



NORTH

Lucknow murder: Former BSP MLA's son arrested

Lucknow: A day after 25-year-old Prashant Singh was stabbed to death outside an apartment building in Lucknow, the police Friday arrested a law student on conspiracy charges. Police identified the student as Aman Bahadur, son of former BSP MLA Shamsher Bahadur.

Prime accused Arpan Shukla, an engineering student at BBD University, is the only accused named in the FIR and is yet to be arrested. Police said Aman Bahadur and Arpan Shukla are friends. The victim, Prashant, was an engineering dropout from BBD University. **ENS**



A woman pays tribute to 'Bhasha Shahids' (language martyrs) at a memorial on the occasion of International Mother Language Day, in Kolkata on Friday. **PTI**

EAST

West Bengal to reintroduce double-decker bus

Kolkata: The West Bengal Transport Department is set to reintroduce the iconic double-decker bus on city roads, a senior official said here. He said that the new double-decker buses will hit the roads in March. The buses have been designed by the transport department and two of these are being readied for service, West Bengal

Transport secretary N S Nigam said. "These will be open roof and if the design is successful, we can look at the options of making more such buses," he said. "We have to develop them as there is no standard design," Nigam said. The only city that has double-decker buses in its public transportation fleet is Mumbai. **PTI**

WEST

2 held for murder in Malwani, police look for 1 more

Mumbai: Two persons were arrested on Friday in connection with the murder of a 35-year-old man in Malwani in Maharashtra last December.

Mahesh Patel used to work as a bus driver and stayed with a woman in Madh Island. The police are looking for the 28-year-old woman, who allegedly conspired with another man she

was having a relationship with and put 10 sleeping tablets in Patel's food on December 20 last year. As Patel became drowsy, the woman and the man smothered him to death, said the police. Police have arrested Arup Das (25), with whom the woman was in a relationship and an accomplice, Sagar Sharma, the police said. **ENS**

SOUTH

SIT constituted to probe into Amaravati 'irregularities'

Amaravati: The Andhra Pradesh government Friday constituted a 10-member SIT, headed by a Deputy Inspector General of Police-rank IPS officer, to conduct a comprehensive probe into alleged irregularities, particularly land deals in the Amaravati capital region, during the previous TDP regime.

The report of a Cabinet

Sub-Committee on the "procedural, legal and financial irregularities and fraudulent transactions concerned with various projects, including issues related to land in the CRDA region" will form the basis for the SIT probe, according to an order issued by General Administration Department Principal Secretary (Political), Praveen Prakash. **PTI**

Panama Papers details led to I-T crackdown on Bharat Hotels Group

RITU SARIN

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

DETAILS OF offshore entities listed in the Panama Papers, published by *The Indian Express* in collaboration with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in 2016, led to the January 19 searches at the premises of the Bharat Hotels Group and its promoters in New Delhi.

Government officials told *The Indian Express* that following the publication of the Panama Papers, several references were sent by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to offshore jurisdictions and once information was received, searches were conducted at 13 locations in and around the Capital.

Following the operation and recovery of evidence of the links of the promoters of the Bharat Hotels Group to a clutch of offshore companies listed in the Panama Papers, the CBDT has dispatched fresh references abroad, this time for details of assets and properties held by offshore companies incorporated by Mossack Fonseca.

The Panama Papers refer to more than 11 million documents from the files of Mossack



Fonseca, a law firm in tax haven Panama, which set up labyrinthine offshore companies for its worldwide clientele of the well-heeled. Hundreds of individuals used the firm — and the secretive, lax regulatory system in which it operates — to set up offshore entities in tax havens around the world.

In a press release, the CBDT said "undisclosed foreign assets" of over Rs 1,000 crore had been detected during the searches. But officials said the amount would be several times that figure, and that the Bharat Hotels case was likely to become one of the biggest detection of the Panama Papers cases in India.

The CBDT said provisions of the 2015 Black Money Act may be invoked in this case, and they had evidence that "a large amount of black money was stashed abroad by the group, through the mechanism of

Trusts, formed in the early 1990s in tax havens".

Hitherto unpublished details from the Panama Papers data show that following the death in 2006 of Bharat Hotels Group proprietor and former MP Lalit Suri, his brother-in-law, Jayant Nanda, was inducted as a Director in several of the Mossack companies located in the British Virgin Islands (BVI), the Bahamas and Hong Kong.

A resident of UAE, Jayant Nanda was detained by Income Tax sleuths at the Delhi airport on January 19 when simultaneous searches were underway. Fresh evidence from the Panama Papers reveal that the focus of the Income Tax sleuths is on the ownership of a Panama-based entity called Richmond Enterprises SA and several other offshore companies to which it was linked, and were mostly incorporated between 1990 and 1992.

Asked about these links to offshore companies named in the Panama Papers and undeclared foreign assets, the official spokesperson for the Bharat Hotels Group said they had "no comments" to make.

Among the companies are two BVI-based entities: Blue Shore Circle Investment Ltd, of

which Jayant Nanda became a Director in November 2007 and Sure Line Holdings Inc. There are documents to show that 25,000 shares of Sure Line Holdings Inc were transferred to Nanda as late as February 2015. This company is also among those who received a "resignation" notice from Mossack Fonseca in February 2017 following the global media leak. The notice was in the name of Jayant Nanda, wherein he was asked to find a new registered agent for the firm.

There are other companies under tax scrutiny as they were linked to Richmond Enterprises SA: Peran Limited and Amex Investment Limited, both incorporated in Hong Kong, and J&W Inc, incorporated in Nassau, Bahamas. The Mossack Fonseca data set shows cross-holdings between these companies. For instance, in August 2001, Richmond Enterprises SA acquired 1,000 shares of J&W Inc.

Officials said that besides recovered documents showing linkages to these offshore entities, the searches have revealed that several offshore Trusts had also been set up by owners or associates of the Bharat Hotels Group. Among the Trusts are the Charisma Trust, Oasis Trust and Pacific Trust.

PIL seeks ban on slaughter of 'old bulls, buffaloes'

PRITAM PAL SINGH

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

A PUBLIC Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed on Friday in Delhi High Court seeking to impose a "total prohibition" on slaughter of old bulls and buffaloes on the grounds that the "cattle breeds are never useless".

The PIL, filed by Madhya Pradesh resident Brishbhhan Verma — who claims to be a social worker — submitted that the "prohibition on slaughter of cows must be extended to bulls and buffaloes only because such cattle, even after becoming useless as animals, assist in agriculture work or breeding".

The petition claimed that these animals "continue to provide dung and urine that can either be used by farmers as manure and fertilizer, or can be sold by the owners..."

The plea states that an interpretation of Article 48 of the Constitution, which states that the prohibition on killing/slaughtering of any animal and their progeny, excludes the male counterpart and "violates Fundamental Rights of the petitioner under Article 21 of Constitution..."

"If there is prohibition on slaughter of any person, then male and female both are prohibited. [If] There is prohibition on the peacock, then peahen will also be prohibited. But the order is clearly about slaughter of old, useless bulls, bullocks and old buffaloes," the PIL stated.

The plea cites numbers to add that bovine breeds are vanishing. "It is pertinent to mention that the cow and its original species are on the verge of banishment as it can be devised that cow breeds from 1947 to 1991 turned from 70 crore to few lakh, maximum one crore."



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the foundation laying ceremony for the Thal Sena Bhawan in New Delhi on Friday. **Praveen Khanna**

Rajnath lays foundation stone of new Army office complex

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Friday laid the foundation stone of a building that will house several offices of the Army headquarters in Delhi Cantonment area and said it will be a "source of inspiration that will remind the people of the country about the sacrifices made by our soldiers".

He said it will also "represent the unsung heroes of the armed forces who have sacrificed their lives for the country".

The Defence Minister credited the sacrifices made by the

nation's soldiers for India emerging as one of the powerful nations in the world.

He also stressed on the importance of integration among the armed forces and referred to the creation of the Department of Military Affairs and the post of Chief of Defence Staff that he said will work towards bringing jointness among the three services.

On Thursday, Army Chief General M M Naravane had said that the new Thal Sena Bhawan "will bring all Army headquarters offices under one roof thereby improving the working efficiency, while reducing the carbon footprint and logistics requirements".

He had said the new office,

since it will be in the cantonment, "will also allow more family time for all soldiers" during peace posting at Delhi as they won't have to travel to Central Secretariat or other offices scattered around the city.

The Army Chief had clarified though that the offices of senior functionaries of the force, like the Army Chief and Vice Chief will continue to be located where the Defence Minister's office will be.

The new building, to be completed within five years, will come up in an area of 39 acre and will be a multi-storey green building, adopting Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment.

GUJARAT

Surat civic body's women staff made to 'strip for medical test', probe ordered

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

SURAT/VADODARA, FEB 21

WOMEN EMPLOYEES of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) were allegedly stripped in groups at the civic body-run hospital for a medical test, prompting authorities to order a probe.

Even as SMC Commissioner Banchhanidhi Pani instituted a three-member committee to probe into the complaint made by the employees union on Thursday evening, the National Commission for Women (NCW) demanded a high-level probe and questioned the need for such a medical test that "violates human rights and privacy" of women.

The complaint, however, doesn't mention how many women were allegedly made to undergo the test.

The incident comes days after students of a women's college in Bhuj were allegedly forced by hostel authorities to remove their undergarments to prove they were not menstruating.

Pani has directed the probe committee to submit a report within 15 days. SMC Employees Union (SMCEU) president A A Shaikh in his application to Pani has mentioned that the trainee employees, who had served for three years, had been regularised and for that medical fitness certificate was necessary.

Head of the department of gynaecology at Surat Municipal Institute of Medical Education and Research (SMIMER), Dr Ashish Vachhani, told *The Indian Express*, "If a woman employee is unmarried, we only note down the details of her medical history, including her menstruation cycle. For employees who are married, besides taking down their entire medical history, pregnancy and child birth, we carry out a PAP smear test for cervical cancer. If an employee comes for medical fitness certifi-

cate, he or she has to undergo a series of tests beginning with eye and heart check-up, blood and urine tests, and gynaec check."

"We didn't ask the 10 SMC employees to stand in a queue and strip (as alleged) as it is impossible. In our routine OPD, on an average 125 to 150 patients come other than SMC employees. We function as per government guidelines," he said. "There are three medical examination cabins, where first the employees get themselves registered, in the second cabin, the doctor checks her blood pressure and takes down her medical history, and later if needed, the employee is taken for medical examination in a small room."

SMIMER Medical Superintendent Dr Vandana Desai said, "I am not aware of the incident. It is not possible for 10 women to stand together in the gynaecology department as the space is small. It is a simple test wherein women doctors collect details of the applicant's medical history. If there is any complications, then further checking is done."

The complaint states that the women shared the "awkward" experience with other women employees who approached the SMCEU to take up the matter with the Municipal Commissioner.

Municipal Commissioner Pani said, "We have received the complaint from one of the SMCEU members and have formed an inquiry panel. On the basis of the report, appropriate actions will be taken."

Surat Mayor Jagdish Patel also assured stern action against the culprits. "This issue is very serious. Such physical tests are conducted on all those employees who are getting permanent after finishing their training period. We will take strict action against the culprits if the allegations levelled by the women staffers are found to be true," said Patel.

WITH PTI INPUTS

Farmer suicides: Andhra govt pays first tranche of compensation to families

SREENIVAS JANYALA

HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY 21

DISMISSING THE previous TDP government's claim that 391 farmers committed suicide due to debt, crop losses during its rule, the YRS Congress Party government on Friday stated that 1,513 farmers committed suicide during the previous regime and released the first tranche of Rs 35.55 crore to provide ex-gratia to 627 families of the deceased.

Each of the families will receive ex-gratia of approximately Rs 7 lakh in the first tranche.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy said 1,513 farmers committed suicide during the previous regime and vowed to give compensation to families of all the remaining 1,122 farmers

that the TDP did not compensate.

The government had made a provision in the Budget for paying the compensation.

According to officials, the suicide cases were verified in each case by the District Collectors.

"The previous government did not provide any support to farmers in distress. But my government is not like that. We will take care of farmers in distress. All the District Collectors must reach out to the families of the farmers who committed suicide and give them assurance that this government would take care of them. As soon as the facts of the suicide are verified, the families should be paid the ex-gratia immediately," Jagan said.

He advised Collectors to ensure that the amount reaches the families directly.

CORONAVIRUS

In Wuhan, a French doctor stayed back: 'My duty to protect my patients'

ANURADHA

MASCARENHAS

PUNE, FEBRUARY 21

LAST MONTH, as the world scrambled to get out of Wuhan, a doctor from France decided to stay back in the Chinese city at the heart of the coronavirus outbreak.

It was a big decision for Dr Philippe Klein — but one he doesn't regret. Not even after the virus claimed the lives of the Wuhan doctor who first raised the alarm in December, and the director of a major hospital in the city.

Today, Klein is at the forefront of the battle against the virus. The 55-year-old has obtained permission from the government to

"move freely" to visit patients in their homes, and handles cases at the international clinic of Union Hospital, one of the largest in the city.

"My patients have healed just as over 97 per cent of infected patients heal," Klein, who manages the clinic, told *The Indian Express* in an email interview. "The world needs to know the courage of Wuhan and China in this historic crisis," he says.

The WHO has confirmed 2,121 deaths and over 75,000 cases in China, and the country is still under high risk. But despite a lockdown, Wuhan's residents remain "brave, calm, disciplined and united", and "doing everything possible to protect and entertain their parents



Dr Philippe Klein with his team in Wuhan.

and children".

"My duty is to protect my patients and after telling my staff to stay at home, I put this pro-

TECTIVE gear (overall, gloves, masks and goggles) before going to the patient's home and then leave them in a sealed plas-

tic bag. I wash my hands very often," says Klein.

"The crisis in Wuhan is like this huge sociological and medical laboratory from which we can draw lessons of incredible courage, intelligence and solidarity. There is a need to understand the sacrifices made by residents of Wuhan and China to protect the rest of the world. These lessons will protect all humanity from future health crises," he says. Klein's patients are mostly expats, including Indians working for a French auto company.

"The clinic welcomes foreigners and mainly the French community, which is important in Wuhan. I practice general medicine consultations and provide support VIP service to the best

Chinese specialists. During this crisis, my job was to work towards the safety of the European community while awaiting evacuation and also to provide medical and psychological support for all those who remained in Wuhan," he says.

The initial days of the outbreak were particularly tough for Klein and his Chinese team. He recalls that they were under immense pressure while psychologically preparing for a rapid human-to-human transmission.

"It was a special time of the year as the Chinese look forward to the new year celebrations, and this intermingling would have rapidly promoted the epidemic. At our clinic, around January 16, the anxiety was palpable when a

patient with pneumonia was detected with bird flu (avian influenza). I immediately shut the clinic and visited patients at home to prevent them from contracting any virus in the clinic," he says.

The death of Dr Liu Zhiming, director of Wuchang hospital, was a shock. And the construction of two hospitals in Wuhan in record time a "technical and human achievement".

Looking ahead, the doctor says a clinical trial is underway on severely affected patients in Wuhan using an antiviral drug that had been used against the Ebola virus. "The drug is showing positive results," he says.

Klein, a father of four, has been based in Wuhan for the last

six years. After the outbreak, he sent his wife and 12-year-old son, who were with him, back home to Metz in France. As for his own future, the doctor plans to join his family only after the situation returns to normal in Wuhan.

"I sent my wife and son on the second plane back to France (in January). I also recommended my patients (the foreign community in general) to be evacuated to avoid the contamination as I knew the city's health system would deteriorate because of the mobilisation of 100 per cent medical forces in the battle against this new virus," he says.

There's one regret, though — there's no shortage of food but it's a challenge, he says, to find fruits and vegetables.