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# SC stays Aarey tree felling

Maha Govt says whatever required for Metro car shed has been done; Section 144 relaxed, 29 protesters released

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The Supreme Court on Monday restrained authorities from cutting any more trees in Mumbai's Aarey colony for a Metro car shed, but the order came too late to save what is known as the 'lung of the city'. The Maharashtra Government told the court that whatever was required to be cut has already been done.

According to report, aware of the SC hearing the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRCL) deployed an army of personnel to cut the trees throughout the night.

The speed with which the authorities carried out the task is amazing. Only three days ago on October 4, the Bombay High Court refused to declare Aarey colony a forest and declined to quash the Mumbai municipal corporation's decision to allow felling of over 2,600 trees in the green zone to set up a Metro car shed.

Despite massive protest by green activists and local residents, the Government cut down nearly 3,600 trees in three days and didn't wait for the SC hearing. The MMRCL started cutting the trees from Friday night to make way for the car shed triggering angry protests, hours after the High

Court dismissed four petitions filed by NGOs and activists challenging the decision.

A specially constituted Bench gave the stay order after the apex court took suo motu (on its own) cognisance of a petition addressed to Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi by law student Rishabh Ranjan seeking a stay on felling of trees in the colony. The apex court is on a week-long Dussehra break from Monday.

As many as 29 protesters were arrested for allegedly obstructing and assaulting police personnel during the felling of trees. They were released from jail in the wee hours of Monday after being granted bail by a local court, officials said. Mumbai Police have also relaxed prohibitory orders imposed in the Aarey Colony and its surrounding areas.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Maharashtra and Mumbai's civic body, told the special Bench of Justices Arun Mishra and Ashok Bhushan that whatever was required to be cut for the Metro car shed has already been done and they would not fell any more trees.

"We will decide this. Do not cut more trees," said the Bench, adding, "Do not cut anything now." It further said,

■ Bench would take up the matter for further hearing on October 21

■ Shiv Sena calls court order a "moral victory" for environmentalists, rues that nearly 2,100 trees were cut in 2 days

■ Aarey forest is located adjacent to the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and has five lakh trees

■ Metro authorities have defended tree felling by contending that it is restricted only to a small area in Aarey Colony and is necessary to ensure a modern transport system for Mumbaikars



"As undertaken, status quo be maintained till the next date of hearing with respect to cutting of trees." Tushar Mehta, Solicitor General appearing for Maharashtra, has stated that they are not going to cut any further trees till the next date of hearing. In the circumstances, the statement is quite fair.

The court said the Bench would take up the matter for further hearing on October 21. Opposition NCP leader Supriya Sule welcomed the apex court order but said what was worrying was the admission of the Maharashtra Government that the necessary number of trees have already

been cut.

Shiv Sena — which is an ally of the ruling BJP but has been opposing tree felling in the city's green belt — said the court order is a "moral victory" for environmentalists. Sena spokesperson Maneesha Kayande said it's the Government's "mistake" not to declare Aarey area as a forest and rued that nearly "2,100 trees" have been cut in two days.

The Metro authorities have defended tree felling by contending that it is restricted only to a small area in Aarey colony and is necessary to ensure a modern transport system for Mumbaikars. The apex court said it would have

to examine as to whether the entire Aarey area was a forest area or eco-sensitive zone and asked the authorities to place on record the relevant notifications and status of sampling of trees planted by them. Aarey forest is located adjacent to the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and has five lakh trees, according to the letter petition.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for one of the petitioners before the Bombay High Court, said States are required to notify an area as forest as per an earlier direction of the apex court but Maharashtra has still not done so.

Continued on Page 10

## India gets 1st tranche of Swiss a/c details

IANS ■ NEW DELHI/BERNE

In a major step towards fighting black money, India got the first tranche of Swiss Bank details of its residents under the Automatic Exchange of Information agreement.

India is among 75 countries with which the Federal Tax Administration (FTA) exchanged information on around 3.1 million financial accounts. It took place within the framework of the global standard on the automatic exchange of information (AEOI). Following the first exchange last year, in which no technical problems were encountered, this year, the AEOI involved a total of 75 countries.

With 63 of these countries, the exchange of information was reciprocal. In the case of 12 countries, Switzerland received information but did not provide any, either because those countries do not yet meet the international requirements on confidentiality and data security (Belize, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Curacao, Montserrat, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Cyprus) or because they chose not to receive data (Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands).

Currently, around 7,500 reporting financial institutions (banks, trusts, insurers, etc.) are registered with the Federal Tax



India is among 75 countries with which the Federal Tax Administration exchanged information on around 3.1 million financial accounts

Administration. These institutions collected the data and transferred it to the FTA.

The FTA sent information on around 3.1 million financial accounts to the partner states and received information on around 2.4 million from them.

The largest exchange was with Germany (in both directions), as was the case in the previous year. The FTA cannot provide any information on the amount of financial assets.

Switzerland has committed itself to adopting the global standard for the international automatic exchange of information in tax matters. The legal basis for the implementation of the AEOI in Switzerland came into force on January 1, 2017.

Identification, account and

financial information is exchanged, including name, address, state of residence and tax identification number, as well information concerning the reporting financial institution, account balance and capital income.

The exchanged information allows the cantonal tax authorities to verify whether taxpayers have correctly declared their financial accounts abroad in their tax returns. Next year, Switzerland's network of AEOI partner states will expand further, to around 90 countries. The OECD Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes (Global Forum) reviews the implementation of the AEOI.



Bollywood actors Alia Bhatt, Rani Mukherjee, Hritik Roshan and Director Ayan Mukerji pose for photos with fans at North Bombay Sarbojanin Durga Puja pandal during Navaratri in Mumbai on Monday

PTI

## SPG for Gandhis on foreign trips must

Centre tweaks security rules, makes it mandatory for Gandhis to submit details when abroad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has issued fresh guidelines related to the security cover given to the Gandhi family, including Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. The revised guidelines make it mandatory for the Special Protection Group (SPG) personnel to accompany Gandhis during their foreign trips as well.

Before the changes in the guidelines, the SPG personnel accompanied Gandhis till their first location abroad and were subsequently sent back to India by them apparently preferring privacy over security.

The new guidelines also make it mandatory for the Gandhis to submit itinerary of all foreign trips. They have also been reportedly asked to furnish information of their recent tours.



The Centre has also reportedly made it clear that non-acceptance of these new guidelines could lead to curtailment on their foreign visits on account of security considerations.

The SPG was set up in 1985 after the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Parliament passed the SPG Act in 1988 dedicating the group to protect the Prime Minister of India. In 1989, then VP Singh Government

had withdrawn the SPG protection given to the outgoing PM Rajiv Gandhi.

After Rajiv was assassinated in 1991, the SPG Act was amended providing SPG protection to all ex-PMs and their families for a period of at least 10 years. The rule was amended again in 2002. Ex-PMs like HD Deve Gowda no longer enjoy the security cover after the review as provided in the SPG Act.

In August, the Government

withdrew the SPG protection from former PM Manmohan Singh's security cover.

Following the withdrawal of the SPG cover of Singh, the Government had said, "The current security cover review is a periodical and professional exercise based on threat perception that is purely based on professional assessment by security agencies. Manmohan Singh continues to have a Z+ security cover."

## Police to evict MP bungalow squatters tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Failing to get former MPs to vacate their bungalows and flats despite repeated reminders, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has decided to evict them forcefully with the help of the police. Many newly-elected MPs are forced to stay in various State Bhavans or guest houses due to these squatters.

The department has written to the Delhi Police to provide adequate force on Wednesday to vacate flats number 113, 108/110 and 124 and 126 at North Avenue.

The Government provides residential accommodation to its employees, including the Members of Parliament and other dignitaries, on a license basis while they are in service or till the term of their office.

However, it is often seen some don't vacate bungalows.

## Delhi air turns poor on Dussehra eve

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

On the Dussehra eve, Delhi recorded higher levels of harmful primary pollutants as National Air Quality Index (NAQI) tagged the air quality under poor category in various areas of the National Capital Region (NCR).

System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR), a unit of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, (MoES) recorded higher level of pollutants than its prescribed standards.

And other pollution monitoring agencies — Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and US Embassy — measured values of sulphur dioxide, nitrate oxide, particulate matter (10) and 2.5 advanced than the standards of World Health Organisation (WHO).

Environmentalists attributed the reason of polluted air to late withdrawal of monsoon in Northern India affecting

■ Reason of polluted air is late withdrawal of monsoon in Northern India

■ Kejriwal sought Transport Dept's views on exemption to women, two wheelers and CNG-run vehicles in the odd-even scheme

■ Scientists have warned that air quality may become even worse in case firecrackers are burst or stubble burnt

■ On Monday, the Air Quality Index was measured at 128 µgm-3 and Chandni Chowk, Anand Vihar, ITO and RK Puram fared worst



adversely the dispersion of suspended particulate matters (SPMs) in the atmosphere. In a preventive measure, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday sought the Transport Department's views on exemption to women, two wheelers and CNG-run vehicles in the odd-even scheme which will

be implemented during the November 4-15 period.

Meanwhile, scientists have warned that the air quality may become even worse in case firecrackers are burst or stubble burned in neighbouring States.

On Monday, the Air Quality Index (AQI) was measured at 128 µgm-3 and Chandni Chowk, Anand Vihar,

ITO and RK Puram fared worst. The Met Department has also marked surface wind direction (westerly) side as 'unfavourable'.

In its health bulletin, SAFAR said, "Consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion. Take it easy if symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath occur."

## Taliban free 3 Indians in exchange of 11 militants from Afghan jails

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Three Indian engineers held by the Taliban in Afghanistan since May 2018 have been freed by the militant group in exchange for 11 of its top members from Afghan jails, according to media reports on Monday, amid fresh efforts to revive the Afghan peace talks.

The release of Indian hostages follows key meetings between US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban representatives led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Islamabad during the weekend.

Two Taliban officials told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty on Sunday that the swap took place earlier in the day, but they did not disclose the location.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity, citing what they described as the

sensitive nature of the issue. Seven Indian engineers and their Afghan driver were abducted in the first week of May, 2018 in the Bagh-e-Shamal area of northern Baghlan Province where they were working on an electricity sub-station. The Indians were working for KEC, a global infrastructure engineering, procurement and construction company of RPG Enterprises.

No group has claimed responsibility for their abduction. One of the seven Indian hostages was released in March. The Taliban officials refused to say whether the freed Taliban members were being held by Afghan authorities or US forces in Afghanistan.

The Taliban were reportedly released from one of Afghanistan's largest jails at the Bagram military base, north of the capital, Kabul, the Associated Press reported. While the US troops years ago handed over the sprawling

base to Afghan security forces, it still maintains a military presence at Bagram. It was not clear whether the US or Afghan forces released the Taliban.

Both Afghanistan's Defence Ministry and the president's office declined to comment on the developments, the report said. The identities of the released hostages were not disclosed by the militant group. The Express Tribune newspaper quoted the report by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty as saying.

The officials said the freed Taliban leaders include Sheikh Abdul Rahim and Mawlawi Abdul Rashid, who had served as the insurgent group's governors of Kunar and Nimroz provinces respectively during the Taliban administration before it was deposed by the US-led forces in 2001. A member of the powerful Haqqani family was also among the 11 militant leaders released, the BBC Pashto service reported.



the pioneer  
wishes its readers  
HAPPY DUSSEHRA

### CAPSULE

#### SCHOOL BIRTH CERTIFICATE WILL HAVE PRIORITY: HC

**New Delhi:** The Delhi HC held that the birth certificate issued by the school has to be given priority while determining the age of a person. "...this Court is of the opinion that the birth certificate issued by the school has to be given precedence.

#### TRIO WIN NOBEL MEDICINE PRIZE FOR WORK ON CELLS

**Stockholm:** US researchers William Kaelin and Gregg Semenza and Britain's Peter Ratcliffe on Monday shared the Nobel Medicine Prize for discoveries on how cells sense, adapt to oxygen availability.