



NORTH

Six posing as Crime Branch officials rob UP SHO’s house

Bareilly: Six robbers posing as Crime Branch officials went to the house of a police officer in Uttar Pradesh’s Pilibhit district and allegedly decamped with jewellery and cash after holding his daughter and wife hostage at gunpoint, officials said. The incident took place on Tuesday evening at the Shastri Nagar residence of Pushkar Singh, SHO of Amaria police station, they said. The neighbours alerted Singh, police said. Bareilly Senior Superintendent of Police Shailendra Pandey said police teams have been formed to crack the case and footage of nearby CCTV cameras is being examined. **PTI**



Devotees offer prayers after taking dips in the Sangam during Makar Sankranti in Prayagraj. *Ritesh Shukla*

EAST

Patient ‘jumps off’ Calcutta Medical College building, dies

Kolkata: A 32-year-old patient died on Wednesday morning after he allegedly jumped off the fifth floor of a newly-constructed super speciality building at the Calcutta Medical College and Hospital in front of doctors and nurses, police said. “The man was admitted here last evening. He was suffering from suspected autoimmune encephalitis syndromes, causing altered mentality as well as memory decline. He was also having division of thoughts,” CMCH superintendent Indranil Biswas said. An internal committee has been set up by the CMCH to look into the matter, Biswas said. A case has been lodged at the Bowbazar Police Station. **PTI**

WEST

Seven booked for extortion under new Act in Gujarat

Ahmedabad: In the first case registered under the Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Act that came into force on December 1, 2019, seven persons have been booked for extortion, police said on Wednesday. The offence has been registered against gangster Vishal Goswami and six of his aides. Goswami and his

two aides, currently lodged at Ahmedabad Central Jail, targeted businessmen with four others held on Wednesday. A key feature of GCTOC Act is that intercepted telephonic conversations would now be considered legitimate evidence. The bill in its earlier form had failed to get presidential nod when Narendra Modi was the CM. **PTI**

SOUTH

After 61 arrested, police say Telangana town peaceful

Hyderabad: Situation in Bhainsa town of Nirmal district in Telangana remained peaceful and under control on Wednesday even as 61 people have so far been arrested in connection with the communal clashes that left 19 people and eight police officials injured in the town, police said. A trivial issue of some people riding motorcy-

cles by removing silencers took a violent turn when members belonging to two different communities clashed late night on January 12. Police have registered 13 cases. Apart from police personnel, Rapid Action Force is patrolling in the town. Police said prohibitory orders banning assembly of more than five people were on. **PTI**

MEETING UNDERWAY AT UN SECURITY COUNCIL

France, US block China move on J&K

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 15

FOR THE third time since August, Beijing raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir at a closed-door meeting of the United Nations Security Council late Wednesday night. Vietnam, which is the UNSC President for the month of January, allowed the issue to be brought up by China. However, members of the UNSC, including France and the US, blocked the attempt by China for a discussion on the Kashmir issue. Sources said the plan was

to tell Beijing that this is not the appropriate forum. “Today @UN...our flag is flying high. Those that launched a “False Flag” effort got a stinging response from our many friends...,” tweeted Syed Akbaruddin, India’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, late Wednesday night. The closed-door meeting of the UNSC was called to discuss issues related to Mali, an African country, and China made a request to discuss the Kashmir issue under the agenda of “Any Other Business Points”. Since Pakistan’s Foreign

Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi is in New York, he was likely to push for Pakistan’s case with the UNSC member-states. At the time of going to press, details of the meeting were awaited. The move by China is third such attempt since August when the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution was revoked by the government, and the state was bifurcated into two union territories. Diplomatic sources said that France has noted the request of a UNSC member to raise the Kashmir issue once again in the

powerful body and it is going to oppose it like it did on a previous occasion. French sources said that the Kashmir issue must be settled bilaterally (between India and Pakistan). The sources said this has been stated on several occasions, and it will continued to be reiterated to partners in the UN Security Council. This is the third time, China, Pakistan’s ‘all-weather ally’, has demanded discussion on the Kashmir issue. In August, China had raised it in an informal and closed-door consultations, but the meeting did not lead to any outcomes. In December again, France,

US, UK and Russia — the remaining P-5 members — had foiled an attempt by China to discuss Kashmir at a meeting of the UNSC. Beijing withdrew its request. In August, China had objected to the formation of Ladakh as Union Territory, saying it undermined its territorial sovereignty. It also expressed “serious concern” about the current situation in the region. Delhi had responded to Beijing, MEA spokesperson had said, “India does not comment on the internal affairs of other countries and similarly expects other countries to do likewise.”

RAISINA DIALOGUE

US-led Indo-Pacific bloc divisive: Russia minister

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 15

RUSSIAN FOREIGN Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday strongly criticised the US-led Indo-Pacific initiative, calling it a “divisive approach” to disrupt existing regional structures and contain China’s influence in the region.

“Why call it Indo-Pacific? The answer is to contain China. Indian friends are smart enough to understand the trap. We should not be divisive,” Lavrov said at the ongoing Raisina Dialogue. “We have to be careful with the terminology, which looks benign but might be something else.”

The Russian minister also slammed the US for what he called disregarding international rules and norms while selectively talking about rules-based global order for its self-interests. Referring to the US-backed Indo-Pacific strategy, Lavrov called it an attempt to “reconfigure the existing structures”, and to move away from the ASEAN-centric consensus for the region. “It is an attempt to seek forms of interactions to something which would be divisive,” he said in the presence of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and foreign ministers and diplomats from around 40 countries. “A new concept was created, called Indo-Pacific strategy, initiated firstly by the US, Australia, Japan...When we asked the initiators about the difference between Indo-Pacific strategies and ASEAN-Pacific regional co-operation, they said Indo-Pacific is more open, more democratic,” Lavrov said. “If you look at it closely, it is not at all the case.”



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with his counterpart Sergey Lavrov in New Delhi, Wednesday. *PTI*

hosting the Russian President in India for the annual bilateral summit later this year. The Prime Minister noted that several important decisions and outcomes were reached between the two countries in 2019. He suggested that the year 2020, which is also the 20th anniversary year of the establishment of strategic partnership between India and the Russian Federation, should be the “year of implementation of those decisions”. “The PM referred to the wide-ranging conversation he had with President Putin over telephone on 13 January 2020, and noted the progress in the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between the two countries in the previous year,” the MEA said in a statement.

Scrapping Article 370 historic: Army Chief

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 15

CHIEF OF Army Staff General M M Naravane called the abrogation of Article 370 a historic step and added that it disrupted the plans of Pakistan and its proxies. Speaking at an event to mark the Army Day, Naravane said “the state of Line of Control is linked to the situation in Jammu and Kashmir” and “to scrap Article 370 is a historic step, which will prove to be significant to bring Jammu and Kashmir to the national mainstream”. Naravane said, “This decision has disrupted the plans of our western neighbour and its proxies.” He also said India has a “zero tolerance policy towards terrorism” and added that “we have many options to counter those who promote terrorism and we



Chief of Army Staff General M M Naravane at the Army Day Parade in New Delhi on Wednesday. *Praveen Khanna*

will not hesitate to use them”. The Army Chief mentioned that the Army is taking all steps to maintain peace in the region following the principles of mutual and equal security and through talks. He said the coun-

try faced “some grave security challenges” last year and the Army “not only participated in proxy wars” but has also kept the borders secure. Speaking about the situation in the Northeast, Naravane said



Captain Tania Sher Gill during the parade. *PTI*

the conditions there have improved. He stated that “time-bound discussions are on with most insurgent groups”. The Army, he said, is preparing for future warfare, and mentioned Integrated Battle Groups

as one of the significant steps being taken. There are also efforts to prepare for “space, cyber, special operation and electronic warfare”, he said. The Army Day parade was also attended by the recently appointed Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria and Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh.

Woman officer leads parade

ON WEDNESDAY, Captain Tania Sher Gill (26) became the first woman Parade Adjutant in the history of the Army Day function. Gill of the Corps of Signals, the fourth generation to serve the Army, said, “It was a feeling of great pride, a sense of accomplishment and worthiness, and pure blessing.”

Hizbul militant killed in encounter

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, JANUARY 15

IN A development considered to be a major success against militancy in the Chenab Valley region, wanted Hizbul Mujahideen militant Haroon Abbas Wani was killed in an encounter in the hill Doda district on Wednesday morning, sources said. The police had announced a cash award of Rs 15 lakh on his head barely three months ago. Haroon, an MBA graduate, had quit his job with a pharmaceutical company in Jammu to join terror ranks in September 2018, sources said. He was a close associate of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Jahangir Saroori, one of the longest surviving militants in the union territory. Sources said that following a tip off about the presence of some militants outside Gundana village near Doda, the area was cordoned off leading to an encounter in the morning. While Haroon was killed in the encounter, other militants managed to escape. The operation to track down absconding militants is reportedly in progress. Haroon was wanted by the police and security forces in connection with the killing of senior BJP leader Anil Parihar and RSS functionary Chanderkant Sharma. He was also allegedly involved in some incidents of weapon snatching in Kishtwar. Nearly three months ago, over a dozen people were arrested in Kishtwar and Doda districts on charges of providing logistics to militants who were planning to revive militancy in the Chenab Valley region. According to police, the conspiracy was hatched by Jahangir Saroori with other militants.

Mobile Net partially restored in 5 Jammu dists

ARUN SHARMA & ADIL AKHZER
JAMMU, SRINAGAR, JANUARY 15

EVEN OVER 20 hours after the administration of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) on Wednesday restored internet connectivity to post-paid mobile phones in five districts of Jammu, the services were yet to start functioning, while in Kashmir, a group of eight Malaysian tourists was able to access internet for the first time since their arrival on January 11. Principal Secretary, Home, Shaleen Kabra, who had on Tuesday issued directions regarding partial restoration of services in Jammu, and broadband services in Jammu and Kashmir, did not respond to phone calls. The administration’s official spokesperson and Principal Secretary of Planning, Development and Monitoring Department, Rohit Kansal, also held a press conference announcing government’s decision on Wednesday, but he refused to take any questions from media persons. The five districts where mobile data services were restored were Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur and Reasi. **PTI**

Pointing out that the directions will remain in force for a period of seven days with effect from January 15, unless modified earlier, the order said that in other districts of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, this connectivity shall remain suspended till further directions, pursuant upon a review of adverse impact, if any, of this relaxation on the security situation, it added. In the same order, Kabra had directed the BSNL and private internet service providers to provide broadband facility to all the institutions in Kashmir that deal with essential services like hospitals, banks, government offices, besides hotels, tour and travel establishments. However, he asked the service providers to install necessary firewalls and carry out ‘white listing’ of sites enabling access to only government websites and those dealing with essential services before giving such facility. A senior official in one of the service providers said that they were yet to receive any written order from the administration, while another also denied having received any official instructions to partially restore internet connectivity.

Plea in Madras HC to remove ‘anti-Muslim stand’ of RSS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, JANUARY 15

A PETITION filed in the Madras High Court on Wednesday seeks to remove a sentence from the Social Science textbook of Class X in the state syllabus which says the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) took a pronouncement anti-Muslim stance during the struggle for freedom, which resulted in the partition of the country. The plea by P Chandrasekaran said the objectionable content was published in Tamil and English versions of the book. Arguing that the portions were incorrect and that RSS never took a stand against any religion, the petition stated that the Sangh only worked towards the consolidation of Hindu society.

JHARKHAND

Soren govt takes to social media for quick solutions

ABHISHEK ANGAD
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 15

■ A news report claimed that a child was sold for money in Jamshedpur. The deputy commissioner responded on social media, stating that the child had been recovered, posted pictures and said that the mother and child had been shifted to hospital. ■ A video went viral showing a home guard extorting money from a coal *cyclewallah* in Dhanbad. The respective DC identified the homeguard, conducted an investigation and suspended him. ■ Hazaribagh residents were not receiving rations for a month. The DC conducted an inquiry and found the shop owner had violated the National Food Security Act. His licence was cancelled.

■ A high-tension wire was out of place at Chandwara block of Koderma. The DC formed a team and assured action against those responsible, and ensured compensation to the injured. ■ A man with injured legs was n’t treated at Kodarma’s Sadar Hospital. He was shifted to RIMS Ranchi and DC Ranchi gave a detailed account of the patient’s injuries and ensured that the civil surgeon monitored the case closely. In each of the above cases, local residents or ruling party workers flagged the problems on social media, tagging newly elected Chief Minister Hemant Soren. Soren responded by tagging the respective Deputy Commissioners, ensuring quick redressal of the issues. The previous government’s 181 helpline — with which people could register complaints and



Hemant Soren

go through a process of grievance redressal — was opaque, said a source close to Soren. “The new government is taking the first step to acknowledge that there are problems, and making it public. The next step is to ensure action. A tool that was used for propaganda is now being utilised for change and ac-

countability, and making the public part of the process,” the source said. The process of revamping the perception of governance started in December 2017. This was when two foreign university graduates — who had been in Jharkhand under the Prime Minister’s Rural Development Fellowship programme — met Soren for a 20-minute conversation. The conversation went on for three-and-a-half hours and Soren was “impressed by their vision”. Subsequently, the duo set up a team of 16 people — comprising graduates from universities such as Harvard, Sussex and Oxford, three of them tribals. Their job was to set up a robust party structure, use data to propagate Soren’s idea of governance and highlight the BJP’s ‘misgovernance’ on social media.

“This was done without creating a parallel system. A data-driven system was built by equipping party workers. They were rigorously trained in most of the 24 districts. Today, there are verified social media district handles that take up issues of governance, including bringing issues to the CM’s knowledge,” said one of the team members. Starting their work in early 2018, the team trained JMM workers, decided on social media content for the party, and conducted surveys. JMM office-bearers in districts took to social media to counter the previous BJP government and steer the discourse after the party came to power. While in the opposition, Soren also took to Twitter and Facebook to react to reports and complaints. One of the DCs who was tagged by Soren said:

“Accountability has increased, and the government should think about how to institutionalise the whole process. Also, the accountability of stakeholders needs to be fixed. As of now, only those who have Twitter accounts are tagged.” Sounding a note of caution, a government official said that “systemic problems” cannot be solved on social media. “Also, knee jerk reactions may do more harm than good. It is a wait and watch situation,” the official said, adding that the previous 181 system was a robust one that kept many deputy commissioners on their toes. The JMM-led alliance rode to power in Jharkhand in the election last month, with their poll campaign mainly focusing on the BJP’s ‘misgovernance’ and Soren sticking to his ‘*jal, jungle, zamaneen*’ narrative’.