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Sheikh Hasina to have luncheon meeting with PM Modi today
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Injured Virat Kohli not to play for Surrey in county cricket
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Tamil Nadu CM says Sterlite will be shut; power supply cut

TNPCB orders closure after finding the unit was preparing to resume production

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said on Thursday that the State government was taking all steps legally to permanently close down Sterlite Copper, a Vedanta Group company, in Thoothukudi.

Thirteen persons were killed in police firing during the protests against the plant.

Earlier in the day, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) ordered the closure of the Sterlite Copper unit with immediate effect and disconnected electricity supply to the plant at 5.15 a.m.

"This government is Amma's [Jayalalithaa's] government that respects the sentiments of the people. As far as the Sterlite issue is concerned, this Amma's government is taking steps legally to close down the unit," Mr. Palaniswami told journalists at the Secretariat.

His statement came soon after Opposition leader M.K. Stalin staged a dharna outside the Chief Minister's



Boots on the ground: Policemen deployed at Anna Nagar in Thoothukudi on Thursday. • N. RAJESH

chamber. Mr. Stalin, who was physically removed from the Secretariat premises and detained till the evening, alleged that the Sterlite Group had bribed the government.

TNPCB inspections

In its order, the TNPCB said that during inspections by its officials on May 18 and 19, it was found that "the unit was carrying out activities to resume its production operations" though permission

was not granted. Following this, the Joint Chief Environmental Engineer, Tirunelveli, recommended disconnection of electricity supply to the plant under Section 33A of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and Section 31A of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

Awaiting nod: Vedanta
 However, Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal on Thursday

Rajnath Singh seeks report

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday that he had sought a report from the Tamil Nadu government on the police firing in Thoothukudi and the situation in the town. He appealed to the people to stay calm and maintain peace. The State government has been asked to explain the action taken to restore peace and normalcy. ▶ PAGE 15

said the company would like to continue the business at the plant with the "wish" of the community. At present, the company is waiting for clearance from the court and the government to restart the plant, which was closed for annual maintenance, he said in a video statement on Twitter.

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NEARBY



Helicopter ride over the Nilgiris sparks row

A helicopter service to be launched in Mettupalayam from May 25 to 29 for locals and tourists to view the Nilgiris mountains has come as a shock to environmental activists, who say sorties at a low altitude will affect wildlife in the biosphere. They say there is a ban on commercial helicopter operations over the Nilgiris.
TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 7

The Message of Nature

President Ram Nath Kovind pens down his thoughts from Mashobra near Shimla.
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Trump calls off summit with Kim

Cites his open hostility in remarks

VARGHESE K. GEORGE
 WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday called off his June 12 meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, which was to take place in Singapore.

In a letter to Mr. Kim, Mr. Trump wrote: "...based on the tremendous anger and open hostility displayed in your most recent statement, I feel it is inappropriate, at this time, to have this long-planned meeting."

"I was very much looking forward to being there with you," the President said in his letter, which was released by the White House.

In a dramatic turnaround in March, Mr. Trump accepted Mr. Kim's offer for a summit, conveyed through South Korean interlocutors. After months of diatribe and threats, Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim appeared willing to negotiate denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but the initiative began to unra-



"I was very much looking forward" to the meeting, Mr. Trump said in his letter.

vel early this month with both countries resorting to fresh threats.

'Test site dismantled'

Earlier in the day, North Korea said it had "completely" dismantled its nuclear test site. Foreign journalists invited to the scene described a series of explosions throughout the day at the Punggye-ri test site in the northeast.

(With AFP inputs)

WORLD LOST AN OPPORTUNITY, SAYS TRUMP ▶ PAGE 16

'Karnataka coalition under watch'

MURALIDHARA KHAJANE
 BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, on the eve of a floor test on Friday, said it was a challenge for him to live up to the expectations of national and regional leaders, who were watching the Congress-Jana Dal (Secular) government as a model ahead of the 2019 general election.

Mr. Kumaraswamy's swearing-in on Wednesday saw the attendance of a spectrum of leaders from across India, keen to form a non-BJP alliance ahead of the Lok Sabha election.

"I am open-minded and I know that the entire country is watching Karnataka and every move of mine," the Chief Minister said. A coordination committee of leaders from both parties would help to take the coalition structure forward, he added.

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THE COALITION IS HERE TO STAY: DEPUTY CM ▶ PAGE 15

Fitness contest turns into 'fuel challenge'

Opposition leaders give a political twist to BJP Minister's video selfie campaign

SANDEEP PHUKAN
 NEW DELHI

In the fraught ecosystem of social media, it would appear that even something as innocuous as a motivational fitness video is not immune to the daily cut-and-thrust between political adversaries.

Hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi accepted the fitness challenge from the Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli, Opposition leaders, including Congress president Rahul Gandhi, tweaked the viral social media campaign to throw up their own version of a political challenge for the Modi government.

Using the hashtag #FuelChallenge and tagging captain Kohli, Mr. Gandhi — a fitness enthusiast himself



Wits and tweets: Rahul Gandhi had a challenge for the PM.

— dared the Prime Minister to take on the fuel challenge. "Dear PM, Glad to see you accept the @imVkohli fitness challenge. Here's one from me: Reduce fuel prices or the Congress will do a nationwide agitation and force you to do so. I look forward to your response," he said on Twitter.

A sporting move
 Mr. Gandhi's political challenge is a twist on the

original fitness challenge started by Sports Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore last Tuesday. Posting a 33-second video where he is seen doing push-ups in his office, Mr. Rathore invited actor Hrithik Roshan, badminton star Saina Nehwal and Kohli to join in and post their videos.

The cricketer accepted and, in turn, invited his wife and Bollywood star Anushka Sharma, the Prime Minister,

and cricketer M.S. Dhoni. Taking their cue, the BJP's political rivals started their own challenge. Apart from Mr. Gandhi, former Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar and Lalu Prasad's younger son, Tejashwi Yadav, too, entered the fray.

"While we have nothing against accepting fitness challenge from @imVkohli, I urge you to accept the challenge to provide jobs to young, relief to farmers, promise of no violence against Dalits & minorities. Would you accept my challenge @narendramodisir?" asked Mr. Yadav.

The Congress has kept up the heat on the government, over high petrol and diesel prices. On behalf of the government, an official said, "trivialising a noble gesture" was "regrettable."

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