

NEARBY



CM rides buses, gets positive feedback

NEW DELHI
A day after the Aam Aadmi Party government implemented the free ride scheme for women in DTC buses, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal took rides in DTC and cluster buses to interact with women passengers and seek their feedback. The response received by the Chief Minister was “overwhelmingly positive”, a statement issued by the government read.

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₹5 lakh each for families of slain Bengal labourers

KOLKATA
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has announced a compensation of ₹5 lakh each for the families of six labourers gunned down in Kulgam of south Kashmir. Describing it as a “most unfortunate incident”, Ms. Banerjee demanded “a strong probe”. She deputed the ADG in South Bengal to inquire about the incident.

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Terror in Kashmir a big problem: MEPs

India's move to revoke Article 370 an internal issue, say the members, who were on a visit to the State

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

he delegation of Members of European Parliament (MEPs), on a visit to Srinagar on Wednesday, said “terrorism is a severe problem in Kashmir” and named Pakistan as its source. They felt India's decision to revoke provisions of Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu & Kashmir was an internal issue. “It should not be used [against India],” they said.

The MEPs described the killing of six non-locals by suspected militants in Kulgam, south Kashmir, as “inhuman”. “Terrorism is not finished yet in Kashmir. Terrorism in Kashmir is not only the problem of India. I think it's our problem, as well as of the international community. We support India in fighting for a solution to the problem,” three of the delegation told a select group of journalists in Srinagar's Old Airfield.

‘Allow Indian MPs too’

Another MEP, Nicolaus Fest, however, said the Indian Opposition parties should also be allowed to visit the Kashmir Valley. “I think if you let in European Union parliamentarians, you should also let in Opposition politicians from India. So there is some kind of imbalance. The government should somehow address it.”

The MEPs, who addressed



Back from Kashmir: EU parliamentarians at the New Delhi airport on Wednesday. •PTI

the press, were Bill Newton from the United Kingdom, Ryszard Czarnecki from Poland and Mariana Thierry from France. Henri Malosse from France, a businessman and a former president of the European Economic and Social Committee, also spoke.

They claimed that they interacted with youth, politicians, women and traders during their two-day stay in Kashmir and termed it a “beginning of their engagement” with the civil society there.

“We are here to get information. We are well equipped now and can go

back and share this with our colleagues and respective countries. The situation is not as bad as we thought. People here want peace, better life and better vocations, and want jobs. Terrorism has destroyed such dreams,” they said.

Mr. Newton said the United Kingdom also faced the problem of Northern Ireland, where Christians fought Christians. “Fighting is not a solution. India has a long procedure of talks, agreeing to talk and listening to each other. It is because of talks that Northern Ireland is a peaceful place now. My ad-

vice is talk and don't fight,” he said.

Referring to the presentations of the Army and the police, the MEPs said, “Most terrorists killed in J&K have come from abroad, in fact they came from Pakistan. It is an international problem. All protests should be directed against terrorism.”

The MEPs described J&K as a dynamic place for building tourism infrastructure, development projects and educational institutes.

BIGGEST DIPLOMATIC BLUNDER, SAYS CONGRESS ► PAGE 12
VISITING KASHMIR ► EDITORIAL

J&K, Ladakh become Union Territories

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The bifurcation of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories came into effect at midnight Wednesday. Girish Chandra Murmu and Radha Krishna Mathur will be sworn in as Lieutenant Governors of J&K and Ladakh respectively at two separate ceremonies on Thursday.

J&K Chief Justice Gita Mittal will administer the oath to Mr. Mathur at 7.15 a.m. in Leh district of Ladakh. Around 12.45 p.m., she will swear in Mr. Murmu in J&K's summer capital Srinagar. A special plane has been kept ready in Leh to meet the deadlines of the two ceremonies. Multiple security layers have been finalised to ensure peaceful and smooth ceremonies.

Ms. Mittal arrived in Leh on Wednesday, while the Lieutenant Governor-designates also reached their respective stations.

It is not clear who will administer the oath to Ms. Mittal.

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FAROOQ TO BE IN PSA DETENTION FOR 3 MORE MONTHS ► PAGE 12

HC quashes cow smuggling case against Pehlu Khan

‘Animals purchased for dairy farming’

The death trail

A look at the key dates in the Alwar mob lynching case of 2017

April 1, 2017: Pehlu Khan and his sons, Irshad and Arif, attacked near Behror



April 2: Police file FIR against Pehlu Khan, his sons and others under Rajasthan Bovine Animal Act on the charge of cow smuggling

April 3: Pehlu

Khan succumbs to injuries

April 4: Police file a murder case against the attackers

May 24, 2019: Police file chargesheet in cow smuggling case

Aug. 14: Alwar Additional District & Sessions Judge frees all the six accused

Oct. 30: The High Court quashes the FIR and the chargesheet in the cow smuggling case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Rajasthan High Court on Wednesday quashed a cow smuggling case registered against Haryana dairy farmer Pehlu Khan, who was allegedly lynched by a mob of cow vigilantes in 2017.

The relief covered Khan's two sons and the owner of the pick-up truck in which they were transporting the cattle.

The court ruled that Khan, 55, had purchased the animals for dairy and not slaughter.

Justice Pankaj Bhandari

at the High Court's Jaipur Bench annulled the FIR report registered under the Rajasthan Bovine Animal (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act, 1995, as well as the chargesheet filed against the four in the trial court.

The court held that there was no evidence to show that the cows were being transported for slaughter.

Driver Khan Mohammed and Pehlu Khan's sons Irshad and Arif had challenged the FIR.

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Delhi's pollution spikes to ‘severe’ category

Capital chokes from stubble burning in Punjab, Haryana; AQI recorded at 419

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Air pollution in Delhi hit the ‘severe’ category on Wednesday, with an Air Quality Index of 419, the season's highest. Government agencies attributed the spike to stubble burning in neighbouring States.

The contribution of stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana to Delhi's air pollution was 35% on Wednesday, which is the highest this season, said government-run monitoring agency SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research).

Pollution numbers

“The overall air quality of Delhi after recovering from firecrackers' smoke has again plunged to severe since wee hours of today [Wednesday], purely attributed to stubble fire which has



An agricultural worker setting fire to crop residue on the outskirts of Mohali on Wednesday. • AKHILESH KUMAR

touched the season's highest share of 35% today,” it said.

“Last night's [Wednesday] extremely calm surface wind conditions further aggravated the situation by accumulation of pollutants,” the forecasting agency added.

The AQI on Wednesday was 419 at 4 p.m., which is the average of the past 24 hours, up from 400 on Tuesday and 368 on Monday, according to the Central Pollu-

tion Control Board.

The air quality, however, is expected to improve from Friday. Effective stubble fire counts in Haryana and Punjab have significantly declined to 1,057 during the past 24 hours, compared with 2,577 in the 24 hours prior to it.

The Delhi government has identified five locations – Wazirpur, Anand Vihar, Ashok Vihar, Vivek Vihar and Ba-

wana – which have been critically polluted in the last two days. Acting on the directions of Chief Secretary Vijay Dev, different government agencies have intensified pollution control measures in these areas.

“The DPCC [Delhi Pollution Control Committee] has deployed 16 night patrolling teams to impose environmental compensation on agencies, units for construction and demolition waste, garbage burning, and dumping,” an official statement said. SAFAR also advised people to avoid all outdoor physical activities, give morning walks a miss, and keep all windows closed. “Stop any activity if you experience unusual coughing, chest discomfort, wheezing, or fatigue and consult a doctor,” its advisory said.

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BJP MLAs elect Fadnavis as House leader

SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

Amid the ongoing tussle with the Shiv Sena over power-sharing, the BJP on Wednesday re-elected Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis as leader of the party in the Maharashtra Assembly.

All 105 newly elected legislators of the party supported the proposal recommending Mr. Fadnavis' name as Chief Minister in the presence of central observers, Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and party vice-president Avinash Khanna, at Vidhan Bhawan in south Mumbai.

Senior BJP leaders announced that a BJP-Shiv Sena government would be in place in the next seven days.

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All forms of authority under challenge, says Justice Bobde

‘Personal attacks on judges uncalled for and destructive’

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India-designate, Justice S.A. Bobde, said every religion has beliefs not supported by reason.

“Every religion has its own practices which are a mystery. There are beliefs not supported by reason. Look at the very act of praying... every religion has its own way of praying and conditions for offering prayers,” Justice Bobde told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

Justice Bobde, who would be sworn in as the 47th Chief Justice of India on November 18, believes we live in an age where authority itself, be it of parents or Parliament, is under challenge.

He was responding to a question whether the authority of the judiciary is un-



New innings: Every religion has beliefs not supported by reason, says Justice S.A. Bobde. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

der “attack” from social media and online articles; and whether they have exceeded the reasonable limits of free speech.

“It is not just the judiciary... What is happening in society? There is challenge

to the authority of parents, schools, Parliament. This is the age of challenging authority,” he said. “Personal attacks on judges are uncalled for and destructive,” he said.

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Chidambaram seeks interim bail from HC in INX Media case

Former Union Minister has cited poor health as reason

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Wednesday approached the Delhi High Court seeking interim bail in the INX Media money laundering case citing health grounds.

Mr. Chidambaram has sought interim relief for six days to enable him to consult and get examined by his regular doctor at the Asian Institute of Gastroenterology, Hyderabad, as he was not responding to the treatment at the AIIMS, Delhi.

The plea also said that for

the past several days Mr. Chidambaram was suffering from chronic abdominal pain due to Crohn's disease, with which he was diagnosed in 2017. Additionally, the plea stated that Mr. Chidambaram had lost weight from 73.5 kg to 66 kg due to the ailment.

The 74-year-old's petition is posted for hearing on Thursday before a Bench of Justice Suresh Kumar Kait.

Mr. Chidambaram was on Wednesday sent to judicial custody till November 13 by a Delhi court which said sufficient time had been given to

the Enforcement Directorate for his interrogation.

ED set to file chargesheet

Special judge Ajay Kumar Kuhar dismissed a plea of the ED seeking a one-day custodial interrogation of the former Minister. The agency had already been granted 14 days of his custody. The agency is preparing to file a chargesheet in connection with the INX Media case.

The Congress leader has already been granted bail by the Supreme Court in the INX Media case, which is being probed by the CBI.

In Bihar, faking Chhath puja leave invites ‘the curse’

Policemen in Samastipur district upset at being asked to take a pledge, or face divine wrath

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

For about 400 junior policemen in Bihar's Samastipur district, a pledge of honesty is part of the application form for leave to perform Chhath puja. It comes with a rider: If they give a false declaration just to avail leave, their entire family would be visited by a curse.

As the four-day Chhath puja (a festival of thanksgiving to the sun) gets under way in November in Bihar and some neighbouring States, the personnel in Samastipur

seeking leave have been asked to swear in the name of the Chhath deity that they intend to perform the ritual themselves. If they cheat, a “curse may befall their children, and in fact the whole family.” The format of the pledge for policemen of junior rank went viral on social media on Wednesday, drawing protests from the men in uniform.

“I...take a pledge in the name of the Chhath deity that I, myself, am observing Chhath puja for the last...years. Oh goddess Chhath! If I take leave on a



ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

lie, my children and my whole family will be cursed,” said one pledge form, filled

up by a policeman in Samastipur and signed as Shri Narayan Singh.

The four-day Chhath is a mahapary (great festival) in Bihar and other eastern parts, and in Uttar Pradesh. The festival, known for its austerity and piety, begins on Thursday.

The honesty pledge has not gone down well with the personnel. The president of the Bihar Policemen's Association, Mrityunjay Singh, told journalists in Patna that the “pledge is tantamount to an assault on religious sentiments and

betrays mistrust and doubts about the integrity of junior rank officials”.

“Should they be subjected to such humiliation? I'm going to meet top officials at the headquarters,” he added.

On the official side, there was denial. Samastipur Superintendent of Police Vikash Burman said, “There is no official pledge form. We have taken a serious note of the report. A senior police officer will inquire.”

Mr. Burman said there was no question of granting leave at all, as leave had been cancelled in view of the Chhath.