



short stories

HELICOPTER GOES MISSING IN ARUNACHAL

**ITANAGAR:** A helicopter carrying Tirap deputy commissioner Kamlesh Kumar Joshi, two pilots and a crew member went missing on Tuesday in Arunachal Pradesh's Tirap district, officials said. Chief minister Nabam Tuki asked officials to intensify the search. The Pawan Hans helicopter went missing around 11.15am, an hour after it took off from Khonsa. The helicopter was on a routine passenger sortie to Longding, and was to return to Mohanbari airport in Dibrugah.

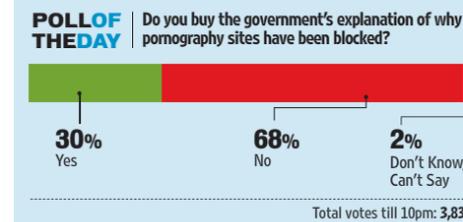
Mamata to seek flood relief from Modi

**KOLKATA:** West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi next week and seek central funds for flood relief. "I am going to New Delhi on August 11 and August 12. I have decided to seek an appointment with the Prime minister. I will discuss with him for grant of central disaster management fund for the purpose of flood relief in the state," the chief minister told reporters at the state secretariat on Tuesday.

12 dead in Thane building collapse

**THANE (MUMBAI):** A three-storey building collapsed near Thane railway station, killing 12 people, early on Tuesday. The Krishna Niwas building in the B cabin area of Naupada came crashing down around 2.30am. Seven people were rescued by the fire brigade and National Disaster Response Force personnel. The building had 16 flats where several families were staying.

on the web



Doctors petition SC against ban on surrogacy

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**NEW DELHI:** A group of doctors has come up in support of commercial surrogacy, saying it has improved the economic condition of surrogate mothers, besides being a boon for hundreds of childless couples. The Indian Society for Assisted Reproduction (ISAR) has moved an application before the Supreme Court asking it not to quash a notification under which trading of "human embryo" is allowed. In the absence of a legislation to regulate surrogacy, doctors and couples wanting surrogate children take refuge under the 2013 notification. "There are hundreds of surrogates who have started their own small-scale businesses like catering, beauty parlours, food joints and sewing coaching classes. They now own houses, their children study in English medium schools, their husbands have bought passenger rickshaws, and their social status is markedly raised," the society stated. The petitioner claims to be a representative body of several scientists, doctors and research experts engaged in the field of assistive reproduction for childless couples. It has protested against advocate Jayashree Wad's petition asking the court to strike down the 2013 notification. Wad has contended that trad-

PROTESTS ON



Jammu AIIMS bandh enters fifth day

**JAMMU:** Jammu witnessed a shutdown for the fifth consecutive day today as the agitation led by AIIMS Coordination Committee, demanding an AIIMS in the region, continued unabated. Over 40 persons took turns to sit in for the ACC chain hunger strike entering a fortnight on Tuesday.

Odisha godman gets death for human sacrifice

**BHUBANESWAR:** The district and sessions court in Odisha's Jajpur district on Tuesday awarded death sentence to a self-proclaimed godman for sacrificing a minor boy to a deity. The godman Pitambar Gaipar made the human sacrifice on February 11, 2010. The godman was arrested on February 18, 2010, after he was found offering the child's blood to women, telling them that drinking it would make them immortal.

Fire crackers create flutter in Kanpur court

**KANPUR:** Three mild explosions on the ground and first floor of the Kanpur Bar Association building created flutter on the court premises on Tuesday. The explosions that took place within a span of three minutes around 1.20pm were found to be triggered by firecrackers.

LS passes first bill of session

**ACTION** SC/ST bill passed, demands of excess grants for Railways approved

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**NEW DELHI:** The Lok Sabha passed the first bill of the disruption-hit monsoon session of Parliament on Tuesday with Opposition benches virtually empty due to the suspension of 25 Congress MPs which has worsened a bitter stand-off with the government.

The lower House passed the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2014 and also approved demands of excess grants for the Railways.

Since the session commenced on July 21, Parliament has transacted little business as an aggressive Congress-led Opposition repeatedly obstructed proceedings, demanding the resignations of top BJP leaders over the Lalit Modi controversy and the Vyapam scam.

The SC/ST bill adds new categories of actions to be treated as offences against SC/STs and amends existing norms while establishing exclusive special courts to try offences under the act.

Replying to a debate on the bill, social justice and empowerment minister Thawar Chand Gehlot said the amendments would provide stronger punitive measures in cases of SC/ST atrocities. "Several steps have been taken by the NDA government in the last one year to prevent SC/ST atrocities and to rehabilitate them".

Moving for the passage of the demands for excess grants totalling ₹2,719 crore relating to the 2012-13 period, railways minister Suresh Prabhu said the matter related to the then UPA government and not to the NDA regime. The demands were later approved by a voice vote.

Prabhu also hit out at the Opposition, saying the NDA government did not "believe in politics".

"We believe in the smooth functioning of Parliament. Everything is subservient to national interest. The Modi government believes in the highest principles of democratic functioning", he said.

Referring to the ambitious bullet train plan, the railways minister said the project would not come at the expense of the services for the common man. "The Japan International Cooperation Agency has just submitted a feasibility report. We are evaluating the viability of the project", he said.



The Opposition benches were virtually empty in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday as the suspension of 25 Congress MPs has worsened the standoff with the government. SANJEEV VERMA/HT PHOTO

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YSR CONGRESS, TRS PROTEST

**NEW DELHI:** YSR Congress and Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) MPs staged protests in Lok Sabha to push the Modi government to concede to their demands. YSR Congress MPs were demanding special status for Andhra Pradesh while TRS MPs wanted a firm commitment on notifying a dedicated high court for Telangana. **HTC**

BUSINESS VISA FOR PAK NATIONALS

**NEW DELHI:** Pakistani businessmen with assured financial standing and credentials will be given multiple entry business visa up to three years, the government informed Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Minister of state for home Kiren Rijiju said instructions were issued on July 7 regarding grant of multiple entry business visa. **HTC**

113 ATTACKS AGAINST SCRIBES

**NEW DELHI:** The government said a total of 113 cases of attacks on journalists in which they were grievously hurt were reported from across the country in 2014. Minister of state for home Haribhai Chaudhary told LS that the National Crime Records Bureau has started collecting data on attacks on media persons since 2014. **HTC**

Cong stand reflects inability to bear Modi's success, says BJP

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**NEW DELHI:** The BJP accused the Congress on Tuesday of adopting a "narrow-minded, partisan, obstructionist and anti-development" approach as it taunted the principal opposition party for not being able to accept the Narendra Modi government's success.

The ruling party stepped up its counter attack a day after 25 Congress MPs were suspended from the Lok Sabha for unruly behaviour. The Congress has been opposing various policies of the NDA government, especially the attempt to amend the land acquisition law passed by the UPA in 2013. The Congress was unable to

THE BJP STEPPED UP ITS COUNTER ATTACK A DAY AFTER 25 CONGRESS MPs WERE SUSPENDED FROM THE LS FOR UNRULY BEHAVIOUR

bear its 2014 election defeat and, thus, resorting to negative tactics in Parliament by using its numerical strength in the Rajya Sabha, said a BJP resolution at its weekly parliamentary party meeting.

"The entire record of governance of the NDA government led by Narendra Modi is transparent, based upon probity and propriety and faster decision

making in public interest without an iota of corruption," reads the resolution.

The Congress's stand would have serious and long-term adverse consequences for the country and affect the NDA government's efforts to build a resurgent India, the BJP said.

The party resolution listed some of the key bills such as the good and services tax (GST) that is awaiting Parliament's nod and putting in place a real estate regulator for protecting interests of consumers.

The BJP is under pressure to wriggle out of the current parliamentary stalemate to push its reforms agenda, a key promise made during the 2014 elections.

Women MPs complain against BJP leader

**NEW DELHI:** Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan is expected to soon take a call on a complaint by five women MPs accusing BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri of using abusive and sexist remarks.

The five MPs — Ranjeet Ranjan, Sushmita Dev (both Congress), Supriya Sule (NCP), Arpita Ghosh (Trinamool Congress) and PK Sreemathi Teacher (CPM) — alleged that Bidhuri abused them during the pandemonium in the House following the suspension of 25 Congress MPs on Monday.

An official in the Lok Sabha secretariat said there was no written complaint by the women MPs but they met the Speaker and informed her about Bidhuri's "repeated unruly behaviour" in the House. "She will take a call within a day or two," he said.

Ranjan later claimed that Bidhuri has used offensive language against her on many occasions in previous sessions too.

Devalged that the BJP MP was in the "habit of using sexist and offensive" language. "The Speaker has assured us that she will take up the issue with Bidhuri," she said.

The BJP MP, however, rejected the allegations. **HTC**

In major climb down, govt open to changes in land bill

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**NEW DELHI:** The government said on Tuesday it was open to all changes in a controversial land bill on which a consensus existed as a parliamentary panel prepared to drop contentious provisions amid fears the legislation would adversely affect the BJP's poll prospects.

In a major climb down, rural development minister Birendra Singh said the NDA government maintained it wouldn't object to good suggestions from any institution, political party or farmers. His comments came a day after BJP legislators joined Opposition members to recommend 12 of 15 key amendments to the new land bill be dropped, virtually asking the Centre to restore the UPA's land laws.

"We, too, must consider the issues on which there has been a consensus because a joint parliamentary committee is after all considered a mini Parliament. If there are dissent notes, we will examine what are the suggestions," Singh told reporters. The minister said the government's stand would be known



The NDA government brought sweeping changes to the UPA's land laws in December through an ordinance but the showpiece reform legislation ran into a groundswell of Opposition. PTI PHOTO

after August 7, when the panel submitted its report. The panel couldn't meet on Tuesday due to an Opposition boycott and will meet on August 10 next.

The NDA government brought sweeping changes to the UPA's land laws in December through an ordinance that was re-promulgated twice but the showpiece reform legislation ran into a groundswell of Opposition with Congress members calling it "anti-farmer".

But fears of a farmer backlash in

the upcoming Bihar polls are what may have compelled the government to backtrack on the showpiece legislation.

Many BJP MPs from Uttar Pradesh told the party leadership the contentious legislation could cost the party dear in the 2017 assembly elections.

The climb-down also came after a study revealed central ministries didn't make a single acquisition bid under the land ordinance this year.

Listen to Hindustan ki Mann ki Baat: Rahul

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**NEW DELHI:** Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday stepped up his attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi even as he threatened to take the issue of corruption against the top BJP leaders to the entire country.

"The PM likes to do Mann ki Baat. Instead he should listen to Hindustan ki Mann ki baat," he said, reiterating the party's demand for resignation of external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj and Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje on the Lalit Modi issue, and Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on the Vyapam scam. **HTC**

"I am not asking for their resignation, Congress is not asking for their resignation, but people of India are asking for their resignation," Gandhi said.

"On the land issue, Congress stood in front of them. They shouted, threatened and later ran off," he said, a day after BJP members in a parliamentary panel moved amendments to restore provisions of the UPA's 2013 land acquisition law.

Former PM Manmohan Singh said it was the responsibility of the government to run Parliament and take into account concerns voiced by the Opposition. **HTC**

Legal opinion to decide defence deal

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**NEW DELHI:** A crucial opinion from the law ministry will determine if the government can award a military contract to the subsidiary of a banned defence conglomerate. The advice could also shape an overarching principle for future deals.

Italian defence giant Finmeccanica's subsidiary Whitehead Alenia Sistemi Subacquei (WASS) emerged as the lowest bidder for a contract to supply heavyweight torpedoes for the Navy's Scorpene submarines, the first of which is likely to get commissioned in September 2016.

The Scorpene trials will not be affected by the acquisition of Black Shark torpedoes. We will use the German SUT torpedoes for the trials.

A SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

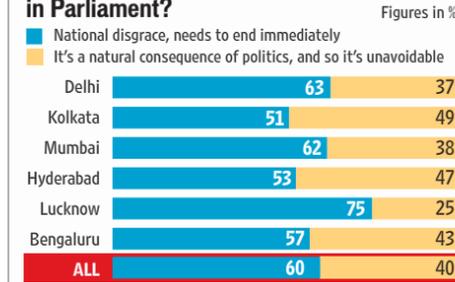
India had last year banned Finmeccanica from taking part in future military tenders after its UK-based subsidiary AugustaWestland faced bribery allegations in the ₹3,727-crore VVIP chopper deal. The deal with WASS was put on hold in July 2014. On Tuesday, defence minister Manohar Parrikar told Parliament that his ministry "has decided to seek opinion in the matter from the ministry of

HT-MaRS survey

BJP AHEAD IN PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON IMPASSE

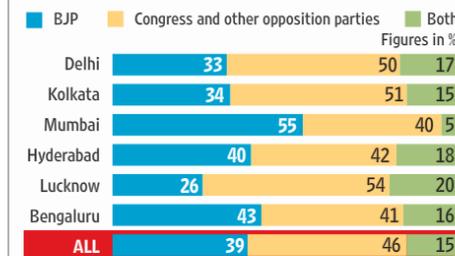
A majority of respondents say the ruling party's stance over the ongoing imbroglio has greater justification, laying the blame for a non-functioning Parliament at the Opposition's door

What do you feel about the deadlock in Parliament?



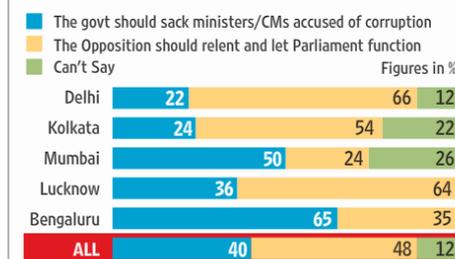
The 26-35 age group is the most vocal in terming the deadlock a disgrace and the 46-55 band the least (63% and 54% respectively)

What is to blame for the current situation?



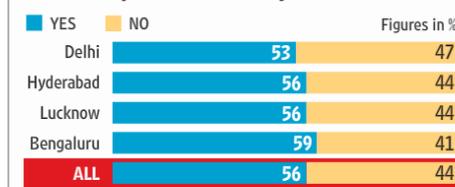
60% of those 46 years and above blame the Opposition while 5% of the young (21-25 years) say both sides must share the blame

How can the deadlock be broken?



Those in the 46-55 age band take a relatively soft line on sacking those accused of corruption, with 32% advocating the option

Is the suspension of MPs justified?



The senior pack (55 years and above) is vastly in favour of the suspension, with 70% answering in the affirmative

**METHODOLOGY:** The HT-MaRS survey was conducted on 4,940 respondents from Delhi (1,004), Kolkata (1,003), Mumbai (1,003), Hyderabad (1,048), Lucknow (400) and Bengaluru (482) aged 21 years and above in a multiple-choice answer format.

Government to dilute whistle-blower law

**NEW DELHI:** The government has decided to dilute the law to protect whistle-blowers as the Whistleblowers Protection Act drafted by the previous UPA regime conferred an absolute right on people to complain about corruption, abuse of power or any other illegal act, according to documents released under the transparency law.

The Lok Sabha had passed the amendment to dilute the Whistleblowers Protection Act during the Budget session on the grounds that it needed to ensure that national security was not compromised. In the process, however, the bill expanded the restrictions on whistle-blowers to

the extent that they can only reveal information which can be provided under the Right to Information law. The amendments ignore the basic principle underlying a whistle-blower protection law; to give a person who has knowledge of a wrongdoing in a public authority, said Venkatesh Nayak of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. Nayak said the proposed amendments would make it impossible for a citizen to blow the whistle, pointing that there were also provisions that barred any probe into a complaint unless the department concerned certified that it did not contain any classified information. **HTC**

Finmeccanica last year but did not blacklist it following the attorney general's advice that a complete ban on the group could affect the military's combat readiness.

The first Scorpene submarine, Kalvari, is scheduled to kick off its year-long sea trials in October. Weapon trials will take place towards June 2016. "The Scorpene trials will not be affected by the acquisition of Black Shark torpedoes. We will use the German SUT torpedoes for the trials," said a senior official. Scorpene submarines are being built at the Mazagon Dock Ltd in Mumbai with technology from French firm DCNS under a ₹23,562-crore project called P-75.