugurating the portal on Friday. ■ PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

chairman Justice A.P. Shah and a galaxy of RTI activists, including Magsaysay Award winner Aruna Roy.

The State government collaborated with the civil society groups to develop the portal, the first of its kind in

the country, initially giving information pertaining to 13 departments on a single platform.

In his inaugural address, Mr. Gehlot said the new web portal, named the Jan Soochna Portal-2019, would

ensure compliance with Section 4(2) of the RTI Act mandating the public authorities to disclose information in the public domain, so that the people need not file applications under the law to obtain information. "I have a sentimental attachment with the RTI Act... I attended the first dharna seeking this right 20 years ago," he said.

In a veiled reference to the RTI Amendment Bill passed by the Parliament recently, Mr. Gehlot said attempts to weaken the statute would only erode the resolve to bring transparency and accountability in administration.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Tragedy strikes Ganesh idol immersions

33, including two minors, drown in M.P., Maharashtra and Delhi

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Thirty-three people, most of them in their 20s, drowned during the immersion of Ganesh idols in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Delhi, officials said on Friday. Some of the dead were minors, they said.

In Madhya Pradesh's capital Bhopal, 11 people died when two overcrowded country boats carrying a 20-ft. tall idol for immersion in Lower Lake in Khatlapura capsized. Eight were rescued. Seventeen people were on the boats when the incident took place around 4.30 a.m., Bhopal Collector Tharun Kumar Pithode said.

In Maharashtra, at least 18 people drowned during the immersion of Ganesh idols. Four people drowned in



Rescue workers search the Lower Lake in Bhopal where two overcrowded boats capsized on Friday. ■ A.M. FARUQUI

Amravati, three in Ratnagiri, two each in Nashik, Sindhudurg and Satara, one each in Thane, Dhule, Buldhana, Akola and Bhandara.

Two men and two women drowned in the Yamuna in Delhi during Ganesh idol immersion, officials said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath ordered a magisterial inquiry and announced a compensation of

₹1 lakh each for the families of the victims.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted: "The capsizing of a boat at Khatlapura Ghat in Bhopal is saddening. In this hour of grief, our thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives."

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 3
LIVED TO TELL THE TALE ▶ PAGE 9

DUSU polls: ABVP wins 3 posts, NSUI 1

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

In a repeat of last year's results, the RSS-backed Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad won three seats in the Delhi University Students' Union elections, while the Congress-backed National Students' Union of India won one seat.

ABVP's Akshit Dahiya won the post of DUSU president, trouncing NSUI's Chetna Tyagi by a margin of 19,039 votes.

The ABVP winners took out a victory procession to the university's Arts Faculty, where they shouted slogans near the bust of Swami Vivekananda.

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