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India, U.S. trade deal falls through

Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump discussed trade and terrorism during their bilateral meeting which lasted for about 40 minutes, Mr. Gokhale said.

"We believe that we have given a good understanding to the U.S. side about the challenges that we face on the count of terrorism in India, including in Jammu & Kashmir," the Foreign Secretary said. Answering questions from the media prior to their bilateral meeting at the UN building, President Trump urged Prime Minister Modi and Pakistan Premier Imran Khan to meet for a "good outcome" on Kashmir.

(With inputs from Kallol Bhattacharjee)

'Father of India'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
WASHINGTON

On his experience at the "Howdy, Modi!" diaspora event, U.S. President Donald Trump said, "They love this gentleman to my right. People went crazy, he [Narendra Modi] is like an American version of Elvis."

"I remember India before was very torn. There was a lot of dissension, fighting and he brought it all together. Like a father would. Maybe, he is the Father of India," he added.

Punjab CM urges Amit Shah to tackle cross-border drones

Cache of arms and satellite phones suspected to have been airdropped

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Two days after the Punjab police seized a huge cache of arms, including five AK-47 rifles, pistols, hand grenades and satellite phones, and investigation revealed that the weapons were suspected to have been delivered from across the border from Pakistan by drones, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday said the incident was a new dimension to Pakistan's sinister designs in the aftermath of the abrogation of Article 370.

The Chief Minister urged the Union Home Minister to tackle the problem at the earliest. Tagging Union Home Minister Amit Shah in



Recent incidents of Pakistan-origin drones dropping consignments of arms & ammunition is a new and serious dimension on Pakistan's sinister designs in aftermath of the abrogation of Article 370.

a tweet from his official handle, Capt. Amarinder wrote, "Recent incidents of Pakistan-origin drones dropping consignments of arms & ammunition is a new and serious dimension on Pakistan's sinister designs in aftermath of the abrogation of Article 370. Request

@AmitShah ji to ensure that this drone problem is handled at the earliest."

On September 22, the police busted a terrorist module of the revived Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF), backed by a Pakistan- and Germany-based terror group, made the arms seizure and arrest

of four suspects from the outskirts of Chola Sahib village in Tarn Taran District. State Director-General of Police Dinkar Gupta had said that initial investigation revealed that the weapons were suspected to have been delivered recently across the border from Pakistan over drones launched by Pakistan's ISI and the state-sponsored Jihadi and pro-Khalistani terrorist outfits working under its command.

"The large-scale infiltration appeared to have been aimed at scaling terrorism and militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and the Indian hinterland, in the wake of the recent developments in the Valley," he had said.



Sharad Pawar, right, with Ajit Pawar. FILE PHOTO

ED files case against NCP chief, nephew

Launches probe in co-op bank scam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate has registered a money laundering case purportedly involving NCP chief Sharad Pawar, his nephew Ajit Pawar and about 70 former functionaries of the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) to probe an alleged ₹25,000-crore scam.

The agency has launched the probe on the basis of an FIR lodged by the Economic Offences Wing of the Mumbai Police, following a Bombay High Court directive on August 22.

"The money laundering case has been registered against the then chairman, managing directors and directors of the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank, along with Mr. Sharad Pawar, Mr. Ajit Pawar, Diliprao Deshmukh, Isharlal Jain, Jayant Patil, Shivaji Rao Nalvade, Anand Rao Adsul, Rajendra Shingane, Madan Patil and others," said an agency official.

It is alleged that the then top executives and managerial staff of the bank conspired with office-bearers and directors of Sakhar Karkhanas (cooperative sugar factories) and Soot Girnis to give out loans in a "fraudulent" manner.

Fraudulent loans

The loans were provided to the factories, despite their weak financials and negative net-worth, whose owners had alleged links with the bank officials. No collateral was taken in several cas-

es and additional working facilities were also extended to some factories without prudent reasons, as is alleged.

"There were several irregularities in the sanctioning of loans, committed only with the purpose of extending benefits to the directors of the lending bank, thereby defrauding and cheating the bank and its shareholders," said the agency official.

Owing to the alleged mismanagement, besides increasing overhead expenditures, the sugar factories turned sick and were sold at a rate much lower than the reserve price. The buyers had personal or political links with the board of directors. The consent of borrowing units was not taken before undertaking such a sale, the agency alleged.

Listing the alleged irregularities, the agency claimed that the directors flouted various NABARD, RBI and SARFAESI guidelines. "There was a huge misappropriation of funds on the part of committee members, directors and loan committee members of the cooperative bank," the ED has alleged. Mr. Ajit Pawar served as Deputy Chief Minister from November 10, 2010, to September 26, 2014.

Mr. Sharad Pawar told presspersons: "I would have been surprised had no such action been taken. I thank the agencies wholeheartedly. The people are watching and they will take the appropriate decision."

26 dead, 300 injured as quake jolts PoK

In a tweet, DG ISPR (Spokesperson of Pakistan Armed Forces) Major-General Asif Ghafoor, said: "COAS [Chief of Army Staff] directs immediate rescue operation in aid of civil administration for victims of earthquake... Army troops with aviation and medical support teams dispatched."

Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry, who hails from the disaster management department said. People turned to social media to express fears about not being able to get in touch with their families in the Valley.

(With PTI inputs)

near the India-Pakistan border," said J.L. Gautam, head of operations at the Indian National Centre for Seismology (NCS). There were no reports of damage or casualties from Jammu and Kashmir, even as Internet and mobile communications remain suspended in large parts of the State.

"The earthquake was felt but there are no reports of any damage," Amir Ali, from the disaster management department said. People turned to social media to express fears about not being able to get in touch with their families in the Valley.

Khattar rebuts Opposition's tirade on slowdown

Haryana's GDP and farm growth higher than nation's, says CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

With the Opposition parties raking up the issue of economic slowdown in the run up to the State Assembly polls slated for October 21, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Khattar on Tuesday said the State was economically strong and sound with a GDP growth at 8.2% in 2018-19 against the country's 6.8% GDP.

Mr. Khattar said the State's economy was in far better shape than many other States. "We have far better economic parameters than neighbouring States like Punjab, where at times employees don't get their salaries on time," he said here at a press conference.

The fact that Haryana's GDP for 2018-19 has been more than the country's GDP indicates the sound economy of the State, he said. "In 2018-19 the agriculture growth was 5.5%

against the country's 2.9% and the industry growth rate was 8.6% against the country's 6.9%. Even in the service sector Haryana has recorded 8.2% growth against the country's 7.5%," he said.

"In the ease of doing business rankings, Haryana was at the 14th position in 2014 but now it's at the third spot. It is due to the business friendly environment that in the past five years the State has seen investments of ₹80,000 crore, which is the highest for five-year period," he said.

Mr. Khattar dismissed the allegation of the Opposition parties that the State government had failed to tackle the unemployment problem. "As much is being said, it is not that much," he said at a news conference here. "According to figures registered with the government, around 80,000 graduates and post-graduates are unemployed.. Some people with matric, Class10 or Class 12 pass qualifications are also unemployed but it is not that much as is being portrayed."

'Govt. can't undermine Parliament'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Moments after the British Supreme Court ruled Prime Minister Boris Johnson's suspension of Parliament as illegal, Congress Lok Sabha member Shashi Tharoor on Tuesday said the judgement made it clear that parliamentary majority cannot be used by the executive to undermine the Parliament itself.

"To put it bluntly, the executive, in the name of its Parliamentary majority, cannot use Parliament's own powers and privileges to undermine Parliament itself. In short, Parliament cannot be induced by its own majority to commit suicide. Note: UK precedents are often cited by Indian courts," Mr. Tharoor tweeted.

Though Mr. Tharoor didn't specify the context, it is seen as a reference to the Centre's decision to dilute Article 370 and the special status for Jammu and Kashmir.

PM must ask 'Howdy farmers, youth': Congress

Party brings up unemployment, inflation and fuel prices

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday asked the Centre to spell out the steps it had taken to contain rising fuel prices, food inflation, unemployment and petty crimes across the country.

Reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks at the 'Howdy, Modi' event in Houston, U.S. that "everything is fine in India", the Congress listed out high fuel prices, rising food inflation and unemployment among issues that contradict Mr. Modi's statement.

Twin posers

At a press conference, Congress spokespersons Sharmistha Mukherjee and Pranav Jha said they expect Mr. Modi to ask 'Howdy Farmers and Howdy Youth' when he returns to India.

Attacking the government over consistently rising fuel



Sharmistha Mukherjee

prices in the past one week, the Congress said the Centre was levying ₹20 as central excise on every litre of petrol while on diesel it was ₹15.83 per litre.

"Former Petroleum Minister Veerappa Moily has mentioned how the UPA government had planned an oil reservoir to store 5 lakh metric tonnes of crude that could deal with incidents like the attack on international oil wells [in Saudi Arabia]... They were to come up in Vizag, Mangalore and later in Odisha. We would like

to know what happened to these sanctioned projects?" asked Mr. Jha.

Ms. Mukherjee said that not just fuel but even daily food items had seen prices shooting up. "While onions are being sold at ₹70 a kg, cauliflower has touched ₹100. Even tomatoes are selling for ₹50 a kg. We would like to know from the government what steps are you taking to ease the situation," she said. Ms. Mukherjee said the situation for the common man had been made worse by growing joblessness, both among urban and rural workers.

"When you have a young population, then generally it is considered as demographic dividend. But if we fail to channelise their energy positively, then demographic dividend can turn into a demographic nightmare. It may result in a spike in petty crimes," she said.

Younger lot in the Congress begs to differ

Like Milind's support for 'Howdy, Modi!', several others have openly backed the dilution of Article 370

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

The Twitter exchange between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Mumbai Congress chief Milind Deora not only intensified speculation on Tuesday about the political future of the latter but also brought into focus the discontent among a section of the younger leaders in the Congress.

Just when Mr. Deora termed the speculation "unfounded" on social media, 41-year-old Pradyot Deb Barman wrote a Facebook post to announce his resignation as the Congress chief in Tripura. With questions being raised about the timing of



Speaking their mind: Milind Deora and Jyotiradiya Scindia are among those who have gone against the party line.

Mr. Deora's tweet - describing Prime Minister Modi's Houston event as a "momentous first" - just ahead of the Maharashtra polls, the former Mumbai Congress chief issued a statement.

"For those who have already imagined and charted my forward path, I wish to give you one unambiguous answer: I will serve my country to the best of my ability and I will remain bipartisan

when it comes to issues of national interest and foreign policy," Mr. Deora said in a statement. "My family's relationships with institutions, political parties and leaders were built keeping India's interests in mind."

Among the reasons he cited for his resignation, Mr. Barman underlined the Congress's reluctance to agree to his plea in court that the National Register of Citizens be implemented in Tripura.

"I start this day without having to listen to criminals and liars...not having to listen to 'High Command' on how to accommodate corrupt people in high positions," he wrote in a Face-

book post. Several young leaders have backed the Modi government on different issues of late.

Leaders like Jyotiradiya Scindia, Deepender Hooda were among those who supported the abrogation of the special status for Jammu and Kashmir. Jitin Prasada supported the Prime Minister's call for population control.

"All these leaders have come into politics because of their families and have not seen struggle. They are getting impatient now as they don't see much of a future for themselves and the Congress," said Sri Prakash Singh, Professor of Political Science, Delhi University.

We must remove doubts in Chinese minds, says Swamy

Beijing worried over Delhi's ties with Washington, he says

ATUL ANEJA
BEIJING

Ahead of the Modi-Xi informal summit, China is concerned about a possible media orchestration of a border incident next month during the Chinese President's visit to India, says BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Subramanian Swamy.

"I would say that there is in the minds [of the Chinese] some doubts that we need to remove. One is they are concerned that what you have done with Article 370, are we going to do something about Ladakh," Dr. Swamy said in an interaction with resident Indian media in



Subramanian Swamy

Beijing on Monday.

Dr. Swamy met Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui. He also addressed the elite Party School of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

"We [in India] can't control every military commander just as they [in China] can't. But they have said

there has been new military activity in Aksai Chin and Arunachal," he said.

Dr. Swamy stressed that China was concerned about India's ties with the U.S., which were highlighted on Sunday in Houston where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump addressed a packed football stadium.

"We need a political understanding [with China] that in any intervention of the U.S. in Asia, we will not be a party in South China Sea islands, Taiwan or Hong Kong. On Tibet, we will not allow anyone to get into Tibet," Dr. Swamy observed.

Will disown lynching accused: Bhagwat

Fears of Kashmiris about loss of land and jobs should be allayed, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat, at a meeting on Tuesday with 80 journalists representing 50 organisations from over 30 countries, said the RSS was against all forms of violence. In a specific comment on incidents of lynching, he said the organisation would "disown any swayamsewak found guilty of such an act".

The interaction restricted to foreign journalists lasted over two-and-a-half hours and covered topics from the recent abrogation of the special status of J&K to homosexuality and caste-based reservations.

Mr. Bhagwat was accompanied by RSS second-in-



Mohan Bhagwat

command Suresh (Bhaiyyaji) Joshi, joint general secretaries Manmohan Vaidya and Krishan Gopal, northern region in-charge Bajran Lal Gupta and Delhi unit head Kulbhushan Ahuja.

"This interaction was part of the continuous process where the 'Sarsanghchalak' [chief] engages in constructive dialogue with people from different walks of socie-

ty," said an official statement put out by the RSS. While the statement did not go into the content of the discussion, sources present at the meeting said it covered almost all aspects of contemporary discourse.

Mr. Bhagwat told the audience that the abrogation of J&K's special status would help "integrate" the people with the rest of India, and added that whatever fears they had about loss of land and jobs should be allayed.

He came out in strong support of the proposed Citizenship Amendment Bill saying Hindus had no place of succour other than India. The Bill proposes to grant citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Jains Parsis and Christians fleeing persecution from

neighbouring countries.

Mr. Bhagwat advised the journalists to "believe in what you see" and not to judge the RSS on the basis of propaganda, adding that the RSS was working every day to demolish propaganda against itself. Much of what he spoke of, including that the organisation views homosexuality as a "variation" rather than an abnormality, had been mentioned by him in his three-day lecture series at the Vigyan Bhavan last year.

He did, however, briefly comment on the handling of the economy, after a declaration that he was "no expert" but that there was "no paralysis as under the 10 years of UPA" and that the rest of it was part of a process.

Shah launches website on security firms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that in olden times, the Gurkha community was synonymous with *chowkidars* (security guards) because of the trust they enjoyed with people.

Private security guards were the first line of defence, he said.

Addressing private security agencies at a function in Delhi, where he inaugurated a portal related to private security, Mr. Shah praised the efforts of two of them during the 26/11 Mumbai attacks in stopping the terrorists from inflicting much damage.

"In olden days, *chowkidar* meant Gurkhas. The community had created a unique identity for themselves in area of trust... people used to hire them as they were brave and honest. In some States, *chowkidars* had become synonymous with Gurkhas... the private security agencies should also follow this model and offer trustworthy services," Mr. Shah said.

"Private security agencies can also recruit students trained by the National Cadet Corps [NCC]...so you can get raw material who are full of *Desh bhakti* [patriotism] and that too at government cost," he said.

Mr. Shah told owners of security firms, "All it takes is a contribution of ₹22 a year for insurance coverage of ₹2 lakh under the government scheme. Can't you spend this much for the well-being of your security guard?"