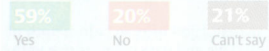


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QUICKLY

1 killed in Delhi cracker blast

A cracker blast killed one person and injured four others in north Delhi's Naya Bazar area today, setting off panic among the people in the wake of high alert in the city, even as police ruled out any terror angle to it. The explosion took place around 10.40 am when Motalip Mirza, a labourer, was carrying two large packets of crackers. CCTV footage of the incident showed that the blast occurred as Mirza put the bags in front of a shop, police said. "High pressure set off the blast," said a senior police officer. Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, who is in Bahrain, called Delhi Police Commissioner Alok Kumar Verma to take stock of the situation in the national capital, which is on high alert due to the festive season. **PH**

Marriott group upbeat on India

Set to expand operations to Lanka, Nepal

ABHISHEK LAW

Kolkata, October 25
The US-based luxury hospitality chain Marriott International is planning to expand its presence in the country as well as in South Asia.

The group will add four hotels in Sri Lanka and Nepal by next year. Sri Lanka is one of the countries where Marriott does not have presence now.

According to Rajeev Menon, Chief Operating Officer, Asia Pacific (excluding Greater China), there will be three hotels in Sri Lanka coming up at Colombo (320 keys), Weligama (200 keys) and Kosgoda (172), a beach town. Colombo and Kosgoda will be under the Sheraton brand, while Weligama will be under Marriott.

The 180-key mid-tier budget hotel in Kathmandu in Nepal, under Fairfield sub-brand, is expected to be ready by January



Rajeev Menon (right), Chief Operating Officer, Asia Pacific, and Neeraj Govil, Market Vice-President - South Asia, Marriott International at a press conference in Kolkata on Tuesday **ASHOKE CHAKRABARTY**

next year. "All hotels will be managed properties. We are entering Sri Lanka with three hotels," he said during an interview to *BusinessLine*. Menon was in the city for the inauguration of the 281-room JW Marriott Hotel on Tuesday.

South Asia includes India,

Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal for Marriott.

India expansion

The largest hotel chain in India post purchase of Starwood, Marriott has 79 properties across 14 brands (including the ones owned by Starwood) with over

18,000 rooms. In India, the hospitality major is looking to add 1000 plus rooms by December this year across five properties - namely one each in Jaisalmer and Pushkar in Rajasthan, Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Belgaum (Karnataka) and Goa.

This apart, Westin is also ex-

pected to come up in Kolkata by end of this year, adding another 300-odd rooms to this tally.

Bullish on India

According to Menon, the company is bullish on India having witnessed double digit growth (both in topline and bottom-line) with 70 per cent occupancy levels.

Nearly, 70 per cent of Marriott's occupancies are domestic visitors. Till a few years ago, booking ratio stood at 35:65, with the bulk coming from international tourists.

"The exponential growth of the middle class, increased domestic travel, the FDI flow and the Make in India campaign are some of the factors that bolstered the hotel industry," he said.

The company has been adding close to 17-20 hotels to its portfolio every year on an average and this may go up to around 20-25.

"Going forward, India's contribution (to Marriott turnover) will move up to double digits," he said.

Urban Development Ministry inks MoU with NBCC, CPWD

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, October 25

The Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) on Tuesday signed an MoU with public sector construction enterprise NBCC and Central Public Works Department (CPWD) for redevelopment of seven General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) colonies. NBCC will redevelop Sarojini Nagar, Netaji Nagar, Nauroji Nagar and CPWD will redevelop Kasturba Nagar, Thyagraj Nagar, Srinivasपुरi and Mohammadpur.

The Cabinet had approved this in July this year.

HOUSE-KEEPING & CLEANING WORKS

Invitation (Tender No. : KGPW-PROD-HOUSEKEEPING-01 Dated : 22.10.2016) are invited by the Dy. CME(Production)/KGPW, South Eastern Railway for and on behalf of the President of India for the following works before 15.00 hrs. on the date mentioned against items and will be opened at 15.30 hrs. Name of the Work: Mechanized House-keeping & Cleaning activities of shop floor and Administrative building Outsourcing through works contract for a period of 12 months. Approx. Cost of Work : Rs. 29,02,597/- Earnest Money : Rs. 79,260/- Date & Time of Closing e-tender : 07.12.2016 at 15.00 hrs Website particular : www.trepa.gov.in Interested bidders may visit website www.trepa.gov.in for full details/description/specification of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for this work will be accepted. Offer Submission Period : Fifteen days prior to closing date of tender, during which tenderer(s) can submit their offer. (PR-706)

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Name of work: **OUR SOURCING OF BED ROLL SERVICES AND OTHER COMMERCIAL SERVICES IN AC COACHES OF VISAKHAPATNAM BASED TRAINS FOR ONE YEAR (PHASE-II)**
Tender Value: ₹98,80,630/- EMD: ₹1,97,620/- Cost of Tender Document: ₹5,000/- Completion period: 01 Year
Tender Closing Date and Time: Dt. 28.11.2016 at 1330 hrs Date and time of opening of Tender: Dt.28.11.2016 at 1530 hrs.
Complete details & Tender documents will be available in the website at <http://www.treps.gov.in>
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G) PR-454N(16-17) Visakhapatnam

BBIN: India eyes expanded rail, air links and power play

PRATIM RANJAN BOSE

Kolkata, October 25

India is looking at an expanded sub-regional cooperation among BBIN (Bhutan-Bangladesh-India-Nepal) countries to cover initiatives in rail and air connectivity as also the power sector.

After the June 2015 Motor Vehicles Agreement, which is awaiting ratification only by Bhutanese Parliament, New Delhi is looking at rail and air links.

"We have shifted our attention to railways and started the negotiation in BBIN," said a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) recently at a think tank meeting in Delhi.

India-Bangla rail link

The primary focus is to revive the extensive rail connectivity that existed between India and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) till 1965, and add Bhutan and Nepal to the air map.

India currently has three cross-country rail connections between Bengal and western Bangladesh. Three new connections will soon open soon between Bangladesh and North-East India through a bilateral arrangement.

Of the three existing links, Gede (Nadia, West Bengal)-Darshana (Bangladesh) offers broad-gauge connectivity between Kolkata and Dhaka and is used for running the six-days-a-week Maitri Express. The link is rarely used for cargo movement.

Singhabad (Malda, West Bengal)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh) is a cargo transit link for landlocked Nepal. But the facility is underutilised due to limited rail infrastructure and lack of North-South connectivity in Bangladesh.

Petrapole (North 24 Parganas, West Bengal)-Benapole (Bangladesh) is the most popular gate for bilateral trade, but traders show little interest

in rail movement of cargo. Gauge mismatch between Indian and Bangladesh adds to the problem.

The scene is likely to change as Bangladesh has undertaken a major rail capacity upgrade.

This coupled with three new connections - Karimgunj (Assam)-Shabazpur (Bangladesh); Agartala (Tripura)-Akhaura (Bangladesh) and, Sabroom (Tripura)-Chittagong Port (Bangladesh) - will open new horizons in regional connectivity.

With Bangladesh implementing the ambitious \$1.3-billion Dhaka-Chittagong rail project, trains originating in North-East India will soon roll into Kolkata through Bangladesh.

A line to Nepal

India currently has a single railhead - used for cargo movement - from Kolkata port to Nepal's industrial and commercial hub Birgunj.

A second railhead is nearly ready

to connect Biratnagar, the second largest commercial centre in Nepal. However, the facility has not been operationalised due to lack of terminal facility in Biratnagar.

Delhi is now looking at three more rail links including one vis the Panitanki-Kakarvitta border in Bengal. Also multilateral agencies have identified a 945-km East-West railway line in Nepal, which is yet to create rail infrastructure of its own.

Air and inland-water

According to the MEA official, "Sylhet airport in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Dhaka can emerge as regional hubs for air connectivity to promote tourism. Some airlines are reportedly interested in connecting the two airports.

Sylhet is an under-utilised international airport. A top Bangladeshi policy-maker feels future cooperation may see travellers from North-East India using Sylhet airport for in-

ternational travel instead of flying via Kolkata or Delhi.

India and Bangladesh have an inland water treaty. Discussions are on to expand its scope and involving the other BBIN nations in it.

But the mega cooperation initiative may happen in the energy sector. India has had a robust trade and investment arrangement with hydro-power producer Bhutan since the 1980s.

The bilateral cooperation between India and Bangladesh in energy has expanded exponentially over the last six years. India is already selling 600 MW to Bangladesh and, is investing in power joint ventures there.

Nepal has been the exception. Though it buys over 300 MW from India, it has vetoed investment proposals in the past. But the scene may be changing with the shift in the power in Kathmandu.

India's Power Ministry has proposed a joint venture among BBIN

countries that will be at liberty to invest in the region and share the fruits as well. It is also "working on a cross-border power trade policy" to make trade regional.

According to a recent World Bank study, regional trade of electricity can spare India from investing in 35,000 MW coal-fired capacities (at an estimated \$26 billion) over the next 25 years.

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