

## Kejriwal, Lt Governor lock horns over vacant posts in Delhi hospitals

**New Delhi, Jan 11** : Vacant posts in city government hospitals have become a new flashpoint between Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, with both blaming each other for the delay in making appointments.

On Thursday, Bajjal told Kejriwal that he was surprised that the Chief Minister has raised questions regarding filling up of vacant posts with retired personnel as Kejriwal himself had chaired a meeting wherein the decision was taken.

Bajjal was referring to a letter by Kejriwal earlier this week, in which the latter said that 2,169 posts were lying vacant in hospitals as there were not enough retired personnel available.

Kejriwal also said that the decision to fill the posts only with retired personnel was taken with Bajjal's approval and that the elected government was kept in the dark about the decision.

"I am surprised as to why the hiring was limited to retired people... I would also be grateful if necessary directions are issued to all officers to stop hiding files from the elected

government," Kejriwal wrote.

On Thursday, Bajjal wrote back to the Chief Minister, expressing his surprise over his letter.

"The proposal for engagement of retired employees against existing vacancies was moved by the Health and Family Welfare Department in pursuance of directions of the Chief Minister, in the meeting convened under his chairmanship on August 8, 2017.

The minutes of that meeting were also issued by the CM Office. Therefore, it is surprising

that the Chief Minister has now raised questions regarding the filling up of vacant posts with retired personnel," a statement from Bajjal's office said.

Bajjal also said that the appointment of retired people was an interim measure whereas regular recruitment is the only sustainable solution.

In a tweet, Kejriwal also urged the Lt Governor to approve two

schemes on doorstep delivery of services and quality healthcare for all,

which have been submitted for Bajjal's reconsideration.

## AIADMK bribery case: HC denies bail to middleman Chandrashekar

**Chennai, Jan 11** : The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed the bail plea of alleged middleman and sidelined AIADMK leader T. T. V. Dinakaran's aide Suresh Chandrashekar in a bribery case.

Justice Mukta Gupta rejected Chandrashekar's bail plea saying there is apprehension that he may tamper with evidence if released on bail.

The Delhi Police had opposed his bail plea saying his conduct, even while in custody, had shown scant respect for the law and he was a habitual offender with as many as 21 cases pending against him in various courts in the country.

However, Chandrashekar's lawyers had contended that he should be granted bail as other accused in the case including Dhinakaran, his close aide Mallikarjuna and others



were on bail. Chandrashekar, who was arrested on April 16, 2017 was denied bail thrice by a trial court and once by the Delhi High Court.

On July 14, the Delhi Police Crime Branch had filed chargesheet alleging Chandrashekar had conspired with Dhinakaran to bribe the Election Commission

officials to get the 'two leaves' symbol for the Sasikala-led AIADMK (Amma) faction.

Delhi Police had not chargesheeted Dinakaran yet but it told the court that a supplementary chargesheet will be filed against the other accused. Chandrashekar was chargesheeted for alleged offences under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) including forgery of valuable security, forgery for purpose of cheating, using forged document as genuine, possessing a forged document, intending to use it as genuine and criminal conspiracy. He was also charged with the alleged offence of taking gratification by illegal means to influence public servants under the Prevention of Corruption Act. If convicted, the offences carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

## Centre's directionless policies compromising national security: Congress

**New Delhi, Jan 11** : Pointing to Chinese transgressions in Arunachal Pradesh, the Congress on Thursday slammed the Narendra Modi government and said "its directionless policies are harming India's strategic interests and compromising national security."

It said the National Democratic Alliance government had displayed a "heedless, incautious and shortsighted attitude" when it comes to national security.

"The recent attempt by China to foster a Doklam 2.0, this time in Arunachal Pradesh, has raised serious concerns," Congress Spokesperson Tom Vadakkan said. "Even though we commend our security forces which timely prevented further road construction in the Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh last

month, we want to caution the government so that it remains more proactive to such transgressions" he added.

The opposition party also said that bravado, chest-thumping and

TV studio warfare are the tools employed by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government to manage media headlines when it comes to critical issues of national security.

"The reality and actuality of their tall claims are getting unravelling day by day," he added.

Vadakkan said: "As the Modi government completes 43 months in office, it has become increasingly evident that its directionless policies are harming India's strategic interests and compromising national security."

"Media reports say that the Chinese made 1.3-km road inside Arunachal Pradesh, before they were stopped and their equipment seized. This is a cause of serious concern," he added.

The Congress leader pointed out that the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) criteria talks of a population of at least 100 for a village to have a government-built road.

Bishing, the village where the road was build,

## Israel PM to arrive on six-day India trip

**New Delhi, Jan 11** : Netanyahu will hold meetings in New Delhi with President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, the embassy said in a statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will arrive here on Monday on a six-day trip to India that will also take him to Gujarat and Mumbai, the Israeli Embassy announced on Thursday.

Netanyahu will hold meetings in New Delhi with President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, the embassy said in a statement. Netanyahu will also attend the annual "Raisina Dialogue", a geo-political conference, and address an India-Israeli CEO forum in New Delhi.

"The Prime Minister's

visit to India is the grand finale to the celebrations of 25 years of Growing Partnership between India and Israel. The visit will

focus on the progress made between India and Israel since Prime Minister Modi's visit to Israel last summer, and on shaping the next 25 years of relations between our countries and our peoples," Israeli Ambassador Daniel Carmon said in the statement.

Netanyahu will arrive in New Delhi on January 14 and depart from Mumbai on January 19.

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## SC no to foreign safety assessment of Mullaperiyar Dam

**New Delhi, Jan 11** : The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a plea for direction to the Centre to engage an international agency to assess the safety of the 120-year-old Mullaperiyar Dam in Kerala that is maintained by Tamil Nadu. The bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra, Justice A. M. Khanwilkar and Justice D. Y.

Chandrachud rejected the plea as Attorney General K. K. Venugopal submitted a note from the Central Water Commission (CWC) stating that the 120-year-old dam was safe.

The CWC in its note said a special committee, set up by the Central government, was already looking into the safety and maintenance aspect of the dam.

The court rejected the plea even as counsel Manoj V. George, appearing for petitioner Russell Joy, insisted that an international agency should be entrusted the task of assessing the structure of the Mullaperiyar Dam and it should be decommissioned within a time frame.

Counsel for the petitioner told the court that people living down-stream of Mullaperiyar Dam were living in constant fear of a huge catastrophe if something happens to the dam. Addressing the apprehensions expressed by the petitioner and to allay the fears of the people, the court directed the Central government, Tamil Nadu and Kerala to set up committees to draw disaster management plan in the event of any disaster.

**Mumbai, Jan 11** : A court on Thursday sent to police custody, till January 17, the three partner-owners of the 1Above pub who were nabbed after a 13-day chase on Wednesday, an official said.

The three are Kripesh Sanghavi, Jigar Sanghavi and Abhijit Mankar who also carried a reward of Rs 100,000 announced by Mumbai Police. They have been booked under various charges including

for culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

While the Sanghavi brothers were nabbed while on their way to meet a lawyer in a mall in Khar late on Wednesday night on Linking Road, Mankar was nabbed from a hotel in south Mumbai.

They were produced by the N.M. Joshi Police before the Bhoiwada Magistrate Court which granted them police custody for a week.

This takes the total number of arrests in the December 29, 2017 pub fire that killed 14 and injured another 55, to six, including two managers of 1Above pub - Kevin Bawa and Lisbon Lopez, and a co-owner of The Mojo's Bistro, Yug Pathak, son of a former DGP-rank IPS officer K.K. Pathak. Another partner of Yug Pathak, Nagpur-based businessman Yug Tuli is still absconding and has sought anticipatory bail from a Mumbai court, which is pending disposal. Besides the six arrests, three others, including hotelier Vishal Kariya, have been arrested for helping and shielding the absconding trio after the blaze in rooftop pubs, The Mojo's Bistro, 1Above and other establishments in the sprawling Kamala Mills Compound in Lower Parel. After Kariya's interrogation on Wednesday, police

secured valuable leads leading to the arrests of the 1Above owner-partners. A probe by the Mumbai Fire Brigade has said that the fire first erupted in rooftop pub The Mojo's Bistro, spread to the adjoining 1Above and other premises that night. So far, police have recorded the statements of around 70 witnesses, including the injured and survivors in the pub blaze, other guests and pub staffers.

## INTERNATIONAL

### European powers urge Trump to preserve Iran nuclear deal

**Brussels, Jan 11** : Britain, France and Germany made a joint plea to Donald Trump on Thursday to uphold a pact stopping Iran getting nuclear weapons, a day before the U.S. president is expected to decide whether to re-impose sanctions in a move likely to sink the deal. In sharp contrast to Trump's view that the 2015 pact was "the worst deal ever negotiated", the foreign ministers of the three countries and the EU's top diplomat said there was no alternative to it and that sanctions should remain lifted.

"We agree on this approach, we want to protect (the deal) against every possible decision that might undermine it," Germany's Sigmar Gabriel said alongside his French and British counterparts and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini after meeting Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"It is absolutely necessary to have this to prevent the development of nuclear weapons at a time when other parts of the world are discussing how to get them," Gabriel said.

The meeting in Brussels was choreographed to send a message to Washington

before Trump is due to decide whether to re-impose oil sanctions lifted under the deal. If that happens, Iran has said it would no longer be bound by the pact and could return to producing enriched uranium.

Zarif tweeted that the meeting had shown a "strong consensus" that Iran was complying with the pact, had the right to enjoy its economic benefits and "any move that undermines (it) is unacceptable".

"E3 (Germany, France and Britain) and EU fully aware that Iran's continued compliance (is) conditioned on full compliance by the US," Zarif added. European countries have benefited from renewed trade with Iran as sanctions have been lifted, while U.S. companies are still largely barred from doing business with the Islamic Republic due to other sanctions unrelated to the nuclear issue. "The deal is working. It is delivering on its main goal which means keeping the Iranian nuclear programme in check and under close surveillance," Mogherini said, adding that the International Atomic Energy Agency had shown in nine reports that Iran is meeting its commitments.

Trump formally rejected the deal in October, although the United States has not yet pulled out.

That major shift in U.S. policy put the United States at odds with its European allies, as well as Russia and China that are also signatories to the nuclear accord, in the most visible transatlantic split on foreign policy since the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. European governments are troubled by Trump's "America first" rhetoric and inconsistent statements on NATO and the European Union, while they consider the Iran nuclear deal one of West's the biggest diplomatic achievements in decades.

### Merkel sees 'tough day' in crunch German coalition talks

**Turkey, Jan 11** : Chancellor Angela Merkel said her conservatives still had high hurdles to clear in Thursday's talks on forming a coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD), who are pressing for accelerated European integration. Merkel, weakened by an election setback in September, turned to the left-leaning SPD to seek a re-run of their so-called "grand coalition" after the collapse in November of talks on a three-way coalition untested at national level. The chancellor, who commands wide respect abroad after more than 12 years in power, needs coalition talks to succeed to avoid further erosion of her personal authority and weakening of German international influence, not least in the European Union (EU).

Speaking at the start of the final day of exploratory talks that could lead to formal negotiations, Merkel said it would be a tough day but she recognised that Germans expected results. "Of course we also have in mind that we have to create a good policy platform for our country. So it's going to be a tough day," she said. SPD leader Martin Schulz, a former president of the European Parliament, made clear his priority was Europe. "On the last day of exploratory talks we will make clear that above all this must be a new start for the European Union," he told reporters. "If we join a government it will be on the condition that it makes Europe strong."

### China's Xi supports progress in inter-Korean talks: S. Korea's Blue House

**Beijing, Jan 11** : Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday welcomed recent progress in inter-Korean talks during a telephone call with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, the South's Blue House said in a statement.

At Tuesday's talks, North Korea said it would attend the Winter Olympics in the South next month, and both sides agreed to resolve problems through dialogue and revive military consultations to avoid accidental conflict.

Seoul and Beijing agreed in October to move beyond a year-long stand-off over the deployment of a U.S. anti-missile system in

South Korea, a dispute that has been devastating to South Korean businesses that rely on Chinese consumers.

Moon made his first visit to China last month.

During the 30-minute call, Xi said he supported Moon's stance that the advancement of inter-Korean ties and the denuclearisation of the peninsula should "go in parallel", Moon's office said.

"The two leaders agreed to strengthen strategic communication and cooperation," the statement said.

It added that the two leaders hoped the latest dialogue effort would lead to a peaceful resolution of the North Korean

nuclear issue and the establishment of peace on the Korean peninsula, beyond next month's Olympics.

In Beijing, the official China Daily cited Xi as telling Moon that China wanted to work with South Korea to "jointly maintain regional peace and stability".

In a telephone call on Wednesday, Moon and U.S. President Donald Trump also said the dialogue "could naturally lead to talks between the United States and North Korea for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula after the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics." Washington welcomed the talks as a first step towards resolving the crisis over North Korea's program to develop nuclear missiles capable of reaching the United States, but it has reiterated that any talks involving the U.S. must be aimed at the North's denuclearization.

However, Pyongyang said it would not discuss its nuclear weapons because they were aimed only at the United States and not its "brethren" in China, Russia and South Korea, showing that a diplomatic breakthrough to the crisis remains far off.

### Syrian rebels declare counter attack in Idlib province

**Seoul, Jan 11** : Rebels launched a counter attack against Syrian government forces and their allies in Idlib province on Thursday, seeking to roll back an advance that is fuelling tension with neighbouring Turkey. Fighting raged in the area, where a government offensive backed by Iran-backed militia has gathered pace in the last two weeks, according to rebels and a military news service run by the Lebanese group Hezbollah, which is fighting on the government side.

Idlib province is the biggest chunk of Syria still held by rebels fighting President Bashar al-

Assad, with a population swollen by Syrians who have fled government advances in other parts of the country. Assad has defeated rebels in many parts of western Syria with critical help from Russia and Iran.

The recent military escalation in western Syria has included an unprecedented attack by a squadron of drones on Russian military bases and has cast a shadow over Moscow's efforts to convene a Syria peace congress later this month.

The Hezbollah-run news service said the army and its allies were repelling a "fierce assault"

by the Nusra Front, formerly al Qaeda's affiliate in the Syrian war, and groups linked to it.

Rebels fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) said in a statement they had set up a joint operations room to repel the offensive and to take back areas seized by the government in northeastern Hama and southern Idlib.

"The operation is to hit the belly of the regime deep into liberated territories and to encircle their advancing forces," said Abdul Hakim al Rahamon, a senior official in Jaish al Nasr, an FSA faction taking part. Tahrir al-

Sham (HTS), an alliance led by the Nusra Front, the dominant force in Idlib, said it had already made gains.

"With Allah's blessings we drew plans and prepared ourselves and are encircling them," said Abu al Naji, a commander from Tahrir al

Rebels said they had captured some 15 villages and seized 60 government fighters. A Syrian military source denied this and dismissed rebel talk of a counter attack as propaganda. The source said fierce battles were however underway in the area and army advances were continuing.