

Pakistan Crackdown



A Pakistani policeman stands guard as people come out of the Al-Qadisa mosque, headquarters of a militant group Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) after offering prayers in Lahore. Prime Minister Imran Khan has ordered the takeover of assets and property of dozens of militant organizations that operate in Pakistan under different names. (AP Photo/K.M. Chaudary)

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Amarinder Marks 77th Birthday

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh turned 77 on Monday.

Amarinder was greeted by several people here on this special occasion, including his ministerial colleagues.

"A pleasure to meet the officers and JCOs from my Paltan 2 Sikh who called on me today to wish me on my birthday. Thankful to the entire Regiment for the love they have always showered on me. You will always remain a part of my family," tweeted Amarinder, who served in the army as a Captain in the 1960s.

Amarinder has been the Chief Minister of Punjab since March 2017. This is his second term as



the Chief Minister. His earlier term was from 2002 to 2007.

Meanwhile, in reference to the Lok Sabha elections, he categorically denied any alliance talks with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)

or any other party for the May 19 Lok Sabha elections in the state.

"The Congress does not need any alliance in Punjab, nor is it in talks with any party for the same," Amarinder said here.

China Blocks UN Ban On Masood

UNITED NATIONS: China kept chief Masood Azhar, the chief of the terrorist organisation Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), under its protective wings, vetoing a fourth attempt to declare him a global terrorist and sanction him.

China was the only Security Council member to vote on Wednesday against the proposal spearheaded by France with British and US backing to at the al-Qaeda sanctions committee to declare him a global terrorist.

The move to sanction him picked up steam after the Pulwama suicide car bomb attack by JeM, which killed 40 Indian Security personnel. Wednesday was

the deadline for to take a decision and with Beijing's veto, the proposal will remain on hold.

In New Delhi, the External Affairs Ministry expressed disappointment over the outcome.

"This has prevented action by the international community to designate the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a proscribed and active terrorist organization which has claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir on 14 February 2019," the statement said.

"We will continue to pursue all available avenues to ensure that terrorist leaders who are involved in heinous attacks on our citizens

are brought to justice," the statement said.

The US had said on Tuesday that China's opposition to designating Azhar as an international terrorist runs counter to the mutual goal with the US of regional stability. As the founder and leader of JeM, Azhar "meets the criteria for designation by the United Nations" as a global terrorist subject to its sanctions, Department Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino said. The US had said on Tuesday that China's opposition to designating Azhar as an international terrorist runs counter to the mutual goal with the US of regional stability.

Top Sonia Loyalist Joins BJP

NEW DELHI: In a jolt to the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Tom Vadakkan, its spokesperson and until now a Nehru-Gandhi family loyalist, on Thursday joined the BJP complaining about "dynastic politics".

The announcement came on a day Congress President Rahul Gandhi was in Kerala, to which Vadakkan belongs. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said Vadakkan had been impressed by the work done by the Modi government.

Vadakkan said on Thursday that he was deeply hurt over the way the Congress raised questions in the aftermath of the suicide



bombing at Pulwama. "I gave my prime of life to the Congress. There's no place in it today for self-respecting people," he said.

Prasad noted that Vadakkan was from the "Roman Catholic family" -- an oblique reference to Sonia Gandhi's religion.

Sri Lanka Army, Police Join Hands To Battle Drugs Scourge

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka _ Sri Lanka's military is teaming with police to invigorate an anti-narcotics drive by its president who has vowed to end a 43-year moratorium on capital punishment and execute condemned drug traffickers, top military officials said Friday.

The announcement comes as Sri Lanka is facing growing criticism from rights groups and countries including Great Britain, as well as the European Union, after President Maithripala Sirisena declared that executions will resume in the next two months for convicted drug traffickers.

Sirisena has taken police under his command and vowed to be tough on drug offenders, modeling his country's drug fight after the Philippines.

Sirisena visited the Philippines in January and praised President Rodrigo Duterte's drug crackdown as "an example to the world." Thousands of suspects have been killed since Duterte took office in 2016, and rights groups have denounced the killings as extrajudicial executions.

"Use of narcotic drugs has become a

serious menace across the country," said Army commander Lt. Gen. Mahesh Senanayaka. He said that since the military alone is not permitted to conduct raids and arrests, the soldiers would team with police and excise officials to crackdown on narcotics and arrest drug peddlers.

On Friday, he told reporters the military will share intelligence information with police and assist them in conducting raids on narcotics across the country.

Navy commander Vice Admiral Piyal de Silva said officials have found that majority of the drugs enter the country mostly in fishing boats and therefore, the Navy has been conducting enhanced search operations. In 2017, Navy arrested 168 people on drug-trafficking charges; in 2018 there were 88 arrests and this year, so far 27 people have been arrested.

"Most of those arrested are fishermen," Silva said, adding that the Navy now conducts frequent searches of fishing boats.

Police have intensified efforts to crack down on drugs and they seized 294 kilograms of heroin last month.

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