

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Bahraich violence

5 suspects held after encounter with UP cops, 2 suffer gunshot injuries

BAHRAICH (UP), OCT 17: Five suspects in the Bahraich violence case were arrested here Thursday after an encounter with the Uttar Pradesh Police in which two of them suffered gunshot injuries, a senior official said.

The accused were allegedly trying to flee to Nepal, which shares a border with Bahraich district in Uttar Pradesh, the officer said.

"Five accused have been arrested," Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Amitabh Yash told a news channel.

On the encounter, he said, "I have information of exchange of fire and gunshot injuries."

Yash, also the chief of the Special Task Force of the Uttar Pradesh Police, said the Bahraich police, investigating the murder and subsequent violence, has already established the link of one of the accused in Nepal.

Director General of Police (DGP) Prashant Kumar said those arrested have been identified as Mohammad Faheem, Mohammad Sarfaraz and Abdul Hameed, who are named accused in the FIR -- and two others Mohammad Taleem alias Sabloo and Mo-



hammad Afzal.

Bahraich Superintendent of Police Vrinda Shukla told reporters that Sarfaraz and Taleem were injured in the encounter in the Nanpara area of the district.

She did not elaborate further.

A doctor at a local health care centre said, "Two people were brought here around 2.35 pm. One of them was named Sarfaraz and the other Mohd Talib. One of them had injuries on his left leg and the other on his right leg."

"The bullet is still inside the body. I have referred them to the district hospital in Bahraich for X-ray and further management. Both

are in normal condition," he told reporters.

Violence broke out at Maharajganj in the Mahsi tehsil of Bahraich district on Sunday allegedly over loud music being played outside a place of worship during a Durga Puja immersion procession.

A local, Ram Gopal Mishra, 22, part of the passing group, died of gunshot wounds in the ensuing violence, triggering vandalism and arson in the area with mobs torching several houses, shops, showrooms, hospitals and vehicles.

Meanwhile, Rukhsar, the daughter of accused Abdul Hameed, the landlord accused of firing at Mishra,

said, "At around 4 pm yesterday, my father and two brothers, Sarfaraz and Faheem, and another youth were picked up by the UP STF."

"My husband and brother-in-law have already been picked up. There is no news of them. We fear that they may have been killed in an encounter," she claimed in a video.

Shortly after the encounter, the Samajwadi Party took to social media citing "rampant crimes" in the state and questioned if "riots and encounters" were being staged to divert people's attention from law and order issues.

"Crimes are rampant in the BJP-Yogi government, jewelry of women, sisters and daughters is being stolen and snatched. Are riots being instigated to divert public attention from these crimes and are encounters being carried out to hush the matter?" the SP's media cell posted on X.

It also attached a clip of a Hindi news article with the headline: "Chain looted from a medicine trader by goons near a state minister's house in Muzaffarnagar".

Senior US official warns of N Korean nuclear threats

SEOUL, OCT 17: US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Wednesday that Washington and its allies are "alarmed" by North Korea's nuclear and missile threats as well as its increasing military support for Russia's war in Ukraine, but said he couldn't confirm Ukrainian claims that Pyongyang was also sending soldiers to fight for Moscow.

Campbell spoke with reporters following discussions with South Korean and Japanese counterparts on reinvigorating an international pressure campaign against North Korea, which faltered in recent years amid a deepening divide at the UN Security Council.

Earlier on Wednesday, Washington, Seoul and Tokyo announced plans with eight Western governments to launch a new multinational team to monitor the

enforcement of sanctions against North Korea.

Russia in March vetoed a UN resolution in a move that effectively abolished monitoring by UN experts of Security Council sanctions against North Korea, which prompted Western accusations that Moscow was acting to shield its arms purchases from Pyongyang to fuel its war in Ukraine.

Campbell said there are signs that North Korea was increasing its support of materials, including artillery and missiles, to support Russia's war on Ukraine, which he said was "creating further instability in Europe."

"We are concerned by them and ... we agreed that we will continue to monitor the situation closely," Campbell said about the claims.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has claimed that North Korea is sending military personnel

to help Russia's war effort without providing details. Ukrainian media reported earlier this month that six North Koreans were among those killed after a Ukrainian missile strike on October 3.

North Korea has also been making increasingly provocative threats against rival South Korea, including accusing the South of infiltrating drones to drop anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets over Pyongyang and threatening to attack the South if it happens again.

North Korea also on Tuesday blew up the northern sections of unused road and rail routes that once linked it with South Korea, in a choreographed demolition aimed at demonstrating its growing anger with South Korea's conservative government.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have spiked since 2022 as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un used Russia's

war on Ukraine as a window to dial up his weapons testing activities and threats. Washington, Seoul and Tokyo have strengthened their combined military exercises in response and took steps to sharpen their nuclear deterrence strategies built around strategic US assets.

Following his talks with Campbell and Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Masataka Okano, South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Hong Kyun said that the countries condemn the North's "intentional moves to create tensions".

"We have agreed to maintain a solid South Korea-US combined posture to respond firmly to North Korean provocations and strengthen security cooperation through close coordination between South Korea, the US, and Japan," Kim said.

We have received certificate for 'Emergency': Kangana Ranaut

NEW DELHI, OCT 17: Actor-BJP MP Kangana Ranaut on Thursday said the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has issued a certificate to "Emergency", weeks after she had to postpone the release of the political drama.

"We have received the certificate for our movie Emergency," Ranaut wrote on her Instagram Stories.

"We will be announcing the release date soon, thank you for your patience and support. @manikarnikaofficial @zeestudiosofficial @nishantpitti," she added in her post.

The film was scheduled to hit theatres across the coun-



try on September 6 but couldn't keep its date as it didn't get clearance certificate from the censor board,

which is important for the public exhibition of films in India.

"Emergency", also written,

directed and co-produced by Ranaut, features the actor in the role of former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

The film was embroiled in a battle with CBFC over non-issuance of certificate for its release. It was caught up in controversy after Sikh organisations, including the Shiromani Akali Dal, accused it of misrepresenting the community and getting facts wrong.

Ranaut had accused the film body of stalling certification to delay the release.

Last month, the CBFC told the Bombay High Court on Monday that Ranaut had agreed to the cuts suggested by the board in the movie.

SC upholds validity of Section 6A of Citizenship Act which grants citizenship to immigrants in Assam

NEW DELHI, OCT 17: In a majority verdict, the Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act which grants Indian citizenship to immigrants who came to Assam between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said the Assam Accord was a political solution to the problem of illegal migration.

Section 6A was inserted into the Citizenship Act as a special provision to deal with the citizenship of people covered under the Assam Accord.

The CJ, writing for himself, upheld the validity and said the magnitude of influx of migrants in Assam is higher as compared to other states considering the smaller land size and the detection of foreigner is an elaborate process.

Besides, Justice Surya Kant, who wrote for himself and Justices M M Sundresh and Manoj Misra, concurred with the CJ and held that Parliament had the legislative competence to enact such a provision.

The majority verdict held that cut-off date of March 25, 1971 for entry into Assam and granting citizenship is correct.

Mere presence of different ethnic groups in a state does not mean infringement of Article 29(1), it added.

Justice J B Pardiwala, however, dissented and held Section 6A as unconstitutional. The bench rejected the petitions questioning the constitutional validity of Section 6A.

Section 6A of the Citizenship Act grants Indian citizenship benefits to illegal immigrants -- mostly from Bangladesh, who entered Assam between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971.

The provision was incorporated in 1985 following the signing of the Assam Accord between the Rajiv Gandhi

government at the Centre and the All Assam Students' Union (AASU).

It says those who came to Assam on or after January 1, 1966, but before March 25, 1971, from specified territories, including Bangladesh, in accordance with the Citizenship Act amended in 1985, and since then are residents of the northeastern state, must register themselves under Section 18 for acquiring Indian citizenship.

As a result, the provision fixes March 25, 1971, as the cut-off date for granting citizenship to migrants, particularly those from Bangladesh, residing in Assam.

CBI, ED, IT should be impartial, not function in favour of one party, says Karnataka CM

BENGALURU, OCT 17: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said central agencies like CBI, ED and Income Tax should be impartial and not function in favour of one party. He also said that the ruling Congress was ready to face and win November 13 by-polls in three assembly segments in the state.

"Nagendra (former Minister B Nagendra) has told the media that he was pressurised by the ED. He also informed me that he was pressurised to name me and D K Shivakumar (Deputy Chief Minister).

No agency should work in favour of a party. Whether it is CBI or ED or Income Tax, they should function impartially," Siddaramaiah told reporters.

The Chief Minister was responding to former Minister B Nagendra's allegations that he was pressurised by the ED to name him and Shivaku-



mar in the multi-crore scam in Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. Nagendra had, after walking out of the jail on bail on Wednesday, also charged the ED (Directorate of Enforcement) with arresting him in connection with the scam, under pressure from the BJP, as part of a conspiracy

to destabilise the Congress government.

Siddaramaiah said, in all the three constituencies that will go for by-polls, the Congress party is ready to face the election. "...All preparations are being done. In two to three days, names (of candidates) will be announced. In all the three constituencies Congress party will win," he

said. Responding to a question on his meeting Congress general secretary (Organisation) K C Venugopal, along with Shivakumar on Wednesday evening, the CM said, "...We discussed the upcoming by-election."

The Election Commission of India on Tuesday announced that the bypolls to Sandur, Shiggaon and Channapatna will be held on November 13, and the results will be declared on November 23. The last date for filing nominations is October 25, and the final date for withdrawal of papers is October 30.

By-polls for Sandur, Shiggaon, and Channapatna are necessitated, as the seats fell vacant following the election of their respective representatives -- E Tukaram of Congress, former CM Basavaraj Bommai of BJP, and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy of JD(S) -- to Lok Sabha in May elections.

Indian-origin candidates in race for Oxford University Chancellor

LONDON, OCT 17: The University of Oxford on Wednesday announced the 38 finalists in the race to be elected the new Chancellor of the University of Oxford, which includes Indian-origin candidates but excludes former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan.

Ankur Shiv Bhandari, the first Indian-origin Mayor of Bracknell Forest in Berkshire; Nirpal Singh Paul Bhargal, a Professor of International Entrepreneurship; and Pratik Tarvadi, a medical professional, will go head-to-head with academics, politicians, philanthropists and entrepreneurs.

Former Conservative Party leader Lord William Hague and former Labour politician Lord Peter Mandelson are among the senior politicians selected, with Khan deemed to have been disqualified following the selection process.

"Applications were considered by the Chancellor's Election Committee solely on the four exclusion criteria set out in the university's regulations. All applicants have been notified whether their submissions have been successful," a university statement reads.

declared university criteria, candidates for the unremunerated role had to demonstrate outstanding achievements in their field and the ability to command respect beyond it.

They also had to prove a deep appreciation for the university's research and academic mission, its global community, its ambition to remain a world-class research and teaching university; and the ability and willingness to enhance the reputation of the university locally, nationally and abroad.

While the university did not specify any reasons for individual disqualifications, some experts had indicated that Khan's criminal convictions in his country may disqualify the former Oxford alumni.

Members of the world-leading university's Convocation, consisting of staff and graduates of Oxford University, will now vote online to elect the successor of Lord Patten, a former governor of Hong Kong, who retires at the end of Trinity Term 2024 after 21 years as Chancellor.

During the first round of voting, in the week commencing October 28, voters

will have the opportunity to rank as many candidates as they choose. The top five candidates, who will be announced in the week commencing November 4, will proceed to the second round of voting -- scheduled for the week beginning November 18. The University of Oxford's new Chancellor will be announced in the week of November 25.

The incoming Chancellor will be in post for a fixed term of no more than 10 years in accordance with amendments to university statutes enacted earlier this year.

The Chancellor is the titular head of Oxford University and presides over several key ceremonies and also chairs the Committee to Elect the Vice-Chancellor. In addition to these formal duties, the Chancellor undertakes advocacy, advisory and fundraising work, acting as an ambassador for the university at a range of national and international events. "University of Oxford has been a temple of learning, research, and a beacon of history over many centuries... It will be the honour of my life to be able to serve as the Chancellor of Oxford University, and I feel

I am best suited for the role and to play a part in furthering the goals of this beloved institution," reads Bhandari's "Statement of Interest" for the role.

Bhargal flags his international links and intimate knowledge of Oxford and Oxford University, as well as his "experience as a developer of new courses and visiting professor, excellent commercial acumen, multi-culturally competent, with contacts in government in leading economies around the globe, I believe I can contribute to Oxford University during the 21st century".

For Tarvadi, the post offers an opportunity to bring a vision of inclusivity, innovation, and global impact.

"My international experience and network would be instrumental in forging new alliances and enhancing existing ones, ensuring that Oxford remains at the forefront of global academic and research initiatives," he states. The post has previously been held by former Conservative prime minister Harold Macmillan, former Labour home secretary and president of the European Commission Roy Jenkins, and most recently by Lord Patten.

Hong Kong cuts liquor tax in effort to reignite its nightlife industry

HONG KONG, OCT 17: Hong Kong's leader announced a cut to liquor tax Wednesday as the Asian financial hub hopes to revive its reputation as a travel destination with a vibrant nightlife and dining scene.

After fulfilling Beijing's long-standing imperative to enact a homegrown national security law, Chief Executive John Lee now faces challenges with economic competitiveness against regional rivals like Singapore, Japan, and mainland Chinese metropolises.

Changes in residents' lifestyles and a wave of middle-class emigration during the COVID-19 pandemic have dampened local demand. Many residents now prefer to spend their week-ends in mainland China, at-

tracted by its lower prices and a wider variety of entertainment options. Visitors from the mainland are also spending less in the city than before.

Vacant shops are commonly seen in the city's most popular shopping districts, and revenue at the city's bars were down about 28% in the first half of 2024 from the same period in 2019, preliminary official data showed.

In his annual policy address, Lee said the duty rate for liquor with an import price of more than 200 Hong Kong dollars (about \$26) would be slashed from 100% to 10% for the portion above that price starting Wednesday.

He hoped the policy would foster the logistics, storage, tourism and high-end dining

industries.

The government previously told lawmakers that after wine duties were abolished in 2008, imports jumped 80% in a year and the city welcomed hundreds of new wine-related businesses.

Lee, a former security chief handpicked by Beijing to lead Hong Kong, pushed through the new security law in March. Critics fear the law will further curtail the civil liberties promised to the former British colony when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

That law follows similar national legislation Beijing imposed in 2020 to quell huge anti-government protests. Since that law took effect, many of the city's leading activists have been prose-

cuted, forced into self-exile or silenced. The Hong Kong government said the security laws are necessary for the city's stability.

But in the wake of these dramatic political changes, many middle-class families and young professionals have emigrated to Britain, Canada, Taiwan and the United States.

To attract more wealthy migrants, Lee also revised a scheme that awards residency to applicants who invest a minimum of 30 million Hong Kong dollars (\$3.9 million) in certain types of assets. Starting Wednesday, purchases of homes valued at 50 million Hong Kong dollars (\$6.4 million) or more can be counted for up to a third of the requirement, he said.