

GOVT COMMITTED TO GIVE PUCCA HOUSES

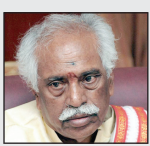


Union Minister Venkaiah Naidu on Thursday said the Central government was committed to fulfil people's aspiration to own a "pucca house" and to boost rental housing a National Urban Rental Housing Policy has been formulated.

NATION

5

FINANCE MIN RATIFIES 8.65% RATE FOR EPF

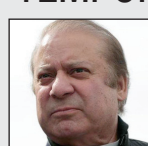


Finance Ministry has ratified the rate of interest of 8.65 per cent on Employee Provident Fund (EPF) for 2016-17. This was stated by Labour Minister Bandaru Dattatreya on Thursday. He said that Labour Ministry will immediately issue the notification in this regard.

BUSINESS

7

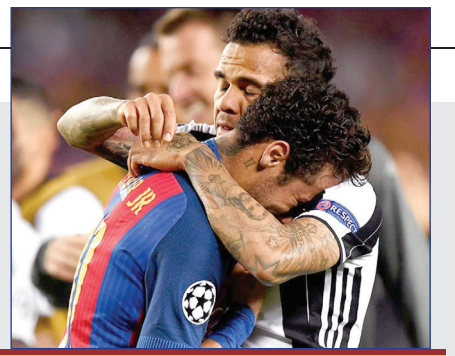
PAK PM SHARIF GETS TEMPORARY RELIEF



Embattled Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Thursday got a temporary breather from the Supreme Court which said there was "insufficient evidence" to remove him from office but ordered setting up of a joint team to investigate the graft allegations against his family.

WORLD

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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE: JUVE EXHIBIT THE ART OF DEFENDING.

SPORT

11

Sonshi cries for a doctor

The poor Sonshi villagers were thrown into prison for demanding basic rights of any living being - fresh air and clean drinking water. But that's not the entire picture. The real government apathy lies in the fact that these villagers are falling prey to respiratory disorders and water borne diseases but there is not a single doctor in near vicinity to treat them, reports **NIBEDITA SEN.**



Sonshi villager Rupesh Naik holding the photo of his deceased younger brother Manoj Naik. Seated on left is Manoj's son Damodar and on right is Rupesh's son Ayush.



The settlements in Sonshi village where the arrested villagers live. Pics: Nibedita Sen

After losing his younger brother Manoj Naik to jaundice after prolonged consumption of contaminated water, resident of Sonshi village, Rupesh Naik is now worried about the fate of his nephew Damodar Naik and son Ayush Naik. This is because people of Sonshi village are grappling with polluted air and contaminated water without having any medical aid in their vicinity. The dust kicked up by mining trucks plying in the area

is resulting in severe health conditions like asthma, bronchitis, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) that cause upper respiratory tract infection and water borne disease diarrhoea, jaundice among others.

"After untimely demise of my brother, I am worried for the future of the next generation. It is highly impossible to live here in these inhuman conditions. While it is impractical to call for ban on mining activity, we want to get relocated from here," Rupesh Naik told GT.

Laxmi Gawde at 80 years of age is baffled that her daughter-in-laws Pratibha and Sharmila Gawde were jailed for demanding basic human amenities.

"My daughter-in-laws were protesting against the government as it had failed in its duty to provide us basic necessities of life. Moreover they did not have the money to pay as surety for getting bail. Is being poor a crime?" a bewildered Laxmi asked.

She lamented that there were no doctors in the entire Sonshi village to treat the sick. At this

Vishwajeet assures better health facilities

Health Minister Vishwajeet Rane on Thursday said that the State government will provide better health facilities to the Sonshi villagers, if they come out of the judicial custody and discuss their problem. "I will provide whatever they (Sonshi villagers) want, but they should come out of the jail," Vishwajeet said when his attention was drawn towards the villagers claim that there was no proper health facility in the village.

age she has to walk at least four miles to board a bus then travel another 10 km to go to Sanquelim primary health centre for treatment.

Sumitra Nadar, a resident of Sonshi village has a diabetic son Gurudev Nadar, who is also suffering from breathlessness. "I have to travel at least 15 km to Valpoi Community Health Centre for treatment and shell out money for commuting every-time," Sumitra said.

Raghunath Mahalaye, a 74-year-old barber, informed that he travels 10 km

every day to fetch water from his home, which is in Navelim as the water available locally is polluted.

"The village atmosphere has got severely polluted due to the mining activities in last 50 years. Yet no initiatives have been taken by any government over the years to resolve our problems," Mahalaye said.

According to Amaresh Smeti, a 50-year-old truck driver and a resident of Sonshi village, there is no pipeline connected to the village to get potable water. "The water is supplied through tankers, but the frequency is erratic. We have to store water for many days at a stretch in the open. During this period, dry leaves, bird excreta, dust and mosquito larvae start settling in the stored water," he said.

Confirming the health issues, an official of Sanquelim Primary Health Centre said that the Sonshi villagers are mostly suffering from respiratory tract infection and COPD.

"Many cases of tuberculosis were also detected. Water borne diseases like jaundice is reported to us. The local village school is surrounded by mines from three sides and therefore children are largely affected by the respiratory diseases," he said.

More on pg 2

45 Sonshi villagers released

BY A CORRESPONDENT
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Valpoi: The 45 villagers from Sonshi village arrested for blocking the mining trucks were finally released from the judicial custody after the mining company paid the surety amount on Thursday late evening.

The arrested villagers were granted bail on Saturday by the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), Valpoi but they could not be released as they were unable to pay surety to the court.

After meeting Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, it was assured that all of the demands of the Sonshi villagers will be fulfilled.

Speaker Pramod Sawant took stock of the situation and called for a meeting on April 17. During the meeting, the mining company had accepted two demands ie to provide healthcare facility and safe drinking water to Sonshi villagers but said that the jobs would be provided based on the availability.

Health Minister Vishwajeet Rane also intervened in the matter and assured the villagers that their demands will be resolved soon.

Legal counsel of Sonshi villagers, Advocate Raviraj Chodankar said, "All 45 villagers who were behind the bars for blocking iron ore transportation have been granted bail and released on late Thursday night as the amount of surety has been paid by the mining company."



Mining trucks carrying iron ore kick up pollutants in the atmosphere.

India hits out at China for renaming of places

New Delhi: India on Thursday hit out at China for giving Chinese names to some parts of Arunachal Pradesh, saying assigning invented names to towns of the neighbour does not make illegal territorial claims legal.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Gopal Baglay also asserted that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India. "Assigning invented names to towns of your neighbour does not make illegal territorial claims legal. Arunachal Pradesh is and will always be an integral part of India," Baglay told reporters here.

When asked if India has taken up the matter with China, he said the Chinese government has not communicated anything officially so far and the ministry has seen only reports on the development.

China on Wednesday had announced that it has "standardised" official names for six places in the northeastern State and termed the provocative move as a "legitimate action".

The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs announced on April 14 on its website that it had standardised in Chinese characters, Tibetan and Roman alphabet names of six places in Arunachal Pradesh, which China calls "South Tibet". P71

Villagers block road at Verna demanding speed breakers

CASES REGISTERED AGAINST NUVEM MLA, 300 VILLAGERS

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Vasco: Following series of fatal accidents on the Verna bypass on Wednesday, the villagers from Verna, Utorda and Majorda led by Nuvem MLA Wilfred D'Sa alias Babashan blocked the Morod junction on Verna bypass on NH-17 on Thursday morning.

The villagers were agitated over last many months as their demand for speed breakers at the junction had been neglected by the PWD authorities.

Maria Antao, one of the vendors selling vegetables on the national highway said that the State government had removed speed breakers during BRICS Summit 2016 held in October last year and failed to re-erect it causing increase in number of accidents at the spot.

Another villager Ashok Naik from Majorda said that the demand of speed breakers had not been fulfilled. "To cross the junction it has become very dangerous for the pedestrians as there is no traffic police or highway police patrolling to control the speeding vehicles." Contd on pg 4



Villagers from Verna, Utorda and Majorda block the road on Verna bypass following fatal accidents on Thursday. Pics: Siddhi Bandekar

TWO-WHEELER RIDER KILLED AT MARCEL

BY A CORRESPONDENT
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Panaji: A rider was killed after the two-wheeler on which he was proceeding collided against an oncoming vehicle at Tivrem-Marcel on Thursday evening. The police gave the name of the victim as Bhulesh Potan, 26, a native of Uttar Pradesh and currently residing at Khandola. The accident occurred when Bhulesh, a mason was returning home with his material on a two-wheeler. On reaching Tivrem-Marcel, his two-wheeler collided against an oncoming jeep, which was heading towards Banastarim. With the impact, Bhulesh was thrown off his bike and sustained severe head injuries. He was immediately rushed to the Goa Medical College and Hospital, Bambolim but died on the way, police said.

10 suspected ISIS activists arrested

Lucknow/Mumbai: A major terror attack in the country was claimed to have been averted as 10 suspected ISIS activists were held on Thursday in a major multi-State operation.

The joint operation was carried out by the police teams of Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, in which four suspected terrorists belonging to the ISIS Khorasan module were arrested and six others were detained, officials said.

The arrests were made during raids on Thursday morning in Mumbai (Maharashtra), Jalandhar (Punjab), Narkatiaganj (Bihar), and Bijon and Muzaffarnagar (both in Uttar Pradesh), the officials added. Inspector General of the UP Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) Aseem Arun, in a statement in Noida, said that four persons were arrested on charges of hatching terror conspiracies.

He said the accused were planning a major terror attack in the country.

Important documents relating to the ISIS were seized from them, Arun claimed.

He said two persons Mufti Faizan and Tanveer, allegedly connected with the ISIS, were arrested from Bijon district.

Nazim Shamshad Ahmed (26), who hails from Bijon, was nabbed from Mumbai township in Thane district adjoining Mumbai. P71

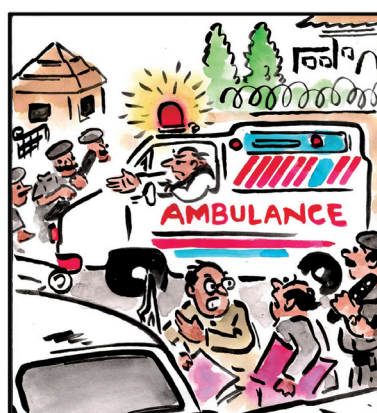
WEATHER
Max: 34.1 Deg C Min: 26.7 Deg C

MARKETS
Sensex: 29,422.39 Nifty: 9136.40

CURRENCIES
Dollar: 64.6364 Pound: 82.8057
Euro: 69.3355 Yen: 59.3500

BULLION
Gold: 29,275 Silver: 42,445

FLIP SIDE ALOK



After they removed the red beacon atop his vehicle, he decided to start commuting by ambulance!