

## NDA's allies upset with BJP, want to join RJD: Tejashwi

Patna, June 10 : Alliance partners of the NDA in Bihar are upset with the BJP and in touch with the RJD, said Bihar's deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday, adding that many NDA leaders also want to join his party. "BJP's allies including RLS, LJP and HAM are upset with the BJP in Bihar.

They are keen to get rid of the BJP and are in touch with the RJD," Tejashwi, the younger son of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad, told the media here. Tejashwi also said that several of

NDA's (National Democratic Alliance) MLAs and leaders are in touch with the RJD and are ready to join the party if given a green signal and offer.

According to Tejashwi, allies of the BJP-led NDA are looking to dump it and join some other alliance because they have no say in the NDA and its government.

He said: "BJP se 'tang aur pareshan hai NDA ke ghatkak dal, unki suni nahi jati hai'

(Constituents of the NDA are sick and tired of the BJP, which doesn't listen to them)."

A senior RJD leader, close to Lalu Prasad, said that Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) chief Upendra Kushwaha, who is a Union Minister, and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) President and former Bihar Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi are in talks with RJD.

That is why they never directly attack Lalu Prasad like other BJP leaders in the opposition in Bihar,

he said. Bihar's ruling grand alliance of RJD, JD-U and Congress is led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

## BJP Files Complaint Against Sitaram Yechury, As Feud Intensifies In Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram, June 10 : General Secretary Sitaram Yechury in Thiruvananthapuram over his "baseless tweet" holding the Sangh Parivar forces responsible for the attack on him at a press conference in New Delhi.

Kerala BJP General Secretary VV Rajesh told IANS that he has filed a complaint against Mr Yechury with state Director General of Police TP Senkumar.

"I spoke to TP Senkumar (state police chief) and have filed a complaint against Yechury because it was after his tweet, which said he was attacked by the Sangh Parivar forces, did the violence escalate in Kerala," he said.

Mr Rajesh said this was a "baseless tweet", as the RSS has no connection with the Hindu Sena. Two youths belonging to the Hindu Sena were arrested for the attack on Mr Yechury at a press confer-



ence in New Delhi on Wednesday.

The Kerala BJP General Secretary in his complaint states that Mr Yechury is solely responsible for the political violence that has gripped the state.

"His tweet has been proven to be factually incorrect and politically

provocative. This is a clear case of exhorting violence, abetting and aiding it. Hence, I request you, as the state DGP (Law and Order) to immediately direct registering of a criminal case against Sitaram Yechury for exhorting violence, abetting the attacks on the

offices and cadre of Sangh Parivar," he said in his complaint. The complaint was lodged a day after Kerala CPI-M Secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan said that attacks on the party by the BJP and RSS have increased dramatically after BJP President Amit Shah's visit to the state.

## Union Minister 'egged' in Odisha amid MP peasant stir

Bhubaneswar/Bhopal, June 10 : Union Agriculture Minister

Radha Mohan Singh, who has remained silent over the deadly protest by Madhya Pradesh farmers, was on Saturday greeted with eggs in Odisha by Congress activists, angry over the killing of six protesters in the neighbouring state.

The Youth Congress activists also waived black flags as soon as the minister's cavalcade left a state guest house in Khurda district for an official function "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas" in Jatani, near Bhubaneswar.

However, the egg missiles missed the intended target but a couple of them broke in front of Singh's official vehicle, witnesses said.

At least five Congress workers were arrested, a police official said. Odisha Youth Congress chief Loknath Maharathy was among the arrested.

Calling him anti-farmer, Maharathy said Radha Mohan Singh had no moral right to be the Agriculture Minister "after the brutal killing of farm-

ers in Madhya Pradesh ruled by the BJP".

Congress leader Pradip Majhi said the "egg attack was carried out to sensitise (the central government), so that the problems of the farmers of Odisha and other parts of the country are addressed".

The angry Congress activists were demonstrating in protest against the death of six farmers in police firing in Mandsaur district,

the epicentre of the farmers' agitation in Madhya Pradesh, which remained calm but tense as authorities allowed a 12-hour relaxation in curfew from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday.

Local markets in the Mandsaur city opened as people came out in droves to stock daily essentials, District Magistrate O.P. Srivastava said, adding no untoward incident had taken place anywhere in the troubled region.

"If the situation continues to be normal, curfew will be lifted (from Sunday)," Srivastava said.

But the wholesale agriculture market — Mandsaur Krishi Upaj

Mandi on the outskirts of Mandsaur city — was deserted as farmers, who began protesting from June 1 to demand debt relief and price hike in their produce, stayed away from selling for the 10th day on Saturday.

According to estimates, this has led to losses of several crores of rupees to the agriculture sector in the state. The market on a normal day sees some 5,000 farmers from across Madhya Pradesh and parts of neighbouring Rajasthan selling their produce in an estimated daily turnover of Rs 5 crore.

Mandsaur and its adjoining Neemuch district were the epicentre of the peasant stir even as protests spread to other parts of the state after police opened fire at farmers on June 6.

Amid the spiralling protests by Madhya Pradesh farmers, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday began his indefinite fast here "until peace is restored" in the state.

The Chief Minister has decided to run his office from the BHEL Dushehra Maidan, where he is sitting

on fast. He said it would serve as an open forum where farmers and people would be able to approach him directly.

The opposition slammed Chouhan's decision to go on fast.

Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Arun Yadav said the act was "a farce". "He has never considered visiting the families of the dead farmers in Mandsaur and also the houses of the 25 persons who died in a blast at a fireworks factory."

In Delhi, CPI-M General Secretary Sitaram Yechury accused the BJP-led central government of turning farming into a "loss-making profession" and meeting farmers' genuine grievances with "bullets".

"The essential point is this: We are not remunerating farmers adequately for their labour and produce. The BJP instead, is meeting their genuine grievances with bullets," Yechury wrote in a Facebook post on Saturday, referring to the protests in Madhya Pradesh in which six farmers were killed in police firing.

## Congress slams Chouhan's 'pretentious' fast, demands murder case in farmer deaths

Mumbai, June 10 : Terming Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's indefinite fast as "pretentious and false", the Congress party on Saturday asked why the state government hadn't lodged a murder case in the killing of six protesting farmers.

"Today Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and his ministers sat on a false fast. They should give up this 'false fast' and get prepared to go on a 'political exile'," said Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala.

"Instead of indulging in hypocrisy and pretension of sympathising with the farmers, they should reply why a murder case has not yet been lodged for the killing of six farmers?" Surjewala asked.

Surjewala also said: "Four days after they denied deaths of farmers due to police firing, the government admitted that it was due to the same."

"Another farmer named Kishan committed suicide today. Would the government reply why farmers are not getting actual price for their crops. Will the MP government fulfill its promise of giving relief to the farmers? Will Prime Minister Narendra Modi fulfill his promise of providing 50 per cent profit over the cost of production," said Surjewala.

He also denied allegations of Congress instigating the violence in the state. Surjewala said: "Give justice to the farmers. Congress party will always stand with the farmers."

"False videos and propaganda will not suppress us. Farmers should be given justice immediately, or else we will launch a struggle," Surjewala said.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday began an indefinite fast "until peace is restored".

## J&K: 13 Pakistani intruders killed in last 96 hours, says Army

Srinagar, June 10 : While foiling a fourth infiltration bid in row, the Army on Saturday killed a militant along the Line of Control (LoC) in Gurez sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipora district.

With this the toll among the infiltrating militants in a series of clashes with the Army during past four days has risen to 13, whereas, one soldier was also martyred and two others were injured. Defence spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia said, "One terrorist was killed by own troops in Gurez sector on Saturday. The weapon in his use has been seized. The operation is in progress." The Army said that the fire fight began when the troops guarding the de

facto border observed movement of militants trying to sneak into the 2,580 m high Gurez valley, about 86 km from district headquarters Bandipora and 123 km north of Srinagar, from across and challenged them. Earlier on Friday, the Army had claimed foiling an infiltration bid in Gwalta area of Uri sector of neighbouring Baramulla district after killing five militants. In the same area, two soldiers of 4 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI) were injured when the militants opened fire at a patrolling party on Thursday. The Army said that "multiple attempts" have been made by militants to sneak into Jammu and Kashmir from PoK through various sectors of the LoC including Macheal, Nowgam, Uri and Gurez in Kupwara, Baramulla and Bandipora districts during the past week. All these attempts were, however, foiled by "alert" troops. The Army has alleged that the infil-

trating militants were helped by the Pakistani troops by providing them active support including heavy calibre artillery covering fire. Islamabad has yet to react to it but has denied such charges in the past.

The defence spokesman said that during this year, so far, as many as two dozen infiltration attempts were foiled by the Army troops along the LoC during which 40 armed intruders were killed. "Relentless operations by security forces have defeated desperate attempts by Pakistan and its agents to spread terror in Jammu and Kashmir during the holy month of Ramadan," the spokesman had said in a statement issued from the Northern Command headquarters in Udhampur on Thursday.

Reiterating it on Saturday, the Udhampur-based defence spokesman Colonel N.N. Joshi said that Pakistan army's "sinister designs" to push in multiple groups of armed intruders across the LoC continue to be defeated by proactive operations being carried out by the Indian Army along the de facto border. "Relentless operations mounted by troops have successfully intercepted groups of armed intruders all along the LoC in Gurez, Macheal, Nowgam and Uri Sectors leading to elimination of 13 armed intruders in the past 96 hours. This includes groups of four and three armed intruders who were tracked and eliminated in the Macheal and Nowgam sectors, respectively as reported on June 8. Since then, the operations in Uri and Gurez sectors have further progressed," the spokesman said.

## INTERNATIONAL

### U.S.-backed Syrian militias push into Islamic State-held Raqqa

Washington, June 10 : U.S.-backed Syrian forces have advanced into opposite sides of Islamic State's so-called Syrian capital of Raqqa, the forces and a war monitor said on Saturday. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a group of Kurdish and Arab militias supported by a U.S.-led coalition, began to attack Raqqa on Tuesday after a months-long campaign to cut it off.

The U.S.-led coalition estimates that Raqqa,

which Islamic State seized from Syrian rebels in 2014 during their lightning advance in Syria and Iraq, is defended by 3,000-4,000 jihadists. It has been a hub both for Islamic State's military leaders and its bureaucrats, and has been used to plot attacks in countries around the world. The SDF said it had seized al-Mishlab district in the far east of Raqqa on Friday and al-Sabahia district in the west. The war monitor, the Syrian Observatory for

Human Rights, said the SDF had taken Mishlab and more than half of Sabahia. The forces are now advancing into al-Romania district in northwest Raqqa, the SDF and the Observatory said. Islamic State had turned back an earlier SDF assault on a military base on the north side, the Observatory said.

Islamic State still has a long sweep of territory along Syria's Euphrates valley and wide stretches of desert, despite recent losses

to the SDF, the Syrian army and rebel groups. To the west of Raqqa, the Syrian army and its allies have advanced into Islamic State territory and on Friday reached SDF lines near the town of Tabqa, 40km (25 miles) from the city. The Syrian government has described the SDF's war against Islamic State as "legitimate" and said its military priorities are further east, suggesting it does not plan to confront the group now.

### U.S. joins battle as Philippines takes losses in besieged city

Washington, June 10 : U.S. special forces have joined the battle to crush Islamist militants holed up in a southern Philippines town, officials said on Saturday, as government forces struggled to make headway and 13 marines were killed in intense urban fighting.

The Philippines military said the United States was providing technical assistance to end the siege of Marawi City by fighters allied to Islamic State, which is now in its third week, but it had no boots on the ground.

"They are not fighting. They are just providing technical support," military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Jo-Ar Herrera told a news conference in Marawi City.

The U.S. embassy confirmed it had offered support, at the request of the Philippines government, but gave no details.

A U.S. P3 Orion surveillance plane was seen flying over the town on Friday, media said.

The cooperation between the long-time allies is significant because

President Rodrigo Duterte, who came to power a year ago, has taken a hostile stance toward Washington and has vowed to eject U.S. military trainers and advisers from his country. The seizure of Marawi City on May 23 has alarmed Southeast Asian nations which fear that Islamic State - facing setbacks in Syria and Iraq - is establishing a stronghold on the Philippine island of Mindanao that could threaten the whole region.

About 40 foreigners have fought alongside the Philippine militants in Marawi City, most of them from Indonesia and Malaysia, though some came from the Middle East.

The Philippines military suffered its biggest one-day loss on Friday since 10 troops were killed in a friendly-fire incident on June 1. Herrera said 13 marines conducting clearing operations died after an "intense" house-to-house firefight during which they encountered improvised explosive devices and were attacked by rocket-propelled grenades.

The deaths took to 58 the number

of security forces killed, with 20 civilians and more than a hundred rebel fighters also killed in the Marawi fighting.

At least 200 militants are holed up in a corner of the town. An estimated 500 to 1,000 civilians are trapped there, some being held as human shields, while others are hiding in their homes with no access to running water, electricity or food.

The military said it was making headway in the town but was proceeding carefully so as not to destroy mosques where some of the militants had taken up positions.

"We give premium to the mosques, because this is very symbolic to our Muslim brothers," Herrera said.

The Philippines is majority Christian, but Mindanao has a significant population of Muslims and Marawi City is overwhelmingly Muslim.

One of the main Islamist factions dug in around the heart of the city is the Maute group, a relative newcomer amid the throng of insurgents, separatists and bandits on Mindanao.

### US investigators seek Trump-Comey conversation memos

Washington, June 10 : US House and Senate investigators have requested former FBI Director James Comey's memos of his private discussions with President Donald Trump and any records the White House kept of their discussion including audio recordings.

The leaders of the House Russia investigation, Representatives Michael Conaway, a Texas Republican, and Adam Schiff, a California Democrat, sent the request on Friday directly to Comey for copies of his memos, reports CNN.

They also sent a separate request to Trump's White House counsel, Don McGahn, for any record the administration had of their meetings.

The investigators requested Comey and the White House to provide the records by June 23.

The Senate judiciary committee, meanwhile, sent a request to Columbia University law professor Daniel Richman for Comey's memos. Richman had confirmed on Thursday that he was the friend Comey testified who had discussed the memos with the media.

The leaders of the

Senate judiciary's probe sent Richman the request on Thursday and asked he provide it by Friday. A source familiar with the matter said Richman has been in touch with Senate judiciary through special counsel Bob Mueller's office, and that there will be movement after the weekend.

Four members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, including Chairman Chuck Grassley and ranking Democrat Dianne Feinstein, had set a Friday deadline for Richman to respond after Comey testified that he gave the memo to him and

asked him to anonymously disclose it to the media in an attempt to prompt the naming of a special counsel, reports.

Comey testified Thursday that Trump asked him to drop an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn and implied the President may have become the subject of investigation himself for interfering in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's work.

Under oath, Comey repeatedly called Trump a liar. Trump responded Friday by saying Comey was a liar

### Pakistan an important partner in South Asia, Putin tells Sharif

Astana/Islamabad, June 10 : Russian President Vladimir Putin has termed Pakistan as an important partner for his country in South Asia, a media report said.

He conveyed this to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during their meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Astana on Friday. The two leaders discussed bilateral relations, including trade and economic cooperation, and also current international issues during the meeting. Advisor on Foreign

Affairs Sartaj Aziz and Minister for Commerce Khuram Dastgir were present at the meeting, Pakistan Today reported. Putin congratulated Sharif on Pakistan's accession to the SCO. Putin said: "I am glad that we met for a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the SCO Summit." He said Russia-Pakistan relations have been constructive and mutually beneficial. "Our relations are developing in many areas, and our trade has increased, even if only by a few percentage points. Of course, we are able to do much more

than we are doing now," he said. In turn, Prime Minister Sharif thanked President Putin, and the Russian Federation for supporting Pakistan's full membership in the SCO. Sharif said, "while in Ufa we did agree on improving Pakistan-Russian bilateral trade, there is improvement but not the level that we agreed upon. It has been always my endeavour to build and strengthen our relationship and I am continuing to strive for that." There has been growing bonhomie between Russia and Pakistan, with both

holding their first-ever joint military exercise in September 2016 in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, and the first-ever Russia-Pakistan consultation on regional issues in mid-December 2016 at Islamabad. Both sides also inked a deal for Mi-35 helicopters. Russia's ambassador to Pakistan, Alexey Y. Dedov, is reported to have said that Moscow and Islamabad have held discussions to merge the China-backed CPEC with the Russia-backed Eurasian Economic Union.