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NEARBY

Shaheen Bagh protests: SC to hear plea on Monday

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Friday deferred hearing a plea to direct the Delhi police to stop the Shaheen Bagh protests against the CAA and the NRC and clear the "roadblock" till the Delhi elections are over. A Bench led by Justice S.K. Kaul indicated the court would not be party to any sort of pre-election narrative to garner votes a day before the polls on February 8.

NEWS PAGE 13

W.B. Governor reads speech critical of CAA

KOLKATA
West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday stuck to convention in delivering the speech provided by the State's TMC government and included remarks critical of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Population Register and the National Register of Citizens. The Governor had earlier hinted that he might omit or add certain portions.

NEWS PAGE 13

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Govt. set to host another visit by foreign diplomats to J&K

Several EU envoys express willingness ahead of Jaishankar's trip to Brussels

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

The government is making preparations to organise a second visit of diplomats, including several European Ambassadors, to Srinagar and Jammu next week, sources confirmed here.

According to the sources, about 20 to 25 envoys from "different geographical regions" are being invited to join the delegation.

Unlike the last visit in January, when European Union (EU) members declined to travel and asked to be sent as a combined group of 27 members, this time, several members of the EU have agreed, sources said.

Meeting with EU heads

On Friday, Mr. Jaishankar met the EU Heads of Mission (HOMs) in South Block, where he is understood to have discussed his upcoming visit, the planned visit of envoys to Jammu and Kashmir as well as concerns against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which are likely to come up during his visit to Europe.

"We received a lot of positive feedback from the last visit," said one official source, referring to the delegation, which included U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Juster, who travelled to Jammu and



Fresh initiative: Sixteen ambassadors visited Srinagar on January 9. This time round, 20-25 envoys from different geographical regions are being invited.

Kashmir on January 9-10.

"While all the Ambassadors expressed their concerns about issues like political detentions and Internet restrictions, they were able to see that there was normalcy on the roads, and the entire Union Territory is not under lockdown as they had expected," the source added.

He explained that the government now intends to take diplomats to the Union Territory on a regular basis.

Other sources confirmed that logistical planning and

security arrangements for the visit, which will repeat the schedule of the previous visit of the envoys, is being finalised. Helicopters will also be kept on standby, in case there are difficulties in road travel at any point.

Briefing by the Army

The visit will include a briefing by Army officials, and meetings with civil society members and politicians chosen by the government.

Diplomatic sources said negotiations over the scope and schedule of the pro-

posed visit have been on for the past month, and had run into issues over specific demands by the European diplomats to meet detained former Chief Ministers Mehbooba Mufti, Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah.

It is unlikely that these demands would be met this time either, as the government has just charged all of them under the stringent Public Safety Act.

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PROCEEDINGS AGAINST KATHUA CASE 'MINOR' STAYED PAGE 12

SC not in a hurry to hear govt. pleas on execution

It said Nirbhaya convicts had 7 days to exhaust remedies

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday conveyed that it is in no hurry to hear the appeals filed by the Centre and the NCT of Delhi for permission to separately execute Nirbhaya convicts.

A Bench, led by Justice R. Banumathi, remained impassive as Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta urged the court to issue a formal notice to the convicts on the appeals. The law officer intermittently asked the court to at least allow the government to serve the copies of the appeal papers to the convicts through the jail authorities.

Mr. Mehta said the "nation is losing patience" seeing the convicts misuse the legal process to delay the execution of their death sentence. "A law needs to be laid down," Mr. Mehta stressed.

Justice Banumathi drew Mr. Mehta's attention to the fact that the Delhi High Court, in its February 5 judgment rejecting the government's plea to separately execute the convicts, had given the men seven days to exhaust whatever remedies were left to them.

If the condemned men exhaust all remedies within that time, the question of separate hangings do not arise, the court reasoned. It



Wait continues: Nirbhaya's mother with lawyers at the Supreme Court on January 28.

scheduled the next hearing for 2 p.m. on February 11.

Delaying tactics

The High Court judgment had acknowledged that "it cannot be disputed that the convicts have adopted all the delay tactics to frustrate the death warrants". In this context, it noted that one of the convicts, Pawan Gupta, was yet to file his curative and mercy petitions, though his review petition was dismissed on July 9, 2018. However, all these factors do not allow executing them separately, the court reasoned.

But it put the four convicts on a deadline. "I hereby direct the convicts to take steps if they wish to make any type of petition before any institutions/authorities available under law within one week from today, failing

which this court [the Delhi HC] expects from the authorities concerned to deal as per law applicable without further delay," Justice Suresh Kait, directed in the judgment on February 5.

The Supreme Court Bench, also comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and A.S. Bopanna, was referring to this particular direction of the High Court while opting to wait out and see what the four convicts intend to do within the time frame of a week.

"The convicts are making a mockery of the legal process... So we have seen calculated and deliberate attempts to delay the hanging," Mr. Mehta submitted.

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SEE ALSO PAGE 3

Ready to roll



Officials checking election material on the eve of the State Assembly polls in Delhi on Friday. R.V. MOORTHY (REPORT ON PAGE 13)

Modi lauds Bodos for peace pact

He allayed fears that the CAA would bring illegal foreigners to Assam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday advised the youth in central India's Maoist belt and in Jammu and Kashmir to emulate the Bodos and shun the path of violence. He also allayed fears that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act would bring illegal foreigners to Assam. This was his first visit to the State since the protests against the citizenship law began last year.

The right path

"I congratulate you on taking the right path and will ensure no thorn pricks you hereafter. I appeal to the youth elsewhere in the northeast, the Naxal areas and Jammu and Kashmir, who still believe in guns, bombs and pistols, to learn a lesson from the Bodo people," Mr. Modi said at a rally organised in



Time to celebrate: Bodo people arriving for the rally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kokrajhar on Friday. RITU RAJ KONWAR

western Assam's Kokrajhar to celebrate the recent signing of the third Bodo Peace Accord between the Centre, the Assam government, Bodo insurgent groups and two Bodo organisations.

The Prime Minister said 130 crore Indians had been

congratulating the Bodos on their peace initiative that would be "a new beginning for those who laid down arms", and for Assam.

"We are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, and its relevance has increased after

the signing of the Bodo Accord. It will serve as an inspiration [for others] to renounce the path of violence," Mr. Modi said.

"The Bodos have received respect after five decades. The previous accords signed in 1993 and 2003 could not restore peace completely," he said.

'No demands left'

"After the signing of the latest accord, no demands of the Bodos are left. Through this pact, the (newly-created) BTR (Bodoland Territorial Region) will get strengthened. Everybody has won through this pact. Peace and humanity have won too. Our first and foremost priority now will be development. I will never retreat without fulfilling your aspirations," Mr. Modi said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Ex-PSO gets death for killing judge's wife, son

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

The Personal Security Officer (PSO) of a judge was sentenced to death by a local court here on Friday in connection with the murder of the latter's wife and teenage son in 2018. He was also sentenced to rigorous imprisonment of five and three years respectively, and ordered to pay a fine of ₹15,000 for destruction of evidence under the Indian Penal Code and unlawful use of a weapon under the Arms Act.

Mahipal had shot dead the mother-son duo in full public view at South City-II market on October 13, 2018.

DETAILS ON PAGE 3

Mehbooba was working with separatists: dossier

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Public Safety Act (PSA) dossier, based on which former Chief Minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti has been booked including public remarks allegedly made by her against the Army, pro-militant tweets and attempts "to collaborate with separatists".

The *Hindu* has learnt that the dossier against Ms. Mufti underlines that there were "confidential reports" suggesting she was "collaborating with the separatists".

It also mentions tweets, where she called for "dignity to militants after death" and accused "the Army of using chemical weapons against them". The dossier also mentions her tweets opposing the triple talaq law passed by the BJP-led go-

Opposition upset at use of PSA

Opposition leaders criticised the Centre for invoking the Public Safety Act (PSA) against Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the leaders "deserved to be freed".

PAGE 12

vernment and critical remarks over the lynching of Muslims in the country.

Public speeches made by Ms. Mufti and former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah of the National Conference on the issue of Articles 370 and 35A are also listed in the dossiers compiled against them.

SPEECHES LISTED PAGE 12
EXTENDED FULLY EDITORIAL

'Modi attributed wrong quote to Omar'

It was picked from a satire website, says CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Opposition parties on Friday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of attributing a wrong quote to former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, saying it was picked from a satire website.

"PM Modi, while replying to the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address, in Parliament claimed that statements made by two J&K ex-CMs were not acceptable. It has now been shown that these statements have been taken from satire website *Faking News*," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury wrote on Twitter.

The party's Polit Bureau accused Mr. Modi of using false charges to frame Mr. Abdullah and Peoples Democratic Party leader Mehbooba

PM Modi, replying to the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address, in Parliament claimed that statements made by two J&K ex-CMs were "not acceptable". It has been shown that these statements have been taken from "Faking News"
SITARAM YECHURY, CPI(M) general secretary

With every passing day, one blow at a time, the Mo-Sh [Modi-Amit Shah] BJP government makes a mockery of Parliament
DEREK O'BRIEN, Trinamool Congress MP

ba Mufti. "That the Modi government should take recourse to such false news for slapping the notorious Public Safety Act (PSA) belies the claims that everything is normal in J&K..." it said.

"Thousands continue to be detained even after six months. Lakhs of livelihoods have been disrupted and normal day to day activity

simply does not exist. This is an affront to the Indian Constitution and democracy," it said.

On Thursday, Mr. Modi said Mr. Abdullah had said dilution of Article 370 would cause a massive earthquake that would divide Kashmir from India.

Hours later, Mr. Abdullah and Ms. Mufti were booked

under the PSA. Both have been under arrest since August 5 when the Rajya Sabha approved the withdrawal of the special status from Jammu and Kashmir.

Writing on Twitter, Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien indirectly referred to the use of *Faking News* by Mr. Modi. He said: "If an MP quotes #FakeNews to mislead #Parliament these options are available. Rule 222. Question of Privilege, Rule 380. Expunction Direction, 115. Write to Speaker Rule 376 Point of order for violation of Rule 353 (defamatory) Rule 377 and raising a matter that's not a point of order."

He added, "With every passing day, one blow at a time, the Mo-Sh [Modi-Amit Shah] BJP government makes a mockery of Parliament."

Bank of India, State Bank cut interest rates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A day after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced measures to ease interest rates, the State Bank of India (SBI) and the Bank of India (BoI) have reduced their lending rates by cutting the marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR).

The SBI has reduced the MCLR by 5 bps across all maturities.

From Feb.10

The one-year MCLR will become 7.85% with effect from February 10.

The country's largest lender indicated that the lending rates would come down further.

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