

IN BRIEF



Brazilian President to be R-Day chief guest

BRASILIA
Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has accepted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation to be the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations in 2020. Mr. Modi met Mr. Bolsonaro on Wednesday on the sidelines of the 11th BRICS Summit. The two leaders held "fruitful talks" to strengthen bilateral ties. The Brazilian President informed Mr. Modi that a large business delegation would accompany him to India. **PTI**

Putin invites Modi for Victory Day celebrations

BRASILIA
Russian President Vladimir Putin has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Victory Day celebrations in May as the two leaders had an "excellent meeting" here, during which they reviewed the progress in bilateral ties and discussed ways to further bolster the special strategic partnership. **PTI**

'India is the most open economy'

BRASILIA
India is the world's "most open and investment friendly" economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Thursday, as he urged BRICS business leaders to invest in the country and take advantage of its "limitless" possibilities and "countless" opportunities. "India is the most open and investment friendly economy in the world due to political stability, predictable policy and business friendly reforms," he said. **PTI**

'Terror batters world economy'

It has emerged as the biggest threat to peace and prosperity, says PM Modi

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BRASILIA**

Terrorism has caused a loss of \$1 trillion to the world economy and the atmosphere it created has indirectly and deeply harmed trade and business, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the BRICS Summit here on Thursday, as he welcomed increased cooperation from the members of the grouping.

Addressing the plenary session of the 11th BRICS Summit at the iconic Itamaraty Palace in the presence of the Presidents of Brazil, China, Russia and South Africa, Mr. Modi said terrorism had emerged as the biggest threat to development, peace and prosperity. "According to some estimates, the economic growth of developing nations has decreased by 1.5% due to terrorism," he said, adding that the scourge had caused a loss of \$1 trillion to the world economy. In 10 years, terrorism had claimed the lives of 2.25 lakh people and des-



Common cause: South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, China's President Xi Jinping, PM Modi, Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro in Brasilia. **AP**

stroyed societies, he said. "The atmosphere of doubt created by terrorism, terror-financing, drug-trafficking and organised crime indirectly and deeply harms trade and business. I am happy that the first seminar on BRICS Strategies for Countering Terrorism was organised. We hope such efforts and activities of the five

working groups will increase strong BRICS security cooperation against terrorism and other organised crimes," he said. Mr. Modi said sustainable water management and sanitation were important challenges in urban areas. "I propose to hold the first meeting of BRICS Water Ministers in India," he said.

"Recently, we started 'Fit India Movement'. I want to increase contacts and exchanges between us in the field of fitness and health." He called for special attention to mutual trade and investment, saying intra-BRICS trade accounts for 15% of the world trade, while its combined population is 40% of the world's population.

India and China to hold border talks

The next round was agreed upon after the Modi-Xi meeting in Brazil

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BRASILIA/BEIJING**

India and China have agreed to hold another meeting on matters relating to the boundary question after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Brasilia, according to an official statement. The 21st round of the border

talks led by the Special Representatives – India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi – were held at Chengdu in China in November last year. According to a statement issued by the External Affairs Ministry, Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi "noted that the Special Re-

presentatives will have another meeting on matters relating to the boundary question and reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and security along the border areas". The statement, however, did not mention the time frame for the next round of talks. Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi are in

Brazil for the BRICS Summit. During the 21st round of talks, both sides resolved to "intensify" and "advance" the dialogue for an early settlement of the dispute, according to the official statements issued by both sides after the talks. The two officials also underscored the need for maintaining peace along the border.

NCP, Sena & Cong. work out draft CMP

Move may speed up govt. formation

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI**

Two days after the imposition of President's Rule in Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress on Thursday announced that the draft of the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) was ready, and it would be sent to the leadership of the three parties for approval.

The move is likely to speed up the process of government formation, with top leaders likely to meet in the next three days.

All the three parties on Thursday held a joint meeting on the MET campus at Bandra, where their election manifestos were compared, and a draft was prepared.

On Wednesday, the Congress and the Shiv Sena held a meeting in the morning, which was followed by a meeting between the Congress and the NCP in the evening. These meetings paved the way for the drafting of the CMP.

Senior leaders present

Senior Sena leaders Subhash Desai and Eknath Shinde were part of the meeting on Thursday, which was attended by former Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, senior Congress leaders Vijay Wadettiwar and Manikrao Thakare, along with NCP State president Jayant Patil, senior party leader Chhagan Bhujbal and NCP Mumbai president Nawab Malik.

At a joint late-evening press conference after the

Raut hits out at Amit Shah

**STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI**

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut hit out at Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday and said the talks on alliance behind closed doors between the Sena and the BJP should have been taken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Commenting on Mr Shah's remark that he took Mr. Fadnavis's name at every public rally and why had the Sena not objected then, Mr. Raut said, "Yes, they spoke about Mr. Fadnavis as CM, but in every sabha Uddhavji also said Maharashtra will have a Sena CM. When the alliance happened, Uddhavji used to say power-sharing will be 50-50. Why did Amit Shah not say anything then?"

meeting, Mr. Bhujbal said the State was going through a very difficult situation.

"At this position, no one is steering the State, except the Governor. The State needs a stable government at the earliest, and as a part of that process, we have all come together, met and drafted the Common Minimum Programme based on which the new government will govern. This will be sent to the leadership of all three parties and once approved by them, the things will move towards government formation," he said.

Fundamental rights under threat: Sonia

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday alleged that forces unleashed by the present regime wanted to "dictate what citizens can do or say in the name of uniformity" and thereby deny their fundamental rights.

At a gathering on the occasion of the 130th birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, she said the past six years had seen "bigotry, injustice and mismanagement of the country".

"The forces unleashed by our present rulers want to dictate to us what we can do, say or think. Their idea of unity is uniformity. They disrespect and fear diversity, which means they deny our pluralism, our freedom of choice, which are integral to our fundamental rights," she said.

"Their language may be modern, but they seek to take India backward, not forward. For after all, they made no sacrifices to shape India's destiny. It falls on each and every one of us to pull away this hypocrisy and reveal the darkness lurking beneath. We must unite and speak up against the bigotry, injustice and mismanagement of the last six years," she added. She said the four pillars of Nehruvian ideology – democratic institution-building, staunch secularism, socialist economics and a non-aligned foreign policy – were under attack.

Earlier, she offered floral tributes at Nehru's memorial at Shanti Van.

Review Taseer OCI decision, says PEN letter

**SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC**

More than 260 writers, journalists and artists, including Margaret Atwood, Orhan Pamuk, Salman Rushdie, Chimamanda Adichie, Perumal Murugan and Amitav Ghosh, have written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking that the government review its decision to rescind writer Aatish Taseer's Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) status.

"We are extremely concerned that Taseer appears to have been targeted for an extremely personal form of retaliation due to his writing and reporting that has been critical of the Indian government," says the letter from the authors who have joined PEN America, English PEN and PEN International, a network of writers, to express their "grave concern" over the government's action.

Official complaint

"In May 2019, amid a contentious Indian election season, Taseer wrote a cover story for *TIME* magazine headlined 'India's Divider in Chief', which drew an official complaint from the Indian government and sustained online harassment," the letter says.

The Home Ministry had revoked Mr. Taseer's OCI status last week, saying he had "concealed the fact that his late father was of Pakistani origin". Mr. Taseer, a British citizen and American permanent resident, has denied concealing this fact, and has days to hand in his OCI document to the Indian Consulate in New York or risk being barred from applying for an Indian visa again, *The Hindu* had reported.

"In his application for the OCI status, Taseer listed his father's name and never tried to hide his identity; in fact, a number of his books and articles have extensively covered his heritage and past," the letter says.

Modi to speak at 'Mujib year' opening event

**SUVOJIT BAGCHI
KOLKATA**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver the keynote address at the inaugural centenary event of Bangladesh founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 17, 2020, in Dhaka.

It will launch programmes between 2020 and 2021, described as "Mujib year" celebrations.