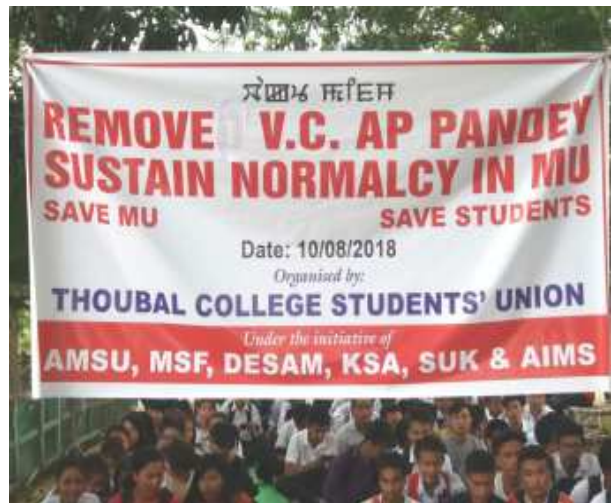


## Protests demonstration at various colleges in the state demanding removal of MU Vice Chancellor Prof. AP Pandey



Agency  
New Delhi, Aug.10

The seven prisoners, convicted of assassinating former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, cannot be released, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Friday. Objecting to the release, the Centre said that setting the convicts free will send a wrong message across the country and world. "Releasing convicts in Rajiv Gandhi assassination case will have international ramifications, set dangerous precedents," said Centre. The Tamil Nadu government had earlier proposed to release seven convicts. The CBI, which investigated

the case, has also opposed the release of the convicts. The seven convicts have been in prison for last 27 years.

Highlighting the sensitivity of the case, the Home Ministry in a report stated that the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi is one of the most heinous and gruesome crime carried out by international terrorists. Over 16 innocent people and some security personnel died while many were injured, added the MHA. "The President had rejected the proposal to release seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case and adjourned the matter. The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was the most heinous and

gruesome crime, the brutal Act brought the Indian democratic process to a grinding halt in as much as the general election to the Lok Sabha and the perpetrators do not deserve any leniency," the Centre added. The trial court has observed that the involvement of a woman as a human bomb to kill the former Prime Minister is the "rarest of rare case", a fact accepted by High Court and Supreme Court, said the Centre.

Nearly 27 years after the assassination of the former PM, his son and current Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said he and his sister, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, have "completely forgiven" their

father's killers. Speaking to a large audience of IIM alumni at an interactive session in Singapore on Saturday, the Gandhi scion said, "We have forgiven our father's murderers. Whatever may be the reason, I don't like any violence of any kind." "We were very upset and hurt and for many years. We were quite angry. But, somehow, completely...in fact, completely (forgiven)," said Rahul. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a woman suicide bomber of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the terrorist group in Sri Lanka led by Prabhakaran, on May 21, 1991, at an election rally in Tamil Nadu.

## Taliban launch attack on Afghan city, casualties: officials

Agency  
Ghazni, Aug 10

Taliban militants have launched an attack on an Afghan provincial capital and heavy fighting is under way as security forces try to beat them back, officials and witnesses said today. At least one Afghan soldier has been killed and seven others wounded in the fighting in the southeastern city of Ghazni, provincial governor spokesman Arif Noori told Agency. Civilian houses and army checkpoints have come under mortar attack and the bodies of dozens of Taliban fighters are in the streets, he added. The Taliban began the attack late Thursday from several positions around the city,

provincial police chief Farid Ahmad Mashal told Agency. Yasan, who lives in Ghazni, said the Taliban were using loudspeakers at the mosque to warn residents to leave their homes. "Heavy explosions and gunfire can be heard. We are terrified," Yasan said in a Facebook post. Police special forces have been deployed to help block the Taliban advance on the city, an Afghan security official said.

The Taliban issued a statement claiming to have captured "most of government buildings inside the city." "So far 140 enemy forces have been killed or wounded," the group said. It was the latest in a series of

attempts by the Taliban over the past three years to capture urban centres. Afghan forces have been struggling to hold back the resurgent militant group since the withdrawal of NATO combat forces at the end of 2014.

In May the Taliban attacked the western city of Farah. After a day of intense fighting, Afghan commandos and US air strikes drove the group to the outskirts of the city. The attack on Ghazni comes as the Taliban faces growing pressure to agree to peace talks with the Afghan government to end the 17-year war. It has so far ignored President Ashraf Ghani's offer of unconditional peace

negotiations. The Taliban has long insisted on direct talks with the United States. Washington has repeatedly refused, saying negotiations must be Afghan-led.

But there are tentative signs that diplomatic efforts to kick-start talks are starting to bear fruit. Washington indicated a change in its longstanding policy in June when US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States was prepared to "support, facilitate and participate" in talks. Pompeo also said the role of foreign forces in Afghanistan would be on the table. Last month Taliban representatives met US officials for talks in Qatar.

## Melania's parents become US citizens through "chain migration" programme

Agency  
New York, Aug 10

US First Lady Melania Trump's Slovenian parents have become American citizens after taking the citizenship oath during a ceremony here using a programme her husband Donald Trump has repeatedly denounced and termed as "chain migration".

Melania's parents, Viktor and Amalija Knavs, were sworn in as US citizens at a federal immigration court in New York City yesterday.

The pair had been living in the US on green cards sponsored by their daughter Melania. "Once they had the green card, they then applied for citizenship when they were eligible," the couple's lawyer Michael Wildes was quoted as saying by 'The New York Times'. Asked if the Knavs had obtained citizenship through "chain migration", Wildes said, "I suppose". "It's a dirty a dirtier word," he said, adding that "it stands for a bedrock of our immigration process when it comes to family reunification". Trump has vehemently opposed the family-based or what he called "chain immigration" in the past. The programme allows adult American citizens obtain citizenship for their relatives. "Chain migration must end now! Some people come in,

and they bring their whole family with them, who can be truly evil. Not Acceptable!" Trump said in a tweet in November.

He has often criticised the family-based immigration system at his rallies, calling it one of the "dumbest laws on immigration in the world" which is a pathway for terrorists to enter the country. According to the report, Melania's communications director Stephanie Grisham said since the Knavs are not part of the administration, she is not commenting on them. Standing alongside the Knavs, their lawyer said the couple had "travailed a wonderful journey, like most have, millions have in getting citizenship and waiting the requisite period of time". Wildes said their application, the process, the interviews were no different than anybody's else's.

"These doors that are in America remain hinged open to beautiful people as they have today. They would appreciate their privacy and we just thank everybody for their attention to this very important dialogue that we are having on immigration. This is an example of it going right," he said. Born as Melanija, the First Lady changed her name to Melania Knaws when she started modelling. According to news reports,

Melania came to the US in 2001 on a so-called Einstein visa for "individuals of extraordinary ability" as a model. She became a US citizen in 2006.

The Knavs came and went from the ceremony at a Manhattan federal building flanked by Homeland Security police. Melania was not present for the ceremony as she was in Bedminster, New Jersey, at the Trump National Golf Club, where the President is currently staying.

The Knavs frequently travel with the Trumps and split their time between New York, Palm Beach and Washington, where they stay in the White House, the report said.

It is unclear as to when or how the couple received green cards. Under immigration statutes, the Knavs would have needed to have their green cards for at least five years in order to apply for citizenship, along with fulfilling character, residency and civic knowledge requirements, it said. According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, it takes about 1-2 years to process an application for naturalization in New York City.

The report quoted their lawyer as saying that the couple had met the five-year requirement, but added, "I can't give further comment". Usually naturalization

ceremonies at the Jacob J Javits Federal Building in the city are large events in which several immigrants are sworn in as citizens after reciting an oath and the Pledge of Allegiance. But the Knavs' lawyer said their ceremony was kept private for "security reasons".

Presiding over the ceremony was New York district director of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services Thomas Cioppa. The Knavs raised Melania in the rural industrial town of Senica while Slovenia was under the Communist rule. Viktor, 74, was a car dealer while Amalija, 73, worked in a textile factory.

## Light to moderate rains in Himachal Pradesh

Agency  
Shimla, Aug 10

Light to moderate rainfall occurred at a few places in Himachal Pradesh, with Dharamshala in Kangra district being the wettest recording 61.6 mm of rains, the meteorological department said. Since yesterday, Rampur in Una district received 48 mm of rains, followed by Una 40.4 mm, Mehre in Hamirpur district 39.2 mm, Kufri in Shimla district 31 mm, Shimla 11 mm, Manali in Kullu district 7.8 mm and Mandi 4.3 mm, the MeT department said.

## International & National News

## Earlier govts not serious on ethanol output, now it will save Rs 12k cr: PM

Agency  
New Delhi, Aug 10

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today blamed previous governments for not taking the ethanol blending programme seriously and said now its production will triple to 450 crore litres in the next four years, leading to import savings of Rs 12,000 crore.

"Ethanol blending programme was started during Vajpayee government. But previous governments did not take ethanol programme seriously. Now we will produce 450 crore litre of ethanol in next four years from existing 141 crore litre. It will result in import savings of Rs 12,000

crore," Modi said addressing an event here to mark World Biofuel Day. India meets more than 80 per cent of its oil needs through imports.

Apart from the thrust on use of electricity, particularly from renewable sources, India is promoting biofuels for reducing its crude import bill. Modi said as many as 12 biofuel refineries at an investment of Rs 10,000 crore have been planned in the country. The government will achieve 10 per cent ethanol blending in petrol by 2022 and is targeting to double it to 20 per cent by 2030, he added. Modi said that one refinery will generate employment for 1,000-1,500 people.

The Prime Minister was of the view that increasing use of biofuels would enhance farmers' income and generate employment in the country. He also said 175 bio-CNG plants have been set up in the country and expressed hope that soon people would see vehicles running on this source of energy.

He lauded the efforts of his government for fixing the minimum support price of 14 kharif crops at 1.5 times the cost of production to boost farmers' income.

On this occasion, he also launched a web portal 'Parivesh' for speedy environment clearance of projects and also unveiled the National Biofuel Policy, 2018.