



NEARBY

Cong., BJP spar over NMML Society rejig

NEW DELHI
 The BJP on Wednesday defended the Culture Ministry's decision to remove Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh, Mallikarjun Kharge and Karan Singh from the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Society, which was reconstituted on Tuesday.

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JNU students continue protest against fee hike

NEW DELHI
 Thousands of students of Jawaharlal Nehru University on Wednesday continued their protest against a revised hostel manual that proposes a "mammoth" increase in hostel fees.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Man lynched, another injured in Jharkhand

BOKARO (JHARKHAND)
 A man was lynched and another was seriously injured when a group of people thrashed them for allegedly stealing the battery of a truck in Bokaro district on Wednesday, a senior police officer said here.

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Maharashtra BJP brass to meet Governor to stake claim today

Mandate for the NCP and Congress to sit in Opposition, says Sharad Pawar

ALOK DESHPANDE
SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

The end to the impasse over government formation in Maharashtra is in sight with a delegation of senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders scheduled to meet Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday to stake claim.

Senior leader and a member of the BJP core committee Sudhir Mungantiwar said on Wednesday after the second round of meetings at Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' residence, "You cannot split water, no matter how much you try to. Shiv Sena and the BJP are together. We had a good meeting over the farmers' issue today. We should wait for the news, the good news can come anytime."

The Governor's office has been informed of the visit by the BJP delegation. "We are hoping for the deadlock to end tomorrow," said a person familiar with the matter in the Governor's office.

Sources said a Sena delegation led by Eknath Shinde and Subhash Desai also met BJP leaders on the sidelines of a meeting held to review the unseasonal rains in the State.

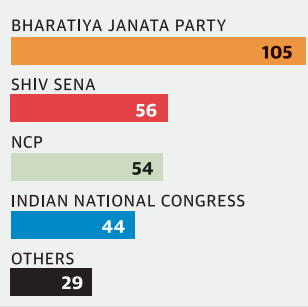
Meanwhile, a meeting between Union Minister for



No deal: NCP president Sharad Pawar addressing a press conference in Mumbai on Wednesday. • PRASHANT NAKWE

Power point

A look at the party position in the Maharashtra Assembly after the recent election



The BJP had emerged as the single largest party in the 288-member House

Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari and senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel in New Delhi set off speculation as it came amid political uncertainty over government formation in Maharashtra.

The Congress leader, however, maintained that he met Mr. Gadkari to discuss road and infrastructure projects in Gujarat and that government formation in Maharashtra did not figure in their talks.

In a related development, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar said at a press conference in Mumbai that he was

waiting for the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance to form the government so that the NCP-Congress could begin working as an "effective Opposition."

"Shiv Sena and BJP have been in alliance for 25 years. There is no question of anyone else forming the government in Maharashtra. They will come together sooner or later. The people have given us the mandate to sit in the Opposition and we will do it effectively," Mr. Pawar said at a press conference.

(Inputs from Sandeep Phukan in New Delhi)

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No plan for President's Rule: Governor

Amid a looming constitutional crisis in Maharashtra, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari said on Wednesday that he had no intention whatsoever of imposing President's Rule in a hurry. "No Governor would want to impose President's Rule. The ideal situation would be if the parties themselves find a solution and come forward to stake claim," he told *The Hindu*.

India aware of Pak. 'motive' on Kartarpur

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Pakistan's military has a "strategic purpose" in opening up the Kartarpur corridor, and India is wary of its "ulterior motive" to fan Sikh separatism in Punjab, said government sources here on Wednesday. However, the Modi government is still committed to going ahead with the project, due to be inaugurated on Saturday.

"There is a duality in the corridor," said an official. "As conceived, the corridor has a strategic purpose for Pakistan...[but] India has walked into this with its eyes open, and as a democratic government recognised the wishes of the Sikh community."

On Wednesday, India objected to photographs of former Sikh separatist leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and other "terrorists from the 1980s" as well as pictures of posters calling for a "Referendum 2020", in a promotional video released by the Pakistan Information Department. The objectionable references were deleted from the version of the video tweeted out by the Pakistan government official handle, however.

INDIA RAISES SECURITY CONCERNS WITH PAK. ▶ PAGE 13
REPLICATE KARTARPUR MODEL: MANMOHAN ▶ PAGE 13

₹25,000-cr. fund to help housing sector

Centre, SBI and LIC to pool funds

Realty test

A look into the details of the Alternative Investment Fund announced by the Centre to finance stalled housing projects

Total bailout fund: ₹25,000 crore

₹10,000 crore Contribution by Centre

₹15,000 crore Contribution of SBI and LIC

How will AIF help?

- 1,600 stalled housing projects likely to take off. Even projects classified as NPAs will be eligible
- The move is likely to generate jobs and revive demand for building materials like cement, iron and steel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved the creation of an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) of ₹25,000 crore to provide last-mile funding for stalled affordable and middle-income housing projects across the country, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced on Wednesday.

The Minister had announced the proposal to create this fund in mid-September, which the Cabinet has now approved. All affordable and middle-income housing projects that are net worth positive and are registered with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) and that have not been deemed liquidation-worthy will be eligible.

"The fund size will initially be ₹25,000 crore with the government providing ₹10,000 crore and the State Bank of India and the Life Insurance Corporation providing the balance," Ms. Sitharaman said. "The fund is not capped at ₹25,000 crore and will likely grow as a lot of sovereign funds have shown interest."

The funds will be set up as Category-II Alternative Investment Fund registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India and will be managed by SBICAP Ventures Limited.

According to the government's estimates, there are more than 1,600 housing projects in which 4.58 lakh crore units are stalled.

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Over 18,000 BSNL staff opt for VRS

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Within days of the state-run telecom operator BSNL opening its voluntary retirement scheme (VRS), 18,400 employees have opted for it. The loss-making PSU had rolled out the scheme for its employees, following the Union Cabinet nod to a nearly ₹70,000-crore revival package for BSNL and MTNL last month. This included ₹30,000 crore for VRS for the two firms.

For BSNL employees, the VRS option will remain open till December 4. The scheme was opened on November 3. "Till 7 p.m., over 18,400 BSNL employees, of the over 1 lakh eligible staff, have opted for VRS," a source told *The Hindu*.

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Season's first



Chilling out: Tourists get ready for skiing during the first spell of snow in Gulmarg, north Kashmir, on Wednesday. • NISSAR AHMAD

Sort out differences amicably, Delhi HC tells police, lawyers

CRPF personnel deployed at police headquarters

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday urged the representatives of lawyers and police to hold a joint meeting to "sort out their differences amicably".

The suggestion from the court came on a day when CRPF personnel were deployed at the police headquarters and lawyers abstained from work in all district courts in the capital.

An argument over parking at the Tis Hazari Court Complex between police and lawyers on Saturday led to violence in which people from both sides were injured.

The issue has since snowballed, with thousands of



Lawyers protesting against the Delhi police at the Saket Court Complex in New Delhi on Wednesday. • R.V. MOORTHY

Delhi police personnel with their families staging an unprecedented 11-hour protest at the police headquarters here on Tuesday seeking the arrest of the lawyers involved.

Meanwhile, the strike by lawyers, demanding arrest

of the police personnel involved in the clash, continued for the third day on Wednesday.

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'Wean farmers off stubble burning'

Supreme Court sets three-month deadline for Centre to prepare scheme

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the Centre to prepare a comprehensive national scheme, in consultation with States, within three months to wean small and marginal farmers away from stubble burning, which has been identified as a major source of air pollution choking the national capital.

"Punishing poor farmers for burning stubble is not a solution," Justice Arun Mishra, who led the Special Bench also comprising Justice Deepak Gupta, said. The Bench also ordered States to distribute crop re-



A farmer burns paddy stubble on a farm on the outskirts of Amritsar on Wednesday. • PTI

sidue management tools and machines to small and marginal farmers free of cost. The States need to use their own funds to finance the scheme, it said.

The court would take a decision on the sharing of financial liability between the Centre and the States on a later date.

It further ordered an incentive of ₹100 per quintal for small and marginal farmers who engage in the management of the residue of their non-Basmati variety rice crop in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Meanwhile, it asked the Delhi government to submit an action plan to deal with issues of garbage dumping and burning, pock-marked roads and the state of traffic congestion in the capital city.

The court gave the go-

vernment three weeks to repair the potholes.

The Bench sat hours beyond regular hours to address the problem of stubble-burning. It hauled up the Chief Secretaries of Punjab, Haryana and U.P. for doing almost nothing to prevent farmers from burning their crop residue.

A democratically-elected government cannot afford to not do anything. The elected government and administrative machinery cannot sit aloof in their ivory towers.

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DELHI AIR QUALITY GETS BETTER ▶ PAGE 9

Chargesheet filed in Chinmayanand case

Probe team to file final report in Allahabad HC on Nov. 28

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHAHJAHANPUR (U.P.)

The Special Investigation Team probing sexual harassment allegations against former Union Minister Swami Chinmayanand and a related extortion case filed a voluminous chargesheet in the two cases in a court here on Wednesday.

"The SIT has filed a 4,700-page chargesheet and case diary in the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate Omveer Singh," said Mr. Chinmayanand's lawyer Om Singh. "We will study the chargesheet and the mobile call detail records," he said. During the probe, the SIT recorded statements of 105 people and collected 24 physical and 55 doc-

umentary evidence.

The contents of the chargesheet were not immediately available as the probe team has to file a final report in the form of an affidavit in a sealed cover in the Allahabad High Court on November 28.

Mr. Chinmayanand, the woman law student who accused him of sexual harassment, and some others were also brought to the court on Wednesday after the chargesheet was filed.

Lodged in jail

The 72-year-old former Minister is lodged in jail following the case filed against him under Section 376C of the IPC, an offence pertaining to the abuse of one's position to "in-

duce or seduce" a woman under his charge to "sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape".

The four accused in the extortion case are the law student, Sanjay, Vikram and Sachin. All of them are in jail. IG-rank officer Naveen Arora, who is heading the SIT, had said on Tuesday that BJP leaders D.P.S. Rathore and Ajit Singh were also made accused in the extortion case.

The student and her three male friends were booked under Sections 35 (criminal act done with criminal knowledge or intention), 385 (extortion), 506 (criminal intimidation), 201 (disappearance of evidences) of the IPC and Section 67 of the IT Act.

Govt. may lift odd-even on Nov. 11, 12

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party government on Wednesday said it was "actively considering" the Sikh community's request to relax the provisions of the odd-even scheme on November 11 and 12.

A Sikh delegation met Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot regarding the community's wish to participate in the 550th Prakash Parv celebrations without the restrictions being in place.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had also received similar requests, read a statement.

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