

Trump to move quickly on Supreme Court nominee

Morristown (US), Powering forward with a decision that could reshape the Supreme Court for decades, President Donald Trump has said he will announce his choice to succeed retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy on July 9. He added that two women are among his top candidates for the job.

The president, who spoke aboard Air Force One on the way to his golf club in New Jersey, said he had identified a group of at least five potential candidates for the nation's high court and he may interview as many as seven. "It's a great group of intellectual talent," Trump said.

Kennedy, a key swing vote on the court, announced Wednesday that he would retire this summer. Kennedy's news that he'll leave the court next month immediately activated a network of White House aides, congressional allies and outside advocates, all set for their second Supreme Court confirmation fight in two years.

Trump told reporters he planned to begin interviewing possible candidates Monday but he may meet with some over the weekend in New Jersey. Asked if he planned



to question potential court nominees their views on abortion rights and Roe v Wade, he responded, "That's not a question I'll be asking."

He added, "I think it's inappropriate to discuss." The president did not disclose whom he is considering for the job. But he has promised to draw the next justice from a list of 25 prospective candidates that was first established during the 2016 presidential campaign and updated last fall, with advice from conservatives. That list includes six women.

Some possible nominees being eyed include Thomas Hardiman, who serves alongside Trump's sister on the Philadelphia-based 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals, and Raymond Kethledge, a

federal appeals court judge who clerked for Kennedy.

Also of interest are Amul Thapar, who serves on the federal appeals court in Cincinnati; Brett Kavanaugh, a former clerk for Kennedy who serves on the federal appeals court in Washington, DC.; and Amy Coney Barrett, who serves on the federal appeals court in Chicago.

Other women on the list include Joan Larsen, who serves on the federal appeals court in Cincinnati and previously served as a Michigan Supreme Court Justice, and Allison Eid, who serves on the federal appeals court based in Denver and previously served as a Colorado Supreme Court justice.

On whether the time was

right for a conservative woman to join the court, Trump said: "Could be. As I said, I'm looking specifically at two women." Asked about Barrett, he said, "She's an outstanding woman." Trump was also asked about Sen. Mike Lee, who is the one non-judge on the list.

"Mike Lee, he's an outstanding talent," Trump said. "I actually saw him on television last night where he said he'd love the job."

Usually they don't say that," Trump has moved quickly on his selection process. He met Thursday with key Republican and Democratic senators at the White House in the evening to discuss the vacancy.

Trump welcomed Republicans Chuck Grassley, Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski and Democrats Joe Manchin, Joe Donnelly and Heidi Heitkamp as part of the effort. The White House said Trump's team also spoke with more than a dozen additional senators.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has committed to confirming a nominee in the fall, which the Republican-controlled Senate should be able to do if McConnell can hold his razor-thin majority together.

In the run-up to selecting Gorsuch, Trump met with three contenders and White House officials vetted several more.

The Judicial Crisis Network, a conservative political campaign organization, has launched a seven-figure ad buy aimed at vulnerable Democrats, said chief counsel and policy director Carrie Severino.

"We'd be very happy if he'd pick any name on that list," said Severino.

"Judges, and particularly the Supreme Court, have been a resounding success of this administration. What we're seeing here is Gorsuch 2.0." Steven Law, president of the Senate Leadership Fund, a campaign group aligned with McConnell, said the group is running digital ads in 10 states that Trump won in 2016 where Democratic senators are now up for re-election.

With a little over a week before his big announcement, Trump is relishing the moment. "It is exciting though, right?" said Trump. "From day one, I've heard, outside of war and peace of course, the most important decision you make is the selection of a Supreme Court judge if you get it."



Amarnath Yatra from Jammu suspended due to heavy rains

Jammu, The Amarnath Yatra from Jammu was suspended today owing to frequent disruptions caused by heavy rains since the beginning of the annual pilgrimage, while the over 2,000 pilgrims who were stranded in Udhampur, left for the Pahalgam base camp this morning, a police officer said.

"The yatra from the Bhagwati Nagar base camp here has been suspended. No pilgrim was allowed from here but the stranded convoy, carrying 2,032 pilgrims, including 315 women, left for Pahalgam base camp in south Kashmir this morning," he said.

According to the officer, the decision to suspend the yatra from here was taken in view of inclement weather. A majority of the pilgrims in the third batch who left the Bhagwati Nagar base camp yesterday were stranded in Udhampur district due to frequent disruption in the flow of traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway.

While 844 pilgrims, including 229 women, who

opted for the 12-km Baltal route managed to reach their destination late last night, 2,032 pilgrims who chose the traditional 36-km Pahalgam track were stopped by the authorities at Tikri and other places in Udhampur as a precautionary measure.

"After getting the road clearance, the pilgrims were allowed to start their journey towards their destination this morning," the police officer said.

There was an incident of shooting stones at Battery Chashma in Ramban district. Later, the highway was cleared for traffic.

A flood alert was sounded in south and central Kashmir after many parts of the state were lashed by monsoon rains intermittently since June 27, leaving thousands of pilgrims who have reached the twin base camps of Baltal in Ganderbal district and Pahalgam in Anantnag district stranded.

The rains also triggered landslides and shooting stones at several places along the Jammu-Srinagar national

highway yesterday, but timely action by the authorities concerned ensured that the 260-km all-weather road connecting the Valley with the rest of the country, remains open.

Officials said over 5,000 pilgrims from various parts of the country had reached Jammu to participate in the yatra.

"Adequate arrangements are in place for the pilgrims. Over 1,200 pilgrims are lodged at Bhagwati Nagar base camp, while the rest have been provided accommodation at other places," they said.

Despite incessant rains, the pilgrimage to the 3,880 metre high cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir Himalayas commenced as per schedule on June 28 after several hours of delay. However, the pilgrimage faced frequent disruptions owing to continuous rainfall.

The 60-day yatra is scheduled to conclude on August 26 coinciding with the 'Raksha Bandhan' festival.

Flood alert in central Kashmir as intermittent rains continue in valley

Srinagar, Intermittent rains continued in Kashmir today with authorities sounding a flood alert in central Kashmir, even as water levels started receding in the southern parts of the valley. The authorities had yesterday issued a flood alert in south Kashmir. Today they issued a flood alert for low-lying areas of the central Kashmir, including the summer capital here, and asked the people to be alert and prepared for evacuation.

The schools across the valley were closed for today in view of the inclement

weather. "The gauge at Ram Munshi Bagh crossed the flood declaration of 18 feet and was flowing at 20.87 feet at 10 am," an official of the Irrigation and Flood Control Department said.

He said the people living in areas along the embankments of Jhelum river and other streams and in low-lying areas of central Kashmir were advised to remain vigilant.

"The staff deputed on flood duty in central Kashmir is directed to report to their sectors and beats," the official added.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Syed Abid Rasheed Shah said the people living in low-lying areas and embankments of river Jhelum in Srinagar were requested to be alert and prepared for evacuation.

We have issued a flood alert for low-lying areas of Srinagar, he said.

In south Kashmir after the water level crossed the flood declaration level of 21 feet at Sangam in Anantnag district of south Kashmir, following which the flood alert was sounded.

While the water level at

Sangam at 10 am this morning was 23.06 feet still above the critical mark the water has started receding there. At 9 am the water level there was 23.16 feet.

Kashmir valley experienced rainfall over the past three days and the downpour intensified in many parts, including the summer capital of the state, yesterday.

The rising water levels induced fear among the valley residents of a re-run of 2014 floods that caused widespread devastation and left over 300 persons dead.

18 killed, 14 injured in China coach-truck highway collision

Beijing, The death toll in a head-on collision between a passenger coach and a truck on a highway in central China has risen to 18, with another 14 people injured, police said today. The accident took place last evening in Hunan province south of the capital Beijing. Footage from the scene showed both heavily damaged vehicles along the rain-slicked highway. It appeared that one of the vehicles may have crossed a centre divider. Speeding, dangerous passing, poorly maintained vehicles and fatigued drivers are most often the cause of serious traffic accidents in China. Friday's disaster appeared to be one of the worst in recent months.

Pak special court to resume trial in Musharraf's treason case early next month

Islamabad, A three-judge special court formed by Pakistan's Supreme Court for conducting high treason trial of former military ruler and dictator Pervez Musharraf is set to resume its hearing early next month, a media report said today.

Musharraf, 74, who has been residing in Dubai since March 2016 after leaving the county on medical grounds, is facing the trail for subverting the Constitution on November 3, 2007.

Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Yawar Ali, who heads the special court, will stay in Islamabad/Rawalpindi from July 2 to 4 to hear the treason case, 'The Express Tribune' reported.

The high treason case was planned to be restarted earlier but one member of the special court was abroad, the report said, quoting sources.

The special court, formed in November 2013 by the Supreme Court on request of the former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, had to be reconstituted as its former head and Peshawar High Court (PHC) Chief Justice Yahya Afridi recused himself from hearing the case on March 29.

On April 7, Chief Justice

of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar proposed a fresh composition of the three-judge special court, nominating Ali as its head. Ali is set to retire on October 22 this year.

The former PML-N led government, however, did not notify the new bench during its tenure and the caretaker government had to issue a notification after taking charge.

Recently, the Supreme Court had summoned Musharraf, who has been living in UAE for two years, regarding his disqualification, but he did not show up, prompting the apex court to bar him from contesting in the July 25 general elections.

Besides facing a high-

profile treason case, Musharraf has been declared absconder due to his persistent failure to appear before the special trial court.

The former president was indicted in March 2014 on treason charges for imposing emergency in the country which led to the confinement of a number of superior court judges in their houses and sacking of over 100 judges.

A conviction for high-profile treason carries the death penalty or life imprisonment. Musharraf, who ruled Pakistan from 1999 to 2008, has sought adequate security from the government for his return from the UAE to appear before the special court.

Delhi University releases third cut-off list

New Delhi, The Delhi University has issued its third cut-off list with many prominent colleges not releasing any cut-offs for some courses.

The list was issued yesterday.

Over 33,000 admissions have taken place to over 56,000 seats in the varsity. Shri Ram College of Commerce has not issued cut-offs for its courses in the

general category. A dozen colleges have closed admissions for BCom (Hons) after the first two cut-off lists. Some of these colleges are Bharti College, Lady Shri Ram College, Kirorimal College, Maitreyi College and Daulat Ram.

The university has, for now, announced a total of three cut-off lists. The first cut-off list was announced on June 19.

Rupee recovers from life low, rebounds 33 paise to 68.46



Mumbai, After crashing to life-time lows yesterday, the rupee staged a spirited recovery to end higher by 33 paise at 68.46 against the US dollar today in line with a big relief rally in domestic equities.

Propped up by heavy dollar selling intervention by the RBI, the Indian unit touched a fresh intra-day high of 68.35.

This was the first gain posted by the rupee in the last four sessions.

Overall forex sentiment, however, remained cautious due to rising crude prices and concerns over fiscal slippage.

The rupee largely took cue from weak dollar overseas,

despite month-end greenback demand from corporates and oil importers.

The Indian currency had suffered its worst drubbing and crumbled to hit a fresh all-time low of 69.10 against the benchmark currency US dollar on Thursday before staging some recovery.

The domestic unit had yesterday ended at a record closing low of 68.79, falling 18 paise against the US dollar due to multiple headwinds. The rupee's previous all-time closing low was 68.73, touched on November 24, 2016.

Keeping the overall bullish trend, it touched a session high of 68.35 in late morning

deals before concluding at 68.46, showing a steep rise of 33 paise, or 0.48 per cent. The RBI, meanwhile, fixed the reference rate for the dollar at 68.5753 and for the euro at 79.8491.

The bond market also regained some lost ground and the 10-year benchmark bond yield slipped to 7.90 per cent against 7.94 per cent previously.

Meanwhile, the benchmark Sensex surged by 385.84 points to end at 35,423.48, while the Nifty zoomed 125.20 points to 10,714.30. On the energy front, Brent crude futures, an international benchmark, is trading sharply up at USD 78.73 a barrel in early Asian trade.

As the second half of 2018 gets under way, the rupee has depreciated by 8.03 per cent or a staggering 509 paise against the greenback after an impressive start.

The rupee has emerged as the worst performing currency in Asia in the current year so far.

Most Asian currencies also suffered worst against the grim backdrop of US President Donald Trump's protectionist policy measures.



Pak HC overturns tribunal's verdict barring ex-PM Abbasi from contesting polls

Islamabad, Pakistan's former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi today received a partial reprieve as the Lahore High Court suspended an election tribunal's decision barring him from contesting the July 25 general election from Rawalpindi.

The Punjab Election Appellate Tribunal presided by Justice Ibadur Rehman Lodhi had ruled on Wednesday that Abbasi was not honest as per certain provisions of the Constitution and disqualified him for life from any public office.

Abbasi yesterday challenged the decision in the Lahore High Court where a two-member bench headed by Justice Mazahir Ali Akbar Naqvi suspended his

disqualification till final adjudication of his appeal.

The Lahore High Court bench also summoned the federal government and the Election Commission of Pakistan on July 2.

The suspension of the disqualification means that Abbasi is still in the race.

Abbasi's counsel Khawaja Tariq Rahim had raised questions over the jurisdiction of the election tribunal to disqualify a candidate.

In the petition, he had requested the high court to set aside the verdict and allow Abbasi to contest election from NA-57 located in Rawalpindi district.

Abbasi had filed nominations for NA-53 Islamabad and NA-57 Rawalpindi.

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