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NEARBY



No leads in Madhu Vihar killing, 30 questioned

NEW DELHI

Even after questioning over 30 people, the police are yet to make a headway in the murder of a 59-year-old woman, who was shot dead by bike-borne assailants in east Delhi's Madhu Vihar on Saturday. An officer said on Sunday that they had obtained footages from 20 CCTVs along the possible escape routes taken by the two assailants after the murder.

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Women molested at resto-pub; probe on

NEW DELHI

Three women were allegedly molested by a group of men at a resto-bar in south Delhi's Greater Kailash, the police said on Sunday. The complainant posted her ordeal on social media. DCP (South) Atul Thakur said, "We have registered an FIR and obtained CCTV footage to ascertain the identity of the accused."

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Choose nationalistic parties, says Amit Shah

BJP kicks off Maharashtra campaign

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Kicking off the Bharatiya Janata Party's campaign for the Maharashtra Assembly election on Sunday, party president Amit Shah asked voters to choose between nationalistic parties, such as the BJP that withdrew Article 370 from Jammu & Kashmir and family-oriented parties, such as the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), that opposed the decision.

"This is the first election after the decision on Article 370. Those parties that opposed the abrogation of Article 370 should be shown their place in this election. The people of Maharashtra now need to take a decision. Will they choose a nationalistic party that takes pride in serving them or a party that



Amit Shah at a meeting in Mumbai on Sunday.

■ ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

just serves a family," asked Mr. Shah.

He was addressing a public rally organised by the Mumbai unit of the BJP on the withdrawal of Article 370.

The BJP is set to contest the coming Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly elections on this plank.

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LOCAL MATTERS ► EDITORIAL

Cannabis high for Manipur's start-up dream

The State government is exploring the possibility of using it for medicine

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Cannabis legalised for medicinal and industrial use may give Manipur's start-up dream a high.

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition government, headed by Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh, has been hard-selling its 'Start-up Manipur' campaign since August 2018. Round two of the campaign began on September 20.

On Sunday, Mr. Singh told *The Hindu* from Imphal that his government was planning to legalise cannabis, or marijuana, to enable units of companies using it as an ingredient for medicines or for other industrial purposes to open.



Wanted weed: Cannabis is often grown in extremist-controlled areas. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

Start-ups would also be considered. "But such companies have to be capable," he said.

Mr. Singh said he had taken his cue from States such as Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand that have

legalised cultivation and harvest of cannabis for medicinal purposes.

"Oil extracted from cannabis is known to be useful in strengthening nerves and treating people suffering from paralysis. Also, legalising cannabis can boost the economy," he said.

After the first round of 'Start-up Manipur', the State government reportedly identified 334 entrepreneurs for financial assistance. Of them, 29 were seen to have high potential.

'Best weed'

Cannabis competes with opium across large swathes of land in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. Drug enforcement officials say the cannabis

grown in remote areas of Manipur is considered the "best weed" across the country.

Agencies such as the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) destroy poppy cultivation but have a tough time checking cannabis grown on a large scale in interior areas. Moreover, many plantations are in areas controlled by extremist groups.

Surveys by the NCB and some private agencies say much of the marijuana in Manipur has been cultivated for at least four decades in Churachandpur, Senapati and Ukhrul districts.

Manipur is on the edge of the Golden Triangle of drug trade, comprising Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and China.

Swaying to the season



Festive spirit: Dancers in traditional attire rehearsing Garba, a dance style which originated in Gujarat, ahead of Navaratri, in Ahmedabad on Sunday. The festival begins on September 29. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

₹37,000 crore tax savings for top firms

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

The Centre's move to cut corporate tax rates from 30% to 22% through an ordinance issued on Friday will yield tax savings of at least ₹37,000 crore for the top 1,000 listed companies, said Crisil Research in an impact note called 'Tax s(h)aving' released on Sunday.

These firms account for over a fourth of the ₹1.45 lakh crore tax revenue loss estimated by the government. The tax savings for these firms could be even higher, Crisil reckoned, as the ₹37,000 crore estimate is based on profits before tax for 2018-19.

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Khalistani terror module busted

Initial probe reveals use of drones to deliver weapons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab police on Sunday said it had busted a terrorist module of the revived Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) that was conspiring to unleash a series of terrorist strikes in Punjab and adjoining States.

The module was backed by the Pakistan-based chief of the KZF, Ranjeet Singh, alias Neeta, and his German-based associate, Gurmeet Singh, alias Bagga.

Four persons were arrested and a huge cache of arms, including five AK-47 rifles, pistols, satellite phones and hand grenades, seized.

The module was planning to carry out multiple terrorist strikes in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and other States.



Punjab CM Amarinder Singh has decided to hand over probe to the NIA.

Given the international links and ramifications of the conspiracy, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has decided to hand over the investigation to the National Investigation Agency to ensure that the conspiracy is fully and expeditiously unravelled.

With initial investigations revealing the use of drones to deliver terrorists weapons and communication hardware from across the border, the Chief Minister

urged the Union government to direct the Indian Air Force and the Border Security Force to launch countermeasures to check any threat from drones to the border State.

Director-General of Police Dinkar Gupta said the weapons were suspected to have been delivered recently across the border from Pakistan through drones. He said the aim was to scale up terrorism in J&K, Punjab and the Indian hinterland, in the wake of the recent developments in the Valley.

Neeta and Bagga had reorganised their terror group. "With the help of sleeper cells, they had spotted, radicalised and recruited local members, besides arranging funds and sophisticated weapons from across the border," Mr. Gupta said.

Kashmir Valley's IT hub gasps as Net shutdown continues

Several workers at the Rangreth facility have been laid off

VIJAITA SINGH
SRINAGAR

It's "no work, no pay" for Omar Yousuf, a computer engineer in Srinagar. He comes to office every day though.

The future of Yousuf and hundreds of others employed in the IT sector in the Kashmir Valley is in jeopardy due to the prolonged Internet shutdown. Several workers have been handed pink slips.

The sprawling Information Technology (IT) hub at Rangreth in Budgam district, on the outskirts of Srinagar, wears a deserted look.

Since Internet connectivity was snapped on August 5 following the revocation of the special status of the State under Article 370, one of the only IT hubs in the Valley is struggling for survival. There are approximately 1,200 employees who work in the Rangreth complex.

Funds crunch

Some firms that have been operating here for over a decade have had to lay off as much as 60% of their staff as they are unable to bear financial losses as a result of the shutdown. "Internet is oxygen for the IT sector; how can we survive in its absence?" said one of the founders of a firm at Rangreth. He, however, wished to remain anonymous.

Uncertain future

The future of IT sector workers in Kashmir Valley is in jeopardy because of the prolonged Internet shutdown

- Around 22,000 persons are employed in around 500 IT firms
- Around 1,200 work in seven companies in the industrial complex at Rangreth in Budgam district
- The Internet connection was never suspended in the IT hub even during the agitation and unrest in 2008, 2010 and 2016
- The Department of Telecommunications has strict security compliance norms for IT companies. They have to maintain a logbook of all URLs visited by them and their clients for six months



Internet was snapped at the IT hub after Mehbooba Mufti's tweets on the afternoon of August 5, hours after connectivity was suspended across the State

The entrepreneur says the Valley has seen several disturbances in the past, including the 2016 unrest after the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani, but the IT sector was never hit the way it has been this time.

He said the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has stringent compliance protocols for IT service providers in the State. The service providers have to maintain a log of each Uniform Resource Locator (URL) accessed by them and their clients through the commercial leased lines and report to the authorities on a daily basis.

"We have to send people to Delhi to check e-mails. In

the past one month, we lost two clients and suffered a loss of ₹8-9 crore. We are a small company... 60% employees are serving notice; we have no option but to lay them off. It feels bad – these young men and women have been associated with us for several years," he said.

"We come here, talk to each other and leave whenever we wish to. There is nothing to do, we did not receive salary for the month of August," says Khalid Bhat, who works at an IT services and software firm.

Mr. Bhat earned ₹20,000 per month.

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Rajnath warns Pak. not to repeat its mistakes

'Rights violations can break up nation'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PATNA

Warning Pakistan not to repeat the "mistakes of 1965 and 1971", Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said the neighbouring country could get broken into various parts due to flagrant human rights violations against the Baloch and the Pashtun.

On the government's decision to revoke Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir, he said the constitutional provision was like a "canker" that bled the State, and asserted that a majority of the population in the State supported the move.

Addressing a 'Jan Jagran Sabha' (public awareness meeting) organised by the BJP, where leaders spoke on the decision to strip the State of its special status, Mr.



Rajnath Singh at the 'Jan Jagran Sabha' in Patna on Sunday. ■ RANJEET KUMAR

Singh said his party had lived up to its promises.

"As a nationalist party, the BJP never softened its stand on the issue. Article 370 was like *nasoor* (canker), which left Jammu and Kashmir bleeding. We have now demonstrated that we are an honest and credible party, which fulfils its promises," he said.

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