



## NEARBY



### 4 incidents of violence by lawyers reported

NEW DELHI  
At least four incidents of assault on commuters, journalists and police personnel allegedly by lawyers staging protest were reported from district courts in the city on Monday. Lawyers broke mobile phones of people who were recording violence.

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### U.P. man killed in Srinagar blast

SRINAGAR  
A man from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh was killed and 41 were injured in a grenade attack by suspected militants at a busy market in Srinagar's commercial hub, Hari Singh High Street, on Monday afternoon.

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## Saying RCEP will hurt farmers, India walks out

PM says his conscience does not permit him to sign the FTA

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
T.G.A. SHARAD RAGHAVAN  
NEW DELHI

Seven years after India joined negotiations for the 16-nation ASEAN (Association for South East Asian Nations)-led RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) or Free Trade Agreement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Monday that India was dropping out of the agreement, citing its negative effects on "farmers, MSMEs and the dairy sector."

"The present form of the RCEP agreement does not fully reflect the basic spirit and the agreed guiding principles of RCEP. It also does not address satisfactorily India's outstanding issues and concerns," Mr. Modi told leaders of the other 15 nations at the RCEP summit in Bangkok. "In such a situation, it is not possible for India to join the RCEP agreement," he said.

The summit included China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and the 10-nation ASEAN group-

### Last minute withdrawal

India pulled out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) at the last minute on the ground that it would hurt farmers, businesses, workers and consumers

#### Who signed the pact?

The RCEP brings together the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (including India), China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Except India, everyone else is ready to sign it

#### Can India join later?

Yes, if the issues it has with the deal are resolved



A protester burns placards during a protest against the RCEP in Delhi. ■ AFP

#### Why is India worried?

The deal requires the gradual elimination of tariffs which may flood Indian markets with Chinese goods and agricultural produce from Oceania, harming local producers

#### Will India's decision hurt the RCEP?

Without India, the RCEP accounts for nearly 1/3 of the global GDP. But they have less than a third of the world's population

SOURCE: REUTERS

ing. "When I measure the RCEP agreement with respect to the interests of all Indians, I do not get a positive answer. Therefore, neither the talisman of Gandhiji nor my own conscience permit me to join RCEP," he added, referring to the stakes of In-

dian farmers, traders, professionals and industrialists, all of whom have protested against the government's decision to go ahead with the negotiations.

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## End stubble burning immediately, orders SC

Will hold State administration responsible, the court warned

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

In a bid to save Delhi from air pollution, the Supreme Court on Monday said it would hold the entire State administrative and police mechanisms of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh – from the Chief Secretary to the local policeman – responsible if even one instance of stubble burning occurred in the future.

"Who is responsible for stubble burning? State governments are responsible! They are only interested in electioneering. They have to be made liable in tort. We are making a mockery of everything," a visibly anguished Justice Arun Mishra said.

#### Penal action

"We will haul up the State administration from bottom to top. People are dying, this just cannot happen in a civilised country. The sad thing in this country is that people in power are only interested in gimmicks..." he stated.

The court said any instance of stubble burning



Volunteers holding a placard on the first day of the odd-even scheme in New Delhi on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

from now on would be penalised.

"There cannot be a mass exodus from Delhi... People have to live in Delhi, which is the national capital. People cannot be just evacuated from here... No room inside a house is safe in Delhi. How long can we survive on air purifiers? We are losing precious years of our lives... It is writ large that various State governments, civic bodies have failed to discharge their liabilities. It is time to fix liability..." an exasperated Bench of Justices Arun Mishra and Deepak Gupta said.

The Supreme Court made the local and civic bodies as

"personally responsible" as the errant farmer who puts fire to his crop residue.

The court ordered the Chief Secretaries of the three neighbouring States of Delhi to be present in court on Wednesday to explain why the governments and civic bodies should not be punished under tort law and be made to pay a hefty penalty for stubble fires seen so far this season. The court said the 'Polluter Pays Principle' does apply to the State and the local bodies.

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**CLEARING THE AIR ► EDITORIAL**

## Opposition to meet Kovind on snooping

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Leaders of 13 Opposition parties, including the Congress, on Monday signed a memorandum, expressing concerns over allegations of 'snooping' after the WhatsApp revelations. The parties sought an appointment from President Ram Nath Kovind to hand over the memorandum to him.

The Opposition parties have argued that the revelations made by the Facebook-owned WhatsApp point to the violation of the right to privacy as pronounced by the Supreme Court. Opposition leaders have also planned to raise the issue at the winter session of Parliament that begins from November 18.

Opposition leaders expressed concern that their messages and photos could be 'misused'.

The issue of snooping came up at a meeting of Opposition leaders convened by the Congress ahead of its 10-day agitation programme to protest against the economic slowdown, unemployment, agrarian distress and bank frauds.

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## BJP to wait and watch in Maharashtra

Caretaker Chief Minister Fadnavis meets party chief Amit Shah in Delhi

NISTULA HEBBAR  
NEW DELHI

The BJP has adopted a wait and watch attitude over the Shiv Sena's assertions that it would prefer to form a government in Maharashtra with the help of the Congress and the NCP than give up its demand of a 50-50 split of the chief ministerial tenure with its long term ally.

Caretaker CM Devendra Fadnavis on Monday arrived in New Delhi to meet with Union Home Minister and BJP chief Amit Shah, ostensibly to ask for more relief for the flood-hit districts, but issues related to government formation were also on the agenda.

Mr. Fadnavis also met the BJP's election in charge for the State, Bhupendra Yadav, after meeting Mr. Shah. According to top sources in the party, it has decided to adopt a wait and watch policy with regard to government formation, and ruled out a swear-



Pressing for relief: Devendra Fadnavis with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Monday. ■ ANI

ing-in ceremony either on November 5 or 6. "The party leadership is firm there will be no rotational chief ministership as demanded by the Shiv Sena," said the sources.

"There can be some talk on ministerial portfolios but even in that the Home Ministry is something that the BJP is keen to retain," added the sources. The Assembly poll results were announced on October 24, with the BJP get-

ting 105 seats and the Sena 56, both less than in 2014. While they had a pre-poll alliance, trouble began with the Sena asking the BJP to enforce a rotational chief ministership, failing which, it said, it would not be averse to forming a government with the support of the NCP and the Congress.

WE ARE NOT HINDERING GOVT. FORMATION: RAUT ► PAGE 12

## Pawar meets Sonia in Delhi

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
NEW DELHI

The onus of forming a government lies with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-Shiv Sena alliance but "I can't say what will happen in future," said Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar on Monday after meeting Congress leader Sonia Gandhi.

Mr. Pawar kept the suspense on, saying he would meet her again.

Sources said Ms. Gandhi had reservations about the Sena's secular credentials. The NCP chief also maintained that so far Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray has not reached out to them with any proposal.

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## 'Compensate us, don't treat us as criminals'

Farmers in parts of Haryana deny burning stubble, suggest monetising field clearing

ASHOK KUMAR  
SONIPAT

On a hazy Monday morning, Jitender, 42, is doing the rounds of his five-acre field at Sonipat's Barona village off the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway, bordering the national capital. He hopes his crop, the 'Pusa 1121' variety of basmati rice, would be ready for harvest in the next couple of days.

Farmers in and around his village mostly grew basmati rice and harvested the crop manually, he said. "The grain of basmati is damaged during mechanised harvesting and fetches a lower price. We therefore harvest using labour, though it costs a little extra," said Mr. Jitender. Farmers, he said, make up for it by selling *parali* (the upper part of paddy cut during harvest). He claimed that incidents of paddy stubble burning in and around his



A farmer arranging *parali* in his field in Firozpur Bangar village. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

village have virtually stopped over the past two years because of the growing demand for *parali* as fodder. The *parali* usually fetches a farmer ₹2,000-₹3,000 per acre. "The stubble is mixed in the field while preparing the land for the next crop," said Mr. Jitender.

The region comprising Jhajjar, Sonipat, Panipat,

and Jind districts, mostly growing basmati varieties, account for only 20-30% of stubble burning incidents; the majority of fires are reported from Kaithal, Kurukshetra, Karnal and Yamuna Nagar districts – better known as the "rice bowl" of Haryana. The farmers in this region prefer high-yielding 'PR' variety because of easy availability of water and the harvesting is done through combine harvesters. The removal of stalk and straw left in the field is a labour-intensive process.

#### Combine harvesting

Malkeet Singh of Landi village in Kurukshetra said small farmers could not afford to incur three-four times the usual cost to prepare the field for the next crop after combine harvesting and preferred to set the stalk and the straw on fire.

"Instead of treating the farmers as criminals and registering a case for burning crop residue, the government should compensate us. The inputs cost of farming has increased several fold over the years, but the price for paddy has reduced to half. The farmer is well aware of the consequences, but it is cost-effective for him to burn [the stubble]," said Mr. Malkeet.

Rajinder Singh, president, Haryana Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Karnal, who is working with farmers of around a dozen villages in his area to combat stubble burning, said the government must link cutting of paddy stalk and clearing of fields after combine harvesting with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

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## Bengal's cities yield new species of tree frog

Specimens of the Brown Blotched Bengal Tree Frog were found in residential areas

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

It took six herpetologists working across States and countries to determine that a tree frog found commonly in urban habitats of West Bengal was a brand new species.

"Specimens were not discovered from deep jungles but from residential areas in two districts of West Bengal," Guwahati-based herpetologist Jayaditya Purkayastha, who runs Help Earth, an NGO, told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Purkayastha is one of the six authors of the study published in the latest edition of *Zootaxa*, a peer-reviewed scientific journal for animal taxonomists. The other researchers are Madhurima Das from



The Brown Blotched Bengal Tree Frog. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Assam, Kingshuk Mondal, Shibajee Mitra, and Anirban Chaudhuri from West Bengal and professor at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Indraneil Das.

#### Photo on social media

Appropriately, it was a photograph shared on social media that triggered the study. Mr. Mitra sent Mr. Purkayastha a photograph of a tree frog from a

residential area in Badu, North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal, in the winter of 2016 and asked if he could identify it.

"Through an initial literature review, it became evident that this interesting find may be new to science," Mr. Purkayastha said. However, the frog was forgotten until Mr. Mondal found more specimens, this time from Khordanahala in South 24 Parganas district in mid-2018.

Mr. Chaudhuri coordinated the initiative to study the new species in Kolkata. After the required measurements and other data collection was done, the herpetologists concluded that the frog belonged to the genus *Polypedates*.

A genetic identity investigation by Ms. Das established the frog as a new species in this genus, while the Malaysia-based Prof. Das, an authority on herpetofauna in Asia, took care of the team's data limitations. Their study finally established the mid-sized tree frog as the 26<sup>th</sup> species under the genus *Polypedates*, found throughout south and southeast Asia.

The new species has been named Brown Blotched Bengal Tree Frog (*Polypedates bengalensis*) from the series of six to nine dark brown blotches that extend laterally from behind the frog's eye to the vent. The frog's body colour is yellowish-brown to greenish-brown.

## Day 1 of odd-even a success: Kejriwal

CM carpools to work; 233 violators fined on Monday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday thanked the Capital's citizens for what he termed was a successful first day of the implementation of the odd-even road rationing scheme here.

The city's air quality, he said, was better compared with Sunday and the people of Delhi needed to continue supporting the enforcement of the scheme by following its provisions over the coming days. "The first day of odd-even was successful. Only 192 fines were issued till 5 p.m. today... we have to keep performing our duty when it comes to reducing pollution till November 15," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi. The number of violators rose to 233 by the end of the day.

The Chief Minister shared a car with his Cabinet col-



Traffic policemen fine a man for violation of the odd-even scheme. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

leagues Gopal Rai and Saityendar Jain to reach Delhi Secretariat while Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia cycled to work.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi remained in the 'severe' category on Monday but improved slightly, settling at 407 as against 494 on Sunday, according to the 4 p.m. bulletin by the Central Pollution Control Board, which is the average of the past 24 hours.

According to data released by the Delhi government, PM10 and PM2.5 levels – which were recorded at 974 ug/m3 and 801 ug/m3 respectively at 6 a.m. on Sunday – were down to 710 ug/m3 and 562 ug/m3 at the same time on Monday.

Mr. Sisodia credited the odd-scheme partly for the air quality on Monday. "We know there are many factors determining the increase and decrease in pollution. Undoubtedly, the odd-even scheme also is a factor for this improvement," he told a press conference.

Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari accused the Kejriwal government of "harassing" people through the odd-even scheme. The Chief Minister, in turn, charged the BJP with politicising the issue of air pollution in the Capital. (With inputs from PTI)

## Tahsildar burnt alive in Telangana

K. SHIV SHANKER  
HYDERABAD

In a shocking incident, a 37-year-old woman tahsildar Ch. Vijaya Reddy was burnt alive in her office at Abdullapurmet in Rangareddy district of Telangana on Monday. K. Suresh, a resident of Gouravelli village situated a few kilometres from the tahsil office, allegedly poured an inflammable fluid on her and set her ablaze.

While she died on the spot, the accused sustained over 60% burns. Ms. Vijaya's driver and a colleague, who came to her rescue, too suffered burns.

Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Mahesh Bhagwat said Suresh was caught in a land dispute

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