

Ramaphosa Will Be Guest At R-Day Parade

BUENOS AIRES: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will be the Chief Guest at the 2019 Republic Day celebration in New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs said.

The announcement comes more than a month after US President Donald Trump declined India's invite to be the chief guest at Republic Day.

Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said in a tweet: "President Ramaphosa accepted India's invitation to be the Chief Guest at Republic Day during 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi."

"150 years of Mahatma (Gandhi) and 100 years of Madiba (Nelson Mandela). Good meeting



Narendra Modi with South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina (IANS/PIB)
Picture shows Prime Minister

India Gets Hold Of Agusta Case Middleman

NEW DELHI: British national Christian Michel James, the middleman wanted in Rs 3,600-crore AgustaWestland VVIP chopper deal case, was extradited to India on Tuesday night from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He was taken straight to the CBI headquarters from the airport here.

The extradition comes as a major boost to the Indian agencies investigating the bribery angle in the contract.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took James, 57, under its custody as soon as he arrived at the Indira Gandhi International Airport on a special aircraft, accompanied by a team of CBI, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and Ministry of

External Affairs officials.

Once the immigration process was over at the airport, James went through a medical examination in the presence of customs and other officials.

Subsequently, he was escorted by a Delhi Police team to the CBI headquarters in south Delhi's Lodhi Road area for interrogation.

James will be confronted with documents recovered during raids by the Swiss authorities and shared with the CBI -- indicating the bribes paid to the Indian officials for securing the contract for the supply of VVIP helicopters.

James, who had been avoiding criminal proceedings in India, was remanded to five days CBI custody by a Delhi court. The

central probe agency in a press note said the entire extradition operation was conducted under the guidance of National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, with the coordination of interim CBI Director M. Nageswara Rao.

A team led by Joint CBI Director A. Sai Manohar was in Dubai during the extradition process, the note said.

The action comes after the Court of Cassation in the UAE in November upheld a lower court order which said that Michel could be extradited to India.

According to the report, James was kept under detention at the Dubai Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), at the Indian government's request.

Bangladesh Leader Khaleda Zia Ineligible To Contest Polls

DHAKA: Bangladeshi opposition leader and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is ineligible to contest Dec. 30 national elections because she has been sentenced to prison terms in two corruption cases, authorities said Sunday.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said anyone convicted and sentenced to two years or more in jail is not eligible, as per a recent Supreme Court ruling.

Zia, who has been in jail since last February, is serving a 10-year sentence on one corruption conviction. In October, she was sentenced to seven years after being found guilty in another corruption case.

Zia had filed nominations for three parliamentary seats. Her party rejected Sunday's announcement. "This is an ill-motivated decision," said Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, a leader of Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party. "The rejection of her nomination papers are part of the government's blueprint to keep her away from the election."

The elections will be held under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is seeking to return to power for a third consecutive time amid opposition accusations that she was becoming increasingly authoritarian.

The country's law minister had said after her convictions that it was up to the Election Commission to decide whether Zia could



contest the polls. The Supreme Court is the guardian of the constitution and it clarifies or explains constitutional ambiguity.

Bangladesh's constitution says "a person shall be disqualified for election as, or for being, a member of parliament who has been, on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years, unless a period of five years has elapsed since his release."

The attorney general said Sunday that the provision applies to anyone in general, and election officials cited the court ruling to declare the 73-year-old Zia unfit.

Zia faces more than 30 other charges, ranging from corruption to sedition, which her party has denounced as politically motivated. Zia was the country's prime minister three times _ twice for full five-year terms and once for a brief period.

Airstrike Kills 10 In Afghanistan

KABUL: At least ten civilians were killed following an airstrike in the eastern Paktia province bordering Pakistan, Afghan officials said Sunday.

Shausta Jan Ahady, a former provincial council member, said that women and children were among those killed in the strike carried out a day earlier. He said local residents displayed the bodies and protested on Sunday. Provincial government spokesman Abdullah Hsrat said the airstrike killed four insurgents and that an investigation has been launched into the allegations of civilian casualties.

"We are aware of the reports of civilian casualties, but can't confirm it right now, as an investigation is ongoing," said Hsrat. Ahady said the area is under Taliban's control.

In a separate incident in the southern Helmand province, an airstrike killed the Taliban's shadow governor and two of his

guards, according to the provincial government spokesman, Omar Zwak.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban's spokesman, said that Mullah Abdul Manan Akhand, a powerful military commander in the southern region, was among those killed in Saturday's airstrike.

"Abdul Manan Akhand, was a powerful and brave military commander who cleared 95 per cent of Helmand from invader Americans and their slaves," the Taliban statement said.

Manan was a military commander and the Taliban's shadow governor responsible not only for Helmand, but also Kandahar, Zabul and Nimroz provinces, according to local officials in Helmand.

The Taliban control of nearly half the country and run a parallel administration with provincial governors and military commanders across numerous provinces in the country.

UP Unveils Ram Statue Plan

LUCKNOW: The Uttar Pradesh government has unveiled the picture of the grand statue of Lord Ram that it proposes to install in Ayodhya.

According to an official spokesman, the statue of the Hindu god would be 151 metre high and would be put on a 50 metre high pedestal, the official said.

There would be a head cover (chhatra) for the grand statue that will be another 20 metre, taking the total height of the statue to be 221 metres, additional chief secretary (information) Avaneesh Kumar Awasthi said.

He told IANS that the statue would be in bronze. Sometime back, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had announced that the state government would install the statue of Lord Ram in Ayodhya, a place he was born.

At a high-level meeting tonight, the Chief Minister directed the officials to ensure that the statue was installed "in the best possible manner."

The state government also plans to construct a guest house, a ground, Ram Kuti, the Gurukul Saryu riverfront and beautify the ghats.

Indo-US Air Exercises

NEW DELHI: The Air Forces of India and the US will begin a 12-day joint exercise "Ex Cope India-2018" on Monday to provide operational exposure to their personnel and undertake mutual exchange of best practices for enhancing operational capability, the Defence Ministry said on Sunday.

It will be the fourth edition in the series of bilateral joint exercise held by the Air Forces of the two nations conducted in India, a Ministry statement said.

This is the first time the exercise has been planned at two Air Force bases in West Bengal's Kalaikunda and Panagarh.

"US Air Force is participating with 12 X F15 C/D and 03 X C-130. Indian Air Force is participating with the Su-30 MKI, Jaguar, Mirage 2000, C-130J and AWACS aircraft," said the statement.

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