



High-Value Farming And Exports Will Boost Rural Employment: PM Modi

New Delhi (GNS): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday addressed a post-budget webinar on agriculture and rural transformation. He said that this year's Union Budget has given a new direction to agriculture and rural transformation. The Prime Minister emphasized that agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and a key pillar of the country's long-term development.

The government is continuously strengthening the agricultural sector
The Prime Minister stated that the government has taken several major steps in recent years to strengthen the agriculture sector. He explained that under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, assistance of over 10 crore farmers has been provided in

the amount of over 4 lakh crore rupees. Under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, insurance claims worth approximately 2 lakh crore rupees have been paid. These efforts have reduced farmers' risks and provided them with financial security.

Emphasis on export-oriented agriculture
Narendra Modi stated that it is essential to make India's agriculture export-oriented in light of global demand. He stated that productivity and export potential can be increased by fully utilizing India's diverse climate. He added that promoting high-value crops can make the agricultural sector globally competitive.

Promotion of high value crops
Prime Minister Modi stressed the



►►**Great potential in fisheries:**Narendra Modi stated that India is the world's second-largest fish producer and that the sector still holds enormous opportunities. He added that fisheries can become a high-impact sector for rural prosperity and export growth. This requires developing new business models in hatcheries, feed, and logistics.

►►**Emphasis on digital agriculture and technology:**The Prime Minister said that the government is creating a digital public infrastructure for agriculture through AgriStack. He said that initiatives like e-NAM, digital land survey, and farmer identification are driving technological transformation in agriculture. He said that technology is effective only when institutions adopt it and entrepreneurs innovate.

►►**Focus on rural prosperity and women entrepreneurship:**Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned schemes for rural development such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Referring to the Lakhpati Didi Abhiyan, he said that the goal is to develop 30 million women into successful entrepreneurs by 2029. The Prime Minister said that the government is committed to reinvigorating the rural economy through a better integration of agriculture, technology, and investment.

'No country can call itself a supreme power', Foreign Minister Jaishankar's statement amid global tensions



New Delhi (GNS): Amid global tensions, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that no country has absolute dominance today. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has said that the global expectation of maintaining a fixed world order since the mid-20th century was "unrealistic", and that power is now diffused to a large extent across various dimensions.

Dispute between Aditya and Sanjay Raut regarding Priyanka Chaturvedi... Raut himself gave clarification on the news.



Mumbai (GNS): Priyanka Chaturvedi, a leader of the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction) from Maharashtra, has been denied a Rajya Sabha ticket. Sharad Pawar has been fielded in her place, supported by the Uddhav Thackeray-led trio of the Congress and the NCP-SP. This decision sparked widespread speculation about differences within the Shiv Sena (UBT), with Aditya Thackeray and Sanjay Raut taking differing positions. Some media reports suggest that Aditya wanted Priyanka Chaturvedi to be re-nominated, but ultimately, Sanjay Raut prevailed, and Sharad Pawar was elected to the Rajya Sabha. There has also been speculation that Raut, overriding Aditya's wishes, made a commitment to Sharad Pawar, which ultimately led to Priyanka's nomination being rescinded. Now, Sanjay Raut himself has clarified these speculations. He stated that the real reason was the party's political equations. He clarified that there was indeed a desire within the Uddhav Sena to give Priyanka Chaturvedi a second chance, but the required voting numbers were lacking, and an experienced leader like Pawar had already staked his claim. Therefore, the party had to support Pawar's name. Raut stated that if the equations were favorable and a senior leader like Pawar had not wanted to enter the Rajya Sabha, Priyanka would have been 100% eligible.

Mamata Banerjee staged a sit-in protest in Kolkata,

Saying she would bring to light the voters declared dead by the Election Commission

Kolkata (GNS): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday launched a protest in Kolkata against the deletion of names from the voter rolls. She alleged that names were being removed from the electoral rolls arbitrarily following the post-SIR process.

During the protest, which began at Kolkata's Esplanade Metro Station, Mamata Banerjee said the BJP and the Election Commission were conspiring to prevent Bengali voters from voting. She vowed to expose this conspiracy. The TMC chief alleged that many voters have been wrongly declared dead in the revised voter list. She said she would bring to light the voters who have been listed as



deceased by the Election Commission. The protest began around 2:15 p.m. The demonstration comes two days before a full Election Commission team is scheduled to visit the state, as announced earlier by TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee. On February 28, the Election Commission released the revised voter list after the post-SIR. This has led to a heated argument between the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Election Commission.

Trump's minister, sitting in Delhi, said - we will not give economic benefits to India like China

New Delhi (GNS): Addressing the Raisina Dialogue, India's premier geopolitical and geoeconomic conference, Christopher Landau said that the US wants to work with India to realize its unlimited potential. However, he clarified that India must understand that the US has learned from past mistakes. He said, "We are not going to repeat the mistake with India that we made with China 20 years ago. China has taken advantage of these very concessions and has become a major rival of the US today."

Christopher Landau said, "We're excited about the trade agreement that's now nearing its final stages, and I think it could truly open the door to limitless possibilities. We're incredibly excited about India and its focus on these economic and commercial opportunities. But India must understand that we're not going to repeat the mistakes we made with China 20 years ago, saying, 'You'll be able to develop all



these markets,' and then later we find you're outperforming us on many commercial fronts. We will ensure that everything we do is fair to our people, because ultimately we have to be accountable to our citizens, just as the Indian government has to its citizens."

India has maintained a completely neutral stance in this escalating Middle East conflict, avoiding supporting either side. Meanwhile, India and the United States are finalizing a trade agreement that has been under negotiation since US President Donald Trump took office. After several rounds of positive negotiations, Washington last month reduced tariffs on Indian goods from 50 percent to 18 percent.

Bombay High Court says divorce cannot be based solely on WhatsApp chats

Allegations of cruelty against wife must be proven; sets aside family court order

Mumbai, Agency: The Bombay High Court has ruled that a divorce order cannot be granted solely on the basis of WhatsApp chats without supporting evidence. A bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande made this observation during a hearing of a woman's family court appeal. The bench said - The court said that the alle-

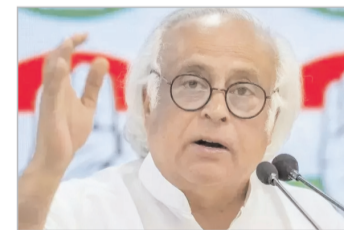


gation of cruelty under Section 13(1)(ia-a) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 must be proved by

legally admissible evidence and the opposite party must be given an opportunity to rebut the material relied upon. The woman had challenged the Family Court's ex parte judgment and order dated May 27, 2025. In this judgment, the Family Court had granted her husband's divorce petition under the grounds of cruelty.

You can get oil from Putin, how long will this American blackmail continue: Ramesh

New Delhi (GNS): The United States has offered India an alternative route to address the energy crisis caused by Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The United States has stated that India can currently purchase crude oil from Russia for 30 days, but Congress has been enraged by this announcement. Congress has described the exemption granted by the United States as an attack on Indian sovereignty and is criticizing the central government, asking how long



America will continue to blackmail us in this manner. Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh posted in Hindi on X, writing, "Trump's new game. He told his Delhi friend, 'You can get oil from Putin, how long will

this American blackmail continue?" Congress MP Manish Tewari even linked it to the country's sovereignty. He also wrote, in response to US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessant's statement on X, that issuing a 30-day waiver is full of hypocritical language of pressure, neo-imperialist arrogance... Are we a banana republic that we need American permission to buy oil for ourselves? The silence of a government that often speaks volumes is too much.

Ravana's brother Vibhishana is worshipped in a 5,000-year-old temple in Kaithoon, Kota

Kota (GNS): This temple, located in Kaithoon town of Kota district in Rajasthan, is believed to be the only place in the world where Ravana's brother Vibhishana is worshipped. According to mythological beliefs, this idol is approximately five thousand years old. It is said that after the coronation of Lord Rama, when Vibhishana embarked on a pilgrimage with Lord Shiva and Hanuman in a Kanwar, during his rest in Kaithoon (ancient Kauthunpur), they were established

here as per the condition. The present structure of the temple was built in the 18th century by Maharao Ummed Singh I. This is the only place in the country where the tradition of burning the effigy of Hiranyakashipu on the day of Holi is observed. The traditional seven-day Vibhishana Fair, held on the occasion of Holi in Kaithoon town of Kota district, Rajasthan, was inaugurated with great pomp. This year, the fair's chief guest was the state's Education and Panchayati Raj Minister, Madan



Dilawar. According to official information, this unique fair, which has been held for the past 45 years, began with

Minister Dilawar performing ritualistic worship and darshan at the Vibhishana Temple. Following this, when the Dev Vimana procession, which emanated from various temples, reached the fair site, the effigy of Hiranyakashipu was burned amid fireworks. On this occasion, Madan Dilawar described fairs as an integral part of social harmony and culture. He described Vibhishana as a great saint and a staunch devotee of Lord Rama, saying that he renounced the path of unrighteousness and supported truth. Referring to the Waqf Amendment Act, Minister Dilawar said that due to the new provisions of the Central Government, the disputed land of the Vibhishana Temple was returned to the Hindu community. He announced that the state government will now issue land leases for all temples in residential areas. These leases will be in the name of the temple idol, not an individual, so that no one can illegally encroach upon these properties in the future.

From food to self-reliance: Message of World Food Day

Sunil Kumar Mahala

World Cereal Day is celebrated every year on March 7th to raise awareness about the importance of cereals, nutrition, and food security. Let me remind you that the word "cereal" originates from the name of the ancient Roman goddess Ceres. In fact, in Roman mythology, Ceres was considered the goddess of agriculture, harvest, and motherhood, and in her honor, grains came to be called "cereals." In fact, cereals include wheat, rice, corn, barley, and oats.

World Cereals Day truly underscores the foundation of food security. It's safe to say that grains like wheat, rice, maize, barley, and millet are not just food, but the foundations of human civilization. It's worth noting that today, more than

half the world's population's daily energy needs are met primarily by three grains—wheat, rice, and maize. Without grains, global food security is unimaginable. Today, as the world continues to face challenges like climate change, population growth, and hunger, the importance of grains increases. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and drought are particularly impacting wheat and rice production. Therefore, adopting sustainable agricultural practices is the need of the hour.

India is among the world's leading wheat and rice producers. Through the Public Distribution System (PDS), grains are delivered to millions of people at affordable rates. In recent years, coarse grains such as millet, sorghum, and ragi have been re-encouraged because they are rich in nutrients and can

be grown with less water. It is also noteworthy that, at India's initiative, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2023 the International Year of Millets, recognising the importance of coarse grains globally.

The purpose of World Cereals Day is not only to increase production, but also to raise awareness about the nutritional value of cereals, prevent food wastage, adopt a balanced diet, and respect the hard work of farmers. In fact, this day highlights the role of farmers in reducing malnutrition and hunger, promoting sustainable agriculture, and ensuring food security.

Barley is historically considered one of the world's oldest cultivated grains, with evidence dating back approximately 10,000 years. Historians believe that agriculture, specifically grain production, was

the key factor in the development of ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley.

Today, coarse grains like millet, sorghum, and ragi are being called "future foods." They are often gluten-free and rich in nutrients like iron and calcium. Some grains are also extremely important from an environmental perspective. For example, perennial grains are crops that do not need to be replanted each year. Their deep roots prevent soil erosion and help absorb carbon. Readers may know that corn is the world's most widely grown crop, but a large portion of it is used for ethanol (fuel) and animal feed rather than for direct food. It's also worth noting that a significant portion of the world's grain production is lost during storage and transportation.

Preventing this waste could alleviate the hunger of millions. Dr. John Harvey Kellogg invented breakfast cereals like cornflakes in the late 19th century. His goal was to present them as simple and healthy meals, so that people could avoid overly spicy and rich foods. Cereals are an important source of energy, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Cereals are the staple food of a large portion of the world's population, with wheat and rice being the most consumed. Climate change is having a direct impact on cereal production, which could exacerbate food security challenges. It is worth noting that World Food Day is celebrated annually on October 16. This day commemorates the establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, on October 16, 1945.

Editorial

On the Israeli-American war against Iran

Six days after the unprovoked, illegal Israeli-American war against Iran began, West Asia has descended into chaos. When U.S. President Donald Trump launched the war, killing Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, other leaders and at least 160 schoolchildren, he called on Iranians to overthrow the Islamic Republic and take over state institutions. That did not happen. Iran retaliated by targeting Israel as well as American bases, assets and missions in the Persian Gulf region. Satellite image-based analyses suggest that Iran has struck communication and radar structures at seven U.S. military sites. Hezbollah, the Lebanese militant group, also joined the war with rocket attacks on northern Israel. In Iraq, pro-Iran militias have struck American assets in Erbil and other areas. The U.S. has confirmed that at least six service personnel were killed and three fighter jets were lost in Kuwaiti "friendly fire", according to the Pentagon. On March 4, the U.S. expanded the theatre of war to the Indian Ocean by torpedoing an Iranian warship, IRIS Dena, off Sri Lanka, killing at least 83 personnel. The ship was in the region for last week's International Fleet Review off Visakhapatnam. If Mr. Trump and his ally Benjamin Netanyahu believed that Khamenei's killing would lead to a collapse of Iran's government, the result has instead been an all-out regional war. Neither side has shown any willingness to step back. U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said on Wednesday that the conflict could last up to eight weeks. Ali Larjani, Iran's security chief, has ruled out talks with the U.S. and American media have reported that Washington is considering arming ethnic Kurdish militias in Iran's northwest to provoke internal unrest. This is a dangerous game. It appears that Mr. Trump launched the war without an exit strategy. As the Iranian state and its institutions show no signs of cracking, the U.S. has turned to massive bombardment and the prospect of fuelling civil strife in a country that it promised to "liberate" from clerical rule only days ago. If the war drags on, Mr. Trump is likely to face growing domestic resistance, with sections of his far-right base already calling it "Israel's war".



By attacking Iran, the US and Israel have pushed the entire world towards World War III. India is facing the worst situation. On the eighth day of the ongoing war between the US, Israel, and Iran, India is bearing the brunt. India probably never imagined that it would suffer such massive losses in a war with which it had nothing to do. With the consequences now emerging, the Indian government must surely understand. Just as a husband is at his most precarious during a conflict between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, he is unable to speak up for his mother or his wife. Today, India is facing the same situation in the midst of the war between Israel and Iran.



India caught between the two sides of the Israel-Iran war

Sanat Jain

On the second day of the war, Israel targeted and killed Iran's religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and Iran's first- and second-line leaders and security commanders. Following this, Iran has moved towards an all-out war. The US and Israel likely underestimated Iran's military strength. Due to this, they took a huge risk that they are now unable to handle. Israel attacked an Iranian school and massacred 180 girls. Iran was enraged. Iran retaliated by first targeting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, followed by Iranian missiles against US military bases in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, and Gulf countries. Most shockingly, Israel's defense system was unable to counter Iran's missiles. Israel suffered heavy losses. A similar situation prevailed at US military bases in the Gulf countries, where Iranian missiles are causing significant damage. To add to the woes, Iran completely blocked the movement of ships through the Strait of Hormuz, effectively halting the oil supply and import and export of approximately 30 percent of the countries. The US's inability to protect its military bases has also spread panic in the Gulf countries. The last straw was the US attack on an Iranian ship that had come to conduct peaceful military exercises with

India. The ship was sunk near the international maritime border near Sri Lanka. This resulted in the death of over 87 Iranian soldiers and the injury of over 32 sailors. India's role in this conflict has been the most negative. One day before the war began, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on a visit to Israel. He addressed the Israeli Parliament. Upon his return, Iran was attacked. Israel massacred the Shia supreme leader of the Shia community, Ayatollah Khamenei, along with nearly two dozen Iranian commanders. The Indian government subsequently issued no response. A condolence message was not even sent to Iran, which strained India's relations with Iran. Due to Iran's attacks in the Gulf countries, approximately 10 million Indian citizens who had gone to Gulf countries for employment were affected. All of that is in jeopardy. The remaining damage is being done in the UAE. India's largest investment, amounting to billions of dollars, is in Dubai, UAE. Millions of people work there. Iran has caused the most damage to Dubai, putting Indian investments there at risk. Furthermore, the trade deal India signed with the United States was jeopardized by the US embargo on oil imports from Russia. This has restricted India's crude oil and natural gas supplies. Given this situa-

tion, the Indian government has had to request permission from the US to import crude oil and gas from Russia. Iran has allowed the movement of Russian and Chinese ships. This is India's biggest diplomatic defeat on the eighth day of the war. Opposition parties in India and other countries around the world consider India a stooge of Israel and the United States. In a way, India has become isolated in global politics. After Iraq, if any country is going to suffer the biggest loss, it is India. India's stock market is continuously falling. India lacks more than 15 days of crude oil and gas. The value of the rupee is continuously rising against the dollar, causing India the greatest economic losses. Given the evolving global situation, has India found itself on the brink of war? For the first time since independence, India is so vulnerable in global politics. Opposition parties as well as ordinary citizens are now expressing this. Amidst the threat of war, the BJP is preparing to replace Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in Bihar with its own Chief Minister, damaging the government's image. Israel and the United States' Netanyahu and Donald Trump have started this war with Iran to preserve their power and avoid the revelations in the Epstein Files, which now appears to be heading towards World War III. India is also

facing significant losses. In that, has India also come to stand on the threshold of war? For the first time since independence, India is so weak in global politics. Now, not only the opposition parties but even common citizens are saying this. Amidst the horrors of war, the way the BJP is going to remove Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in Bihar and install its own Chief Minister is also damaging the government's image. Israel and America's Netanyahu and Donald Trump have started this war with Iran to save their power and to avoid the revelations being made in the Epstein file, which now seems to be moving towards World War III. India too seems to be suffering huge losses in this. In that, has India also come to stand on the threshold of war? For the first time since independence, India is so weak in global politics. Now, not only the opposition parties but even common citizens are saying this. Amidst the horrors of war, the way the BJP is going to remove Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in Bihar and install its own Chief Minister is also damaging the government's image. Israel and America's Netanyahu and Donald Trump have started this war with Iran to save their power and to avoid the revelations being made in the Epstein file, which now seems to be moving towards World War III. India too seems to be suffering huge losses in this.

Nitish Kumar's departure to Rajya Sabha: A new turn in Bihar politics

Vinod Kumar Singh

Some events in Indian politics are not merely news of a change of power, but rather signal the end of an entire era and the beginning of a new chapter. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's nomination for the Rajya Sabha is one such development, creating a stir in political circles with a strong hold on Bihar politics. The move of a leader who has been at the center of power in Bihar for nearly two decades from active administrative politics to Parliament is not just a personal political decision, but also a major political signal related to Bihar politics, power structure, coalition politics and national strategy. Nitish Kumar has long been synonymous with Bihar politics. His political career, spanning more than five decades, encompasses many

facets of Indian democracy. He was born on March 1, 1951, in Bakhtiyarpur, Nalanda district, Bihar. After completing his engineering studies, he chose politics as his life path. Inspired by politics and socialist ideology from his student days, he began his active political journey with the movement of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan. The 1974 JP movement shaped his political personality and later became the foundation for his establishment in mainstream Bihar politics. It is well known that Nitish Kumar was first elected to the Bihar Legislative Assembly in 1985. His political stature gradually grew thereafter. In 1989, he was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time, and his active participation in Parliament brought him recognition in national politics. In the 1990s, he emerged as

an influential leader in central politics, holding several important portfolios. In the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led government, he held important positions such as Railway Minister, Agriculture Minister, and Surface Transport Minister. His tenure as Railway Minister was particularly noteworthy. He held the Railway Ministry between 1998 and 1999, and later in 2001. During this period, he set a unique example in Indian politics by resigning, taking moral responsibility for the Gayasal train accident in Bihar. This move was considered a symbol of his political style and sense of accountability. His decisive rise in Bihar politics came in 2005 when he formed the government in the state in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party. At that time, Bihar had been grappling with political instability and administrative

challenges for a long time. Nitish Kumar assumed power with an agenda of 'good governance' and development and attempted to change the image of the state. Steps like construction of roads, bicycle scheme for girl students in schools, women empowerment and improvement in law and order gave him the identity of a development-oriented leader. Nitish Kumar's political career as Chief Minister is a record in itself. He is among Bihar's longest-serving Chief Ministers. He first became Chief Minister in 2000, but failed to secure a majority, resulting in a short term. He subsequently became Chief Minister in 2005, and has remained at the center of power in Bihar ever since. He has served as Chief Minister ten times, spanning the political periods of 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020, and 2024. Thus, he has direct-

ly influenced Bihar politics for over twenty years. His political journey has seen many ups and downs. He has periodically changed alliances and reshaped political equations. He has sometimes been with the BJP, sometimes joined the Grand Alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Congress, and then returned to the NDA. This is why he is considered a highly pragmatic and strategic leader in Indian politics. Now that he has decided to enter the Rajya Sabha, it signals the beginning of a new chapter in Bihar politics. After being at the center of state power for more than two decades, his move to Parliament can be seen not just as a change of position but also as an expansion of his political role. According to him, since the beginning of his parliamentary career, he has desired to be a member of both houses of Parliament.

Who is Taranjit Singh Sandhu? Former envoy appointed Delhi LG

New Delhi, (GNS): Tamil Nadu governor R N Ravi has replaced C V Ananda Bose as the new governor of West Bengal, while former ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu will be the new Delhi L-G. The move to appoint Ravi as Bengal governor came under fire from CM Mamata Banerjee.

The appointment of Ravi, a former IPS officer who had frequent run-ins with the DMK govt, comes days ahead of the announcement of poll dates for Bengal and other states.

The changes are part of the larger gubernatorial reshuffle announced by Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday (see gfx). Bose, whose tenure was marked by confrontations with the Mamata-led TMC govt, announced his resignation from Delhi. He gave no reason for



the decision. Mamata Banerjee was quick to target BJP, her main challenger in the assembly polls, as she expressed "shock and deep concern".

"The reasons behind his resignation are not known to me at this moment. However, given the prevailing circumstances, I would not be surprised if the governor has been subjected to some pressure from the Union home minister to serve certain political interests on the eve of the forthcoming

state assembly elections," she wrote on X, sharing that home minister Amit Shah called her to say that Ravi will be replacing Bose.

Mamata said Shah did not consult her over the change of guard "as per established convention". Ravi has been at odds with the Tamil Nadu govt over a host of issues and his expected transfer to Bengal assumes significance due to Mamata's vehement protest against the EC's SIR exercise in the state with polls set to be conducted with the new voters' list. The suddenness of Ananda Bose's decision was borne out by the fact that a Raj Bhavan social media channel posted his key official engagements on Friday till a few hours before he made the announcement. The engagements included his "presence" at the "first-of-its-kind" Darjeeling

Hill Festival, where President Droupadi Murmu would be chief guest. The election-eve choice of Ravi as Bengal's 24th governor also prompted the CM to claim that "such actions undermine the spirit of the Constitution of India and strike at the very foundation of our federal structure". Ravi, known for his confrontations with the Stalin administration, will be stepping into Raj Bhavan just ahead of the assembly election. Bose, as many noted, had been lying low, uncharacteristically, for the last few months, avoiding any fresh tussle with the Bengal govt.

Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya said, "They (TMC) should stop whining on ethics and morality in a state where the assembly opposition leader has to move the high court 124 times just to hold public meetings."

Mist system on 1k electric poles to fight air pollution



New Delhi, (GNS): The Delhi Public Works Department has planned to install water sprinkler systems on 1,000 street lights across the capital. It is part of anti-pollution measures under which the PWD has started greening and beautification work at 47 roundabouts. These green walls, aimed at improving urban aesthetics and air quality, will be equipped with automated drip irrigation systems that will run on recycled water from nearby sewage treatment plants, PWD minister Parvesh Verma said. Alongside this initiative, PWD also completed the rejuvenation

of 10 major parks across Delhi. "To combat air pollution, PWD is widely deploying sprinkler and mist spray systems. Sprinklers were proposed for 1,000 streetlight poles, with 271 units already installed and 305 mist spray systems operational. It will help strengthen dust control and improve air quality," Verma said. A PWD report said that at 47 roundabouts, safe and environment-friendly green cover is being developed. Native plants and shrubs, suited to the local climate and soil, were selected because green cover plays a key role in curbing road dust and pollution.

Sandhu in, Saxena moved to Ladakh

New Delhi, (GNS): Retired diplomat Taranjit Singh Sandhu was on Thursday appointed the new lieutenant governor of Delhi. Vinai Kumar Saxena, who was serving as the Delhi LG since May 2022, has been shifted to Ladakh.

Sandhu, who served as India's Ambassador to the United States from Feb 2020 to Jan 2024, maintained close, active, and frequent engagements with the Congressional India Caucus—the largest country-specific caucus in the US House of Representatives. He was also the high commissioner to Sri Lanka.

Sandhu contested Lok Sabha elections on a BJP ticket in Amritsar in 2024 but lost. Saxena's tenure was marked by frequent high-pitched confrontations with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) govt over myriad issues ranging from day-to-day governance to policy decisions, including the controversial excise policy. In July 2022, Saxena recommended a CBI probe into alleged irregularities in the excise policy's framing and implementation, which led to the then chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and some senior AAP functionaries going to jail. Saxena has been shifted days after Arvind Kejriwal and other accused have been discharged in the excise case by a Delhi court.

The appointment of Sandhu comes at a time when relations between BJP-led Delhi govt and the LG office have normalised. Officials attribute the normalcy to Delhi and the Centre, which appoints the LG, being run by the same party. The Delhi govt's relationship with the LG has been marked by sustained tussle since 2015 when AAP came to power in Delhi.

Saxena was appointed the Delhi LG in 2022, replacing IAS officer Anil Bajjal. Saxena was the only LG of Delhi who was not drawn from retired bureaucrats.

Saxena was also behind the Delhi Development Authority's green push and was key to the development of several parks and green spaces along the Yamuna, such as Asita park and Baansera. During Saxena's tenure, several major policy matters led to sharp exchanges between Raj Niwas and AAP govt, including the management of 2023 Delhi floods. A major flashpoint was the control of services in Delhi, particularly the power to appoint and transfer bureaucrats. They also clashed over the functioning of Municipal Corporation of Delhi, mayoral elections, the redevelopment of govt schools and hospitals, and the handling of civic and environmental issues. These disputes frequently played out through official correspondence and even public statements.

Delhi's Maharani Bagh: Infra stretched in green, thoughtfully planned colony

New Delhi, (GNS): Tree-lined roads, planned homes and green spaces framed by bougainvillea define Maharani Bagh in southeast Delhi. Long regarded as one of the capital's most upscale neighbourhoods, the colony has often been seen as a "model" of thoughtful urban planning. "Designed initially with only 210 plots, the colony was laid out with wide roads, dedicated service lanes and abundant green spaces, creating an orderly and spacious living environment. Planned to accommodate about 1,300 residents, it functioned for decades as a well-balanced and self-sustaining residential area, reflecting a strong emphasis on livability," says resident Shiv Mehra.

Even today, residents say the neighbourhood retains its quiet residential character despite being located close to major arteries. Its planned layout, greenery and residential scale have historically distinguished it as an example of



organised urban development, though rising population has begun to place increasing pressure on infrastructure.

Some residents say the strain is now visible across the colony. Sewer lines have become prone to failure, while

ageing water pipelines laid decades ago risk contamination. Stormwater drains meant to carry rainwater now double as sewage channels, leading to flooding and foul odours during heavy rains.

Another resident, Amitosh

Moitra, describes the situation as "a textbook case of unplanned densification without parallel infrastructure augmentation". Roads designed for limited residential traffic now function as public thoroughfares, with commuters cutting through to avoid Ring Road and Mathura Road.

"Parking pressures have intensified, with people occupying service lanes. Overhead electric cables get entangled in trees, causing disruptions, while garbage disposal has become chaotic, with waste accumulating near entrances and attracting strays," he says. Mehra says infrastructure has effectively been frozen in time.

"Policy changes allowed additional floors on every plot, turning single homes into four households. The population has surged past 5,000, but civic facilities remain largely the same as when the colony was planned for barely a quarter of its current load."

The transformation has

been social as well as physical, residents say. Ayesha Kapur, who has known Maharani Bagh since childhood, describes it as a "lovely neighbourhood" shaped by wider urban pressures affecting Delhi. Kapur recalls quieter streets where children cycled and neighbours shared close bonds.

A road that would house 10 families today accommodates 45-50 households. "With property subdivisions and busier lifestyles, community interaction has declined. In recent years, drainage and infrastructure work has added to residents' frustrations, with several parts dug up, sewage flow issues persisting in some stretches and prolonged construction disrupting daily life," she says.

Despite challenges, residents say Maharani Bagh fares better than many other areas where infrastructure has deteriorated rapidly.

Safdarjung Development Area: A 1960s colony that grew with Delhi

New Delhi, (GNS): Every morning, Safdarjung Development Area (SDA) wakes up to walkers and joggers moving through Rose Garden and SDA Park Shaped by safety, greenery and a peaceful character, this south Delhi colony has survived the churn of a rapidly changing city. While much of Delhi races toward high-rises and dense construction, SDA has chosen restraint. Low-rise homes, tree-lined avenues and bungalows define the colony, ranked among the city's top residential neighbourhoods for livability.

With IIT-Delhi as the major landmark, SDA is flanked by Aurobindo Marg, Outer Ring Road, Rose Garden and Green Park. Amid the chaos, the colony has retained its quiet, old-world charm.



Spread across seven blocks, along with Usha Niketan and Bhim Nagri, SDA is dotted with six parks and a large green belt that houses an open-air gym. While it is often mistaken for Safdarjung Enclave, it has a distinct character of its own.

Alok Saxena, 62, a resident, says SDA took shape in the 1960s and was among the city's first colonies where residential plots were auctioned to the public. "SDA is a lively

neighbourhood, and its true character lies in its residents. The area is home to doctors, bureaucrats, lawyers and business professionals. The spirit of camaraderie in the colony remains strong," he adds.

At the heart of the colony stands Kailashpati Mandir, while the annual Jagannath Yatra begins from Jagannath Temple. A church, a cathedral and a mosque reflect the area's harmonious religious diversity, Saxena says.

Two sisters found dead in south Delhi home, mum unconscious

New Delhi, Agency: Police have launched an investigation after two sisters were found dead in their home in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar on Thursday evening. The deaths came to light at 6 pm when the local police station got a call from a relative, who said the family was not opening the door.

Police officers broke the door that was locked from inside and found the bodies in separate rooms.

One sister was found with a pillow covering her face, while the other's body had ligature marks on the neck, indicating she had been strangled. One sister was 33 years old, the other was 28.

The girls' mother was found unconscious in one of



the rooms. She was rushed to the AIIMS trauma centre, where she is under treatment.

The preliminary police investigation suggests that the mother may have killed the daughters before attempting to take her own life.

The crime team and the forensic science laboratory unit were summoned to the spot to collect evidence.

Holi horror: Delhi man beaten to death with iron rods, bricks, stones after balloon water splashes woman

New Delhi, (GNS): A 26-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death after a quarrel over a splash of water during Holi spiralled into violence in Delhi's Uttam Nagar. Police have arrested four people and apprehended a minor. The trouble began, police said, when water from a balloon splashed on a woman amid the festival celebrations.

The deceased has been identified as Tarun, who lived with his family in Uttam Nagar. He was pursuing a digital marketing course, said his family.

DCP (Dwarka) Kushal Pal Singh said two groups, belonging to two different communities, had a fight over the throwing of a water-filled balloon.

The injured were rushed to hospital - three from one side



and five from the other side were injured. Both groups originally hail from Rajasthan. We regis-

tered a case and arrested four adults and apprehended one juvenile. One of the injured,

Tarun Kumar died during treatment. So, we added Sec 103 to the FIR and added murder

charges," the DCP said.

Speaking to Media, Tarun's uncle, Tek Chand, said their relative, an 11-year-old girl, was playing Holi on the terrace when she threw a water balloon at her father standing below. The balloon fell onto the road and splashed water on a woman from the neighbouring family, who, according to Tarun's family, belonged to a different community. "We apologised, but she didn't listen and called her relatives, picking up a fight with us," he said.

Tek Chand claimed the matter was initially settled. About an hour later, Tarun was returning on his bike after playing Holi with a friend. A group of 15-20 people, according to Tek Chand, stopped him and allegedly

assaulted him with iron rods, bricks, stones, and other objects. Security in the area has been tightened following the incident.

Two more murders were reported during Holi. In Burari, a man was killed and his friend critically injured during an attack by a group.

The incident reportedly followed a scuffle after a man allegedly used abusive language during a video call. Others objected, leading to a scuffle during which Nepal Ram and his friend, standing nearby, were attacked. Two men have been arrested, and a minor apprehended. In another incident from Kanjhawal, a 36-year-old cab driver, Vikash Sharma, died after being attacked by two minors after an argument.

Teenager Escapes Fire, Dies In Bid To Get Back New Eid Dress

New Delhi, (GNS): Rozina had almost escaped the fire, but she wanted to save her new Eid dress too. She went back into the burning jhuggi that was her home, and never emerged. The 17-year-old's charred body was found later when the Delhi Fire Service put the flames out. In outer Delhi's Rithala, the fire engulfed over 100 jhuggis on Thursday around 4.15 am.

Rozina's mother Aadina (38) wailed inconsolably. The girl's aunt, Zarina (45), broke down while recounting how they lost her. "She had managed to step out when the fire broke out, but ran back in to retrieve a new outfit she had bought for Eid," she said. Rozina's younger sister has suffered burns on her feet.

About 15 fire tenders and 75



fighters battled the blaze in the cluster near Rithala metro station and brought it under control by 7.25 am. In all, three people were reported dead in two fires that broke out in Delhi's Rithala and Paharganj, where two labourers were killed.

DFS officials said a cardboard and paper godown in Rithala may

have fuelled the blaze. The fire also spread to a gasket factory adjacent to the cluster, which had a large quantity of scrap.

Residents said that before the fire on Thursday morning, the cluster had seen only minor fires, never any disaster of such a scale.

In the jhuggi, Shabnam (12) and Meera (13) sat with the charred remains of five puppies they had

fostered. They also held burnt pages of their school books. Neither of the girls could appear for their exams on Thursday.

Last Nov, a fire had broken out in another jhuggi cluster nearby. Two people had died in that blaze.

On Thursday, govt officials on the spot said shelter would be

provided to the people, but residents said that they did not want to leave the area for fear that the scrap they could salvage and sell might get stolen.

Some residents had broken the jhuggis with rods and hammers and even jumped over adjoining houses to escape the flames. "Many people were injured in the chaos. Some also suffered burns," said factory worker Sameer-ul (22).

The residents said the fire started near the entry gate of the settlement. They alleged foul play. Police said a probe was on to ascertain what caused the blaze. A case was filed at the Budh Vihar police station. In another incident, two labourers were found charred to death after a fire broke out inside a toy godown in central Delhi's Paharganj on Wednesday evening.

Seven minors among eight held for murder of 18-year-old in Azadpur

New Delhi, (GNS): A 28-year-old man, along with seven minors, was apprehended for allegedly shooting dead an 18-year-old in northwest Delhi's Azadpur last month, police said on Thursday. The accused had planned the attack to avenge the murder of an accomplice, but ended up killing the teen instead.

The incident took place on Feb 22 near the main gate of MCD colony, where Ishant had gone to attend a wedding. When police reached the spot, they found him lying in a pool of blood with gunshot injuries. The victim was taken to a Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead.

Seven empty cartridges and four live cartridges were recovered from the spot. A motorcycle without a number plate and the victim's scooter were also found abandoned there. A case was registered. After evidence was duly corroborated, Mohit



Pal (28) was identified and nabbed. Mohit, a habitual offender, was involved in six criminal cases pertaining to attempted murder, robbery, snatching and theft.

During interrogation, Mohit said that the group met at Bhalswa village and hatched a plan to kill one Narender, an accused in the 2024 murder of Mohit's accomplice Deepak, who was expected to attend the wedding after he was out on parole. However, when they could not find him, they shot Ishant, believing him to be associated with Narender.

Pontoons on drains, skimmers to reduce Yamuna pollution

New Delhi, (GNS): The irrigation and flood control (I&FC) department has deployed six floating skimmers on the Yamuna and the Najafgarh drain and installed floating pontoons on 12 drains.

The skimmers and weed harvesters are designed to remove floating rubbish and aquatic weeds from the water surface. Four skimmers are operating on the Yamuna, while the remaining machines are deployed on the Ghazipur and Najafgarh drains, two major sources of waste that pollute the river. The machines are expected to reduce the volume of floating solid waste that reaches the Yamuna.

Alongside surface cleaning, the department extensively desilted major drains across the city ahead of the 2025 monsoon, removing about 18.5 lakh tonnes of silt. The department maintains 57 stormwater drains, including the Najafgarh and Shahdara ones that discharge water into the Yamuna.

In addition, 20 more outfall drains, including the Barapullah drain, that empty into the Yamuna were recently transferred to the department for cleaning and maintenance. Many of the drains were not properly desilted for years and contributed to waterlogging and pollution.

"The impact of largescale desilting was visible during the 2025 monsoon, when the Yamuna touched 207.48 metres - the third-highest flood level recorded in Delhi. Despite the high water level, we were able to manage the situation without major waterlogging in areas covered by the department's drains. The fact that there was no major waterlogging in the catchment areas of our drains was a result of the extensive desilting work carried out before the monsoon," Parvesh Verma, minister for irrigation and flood control, said. An official said that in order to strengthen flood protection along the river, the department has also started construction of a wall along the Yamuna's right bank from the Old Railway Bridge (ORB) to Majnu Ka Tila. The project is aimed at preventing overflow during periods of high discharge from upstream areas such as the Hathnikund Barrage in Haryana, which often causes sudden rises in the river level.

According to an annual report shared by the department, govt initiated topographical and bathymetric surveys of the Yamuna from Palla to Jaitpur, using instruments like sonar and electronic survey systems to map the riverbed and help identify areas where silt accumulation reduces the river's carrying capacity.

Dying Narela lake to get Delhi's first meadow park after revamp

New Delhi, (GNS): The highly encroached and dying Tikri Khurd Lake at Narela will be rejuvenated, restored and developed as the city's first meadow park by Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

The decision was taken after lieutenant governor VK Saxena visited the site in north Delhi on Feb 17 and expressed concern over the deteriorating waterbody that once sustained a vibrant ecosystem. Officials have been asked to prepare a restoration plan at the earliest, on the lines of the previously developed Baansera and Asita parks over degraded landscapes. Officials said the waterbody, previously an oxbow lake on the Yamuna floodplain, was also receiving untreated sewage from neighbouring residential localities, giving an unpleasant look to the area.

The preliminary plan is to revive the 40-acre lake by removing encroachments and



water hyacinth, and developing an open grassy patch across 10 acres of surrounding land. This will be followed by the creation of a heavily wooded area with around 10,000 trees, including bamboo.

A walkway will be developed covering 20 acres surrounding the lake. The 2.5-metre-wide pathway will serve as both a walking and cycling track. "The work on cleaning the approach roads has already started and tenders for construction of a boundary wall around the complex have been issued," DDA stated.

The lake and its surrounding landscape, spread over around 72 acres, fall within sectors 8-1 to 8-3 of Narela sub-city. Officials said that while the revival would be the priority, attracting visitors would also be important, given the strategic location. "The project plan focuses on ecological restoration, landscape regeneration and creation of nature-based public spaces while strengthening the hydrological and environmental performance of the site," said an official. The meadow park will feature expansive native grass-

lands and dense peripheral plantations that will act as ecological buffers. The design will ensure that rainwater gradually flows towards the central depression, which will be restored and strengthened as the primary water retention basin. Existing site contours will be utilised and enhanced to facilitate natural surface run-off throughout the year.

For public spaces, shaded seating areas will be developed beneath native tree canopies. An eco-sensitive restaurant structure, designed using sustainable and lightweight materials, is proposed at a vantage point overlooking the lake. The structure will be visually connected to a stepped access leading towards the waterbody, creating a strong visual and spatial interface between land and water.

Excavated earth generated during the deepening and restoration will be reused on-site to create landscaped mounds and berms, which will

help screen undesirable views from adjoining developments and also function as visual buffers and wind barriers.

To enhance visitors' engagement with the natural environment, elevated machaans, or nature-viewing decks, are proposed at selected locations for observing the restored lake ecosystem, bird activities and surrounding meadow habitat without disturbing sensitive ecological zones. A small meeting or conference facility, along with two-three eco-cottages, is also proposed along the quieter edge of the lake. These will be designed as low-impact structures overlooking the waterbody and can be used for nature retreats, small gatherings and environmental education activities.

Decentralised sewage treatment plants will also be built to treat wastewater from surrounding areas and ensure that the lake retains water throughout the year.

Land acquisition case: No relief for DANICS officer

New Delhi, (GNS): Delhi High Court has dismissed a plea by a govt officer challenging proceedings for allegedly misusing his position in a sensitive land acquisition matter.

The court refused relief to the DANICS (Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Civil Service) officer challenging a disciplinary penalty imposed on him and upheld an earlier decision of Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) in connection with the penalty imposed for the misconduct.

In 2016, when the officer was serving as a land acquisition collector in the city, he had, according to a complaint, issued an order allowing the refund of more than Rs 3.3 crore and treated the acquisition proceedings as concluded.

It was brought to the attention of senior authorities that this order was passed after his transfer and he allegedly preponed the date of the hearing



in the case.

Following this, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against the officer, with enough evidence found to frame charges against him on one account: that the officer had acted in haste and without following proper procedure, which constituted misconduct.

The disciplinary authority had imposed penalties, including reduction of pay scale for three years, suspension of promotion during that period, postponement of future increments, and alteration of seniority. On appeal, the govt

authority upheld the penalty.

The officer challenged the punishment before CAT, which dismissed his plea in July 2021, though it allowed him to submit a representation seeking reduction of the penalty. When the representation was also rejected, the officer approached the high court in 2025, nearly four years after the CAT decision.

Dealing first with the delay, the high court noted that the officer had failed to provide an adequate explanation for the delay in approaching the court. It also rejected the argument that rejection of his representation constituted a fresh cause of action, clarifying that CAT gave him liberty only for the reconsideration of the penalty and did not reopen the case. The court ruled that the petition was barred by delay and laches, but added that even on the issue of merit, it found no justification to interfere.

Rape case filed as pressure tactic Delhi court discharges accused

New Delhi, (GNS): A Delhi court has discharged a man accused of raping a woman on the pretext of marriage, holding that the case stemmed from a consensual relationship that later turned acrimonious.

In an order dated Feb 12, judge Harjeet Singh Jaspal said "genuine cases that deserve prosecution of the accused must be clearly demarcated from the litigation that arises from the cases of consensual relationships between consenting adults going acrimonious on account of dispute and disagreement or a future change of mind."

The case was registered in 2017 under Sections 376 (rape) and 506 (criminal intimidation) IPC. The prosecution alleged the man induced the complainant into a sexual relationship from Dec 25, 2012 by falsely promising marriage. The court, however, noted that the couple had legally married in Sept 2015-after the complainant threatened to file a case-and had been living together in a "valid subsisting marriage".

The complainant later alleged the man moved back to Gurgaon and told her she couldn't take action against him.

She also accused him and his friend of criminal intimidation over alleged scandalous WhatsApp messages. However, the court said her Section 164 CrPC statement confirmed a court marriage and didn't allege forceful sexual intercourse.



'Priority has been to first empanel smaller hospitals in Ayushman Bharat'

New Delhi, (GNS): Better last-mile connectivity, public transport and health facilities are what minister Pankaj Kumar Singh promised to the city one year ago. Speaking to Kushagra Dixit and Abhinav Rajput, he outlined projects that he believes improved the lives of Delhiites and what the city can expect in the coming months.

Q. What has changed in Delhi's health landscape and what are your key learnings in the past year?

A: When I took charge of the health department, the situation was challenging. Hospitals lacked drinking water and medicines. There was shortage of staff nurses and doctors. Buildings remained under construction for



over five years. We started by implementing the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which the previous govt did not allow. This covered about 10 lakh people and over 30,000 have received treatment. Then, there were defunct tin boxes called mohalla clinics. We started new, structured Ayushman Arogya Mandir focus-

ing on primary health care, offering over 80 medical tests. If primary screening and testing are available near a patient's home, it improves early diagnosis and reduces hospital crowding. Our efforts to eliminate tuberculosis, where we screened over 10.7 lakh people including 4.5 lakh in slums, were recognised by the Centre.

Along with this, we implemented central procurement which ensured better pricing, improved quality, and timely supply of medicines, and saved money. To maintain hygiene at hospitals, we started color coded bedsheets for particular days.

Q. How have Delhi's private hospitals responded to getting empanelled under Ayushman

Bharat?

A: Experience comes from experiences. Initially, some private hospitals were hesitant due to pending payment concerns from previous years. Smaller hospitals were especially worried about reimbursement delays. But the hospitals are now coming into the fold. One major hospital has a pending matter in the Supreme Court. But soon Fortis will be empanelled, Balaji has been added. We are in talks with Max, Maharaj Agrasen, and many other hospitals. That said, our priority has been to empanel smaller hospitals first. In emergency situations, an Ayushman card holder is more likely to visit a nearby hospital - often a smaller facility. Large hospitals gener-

ally have the capacity to absorb temporary payment delays, but smaller ones cannot afford that risk. Addressing their concerns and bringing them into the fold quickly has been central to our strategy. Q. What are the new infrastructure projects on the anvil? A: Tenders will be floated soon for 12 MRI, 20 CT scan machines and 30 ultrasound machines for different govt hospitals. Establishment of a neuro-cath lab at GB Pant Hospital has been a big achievement. A common citizen can access high-end neurological interventions in the public sector. We have also expanded dialysis centres and installed 150 new dialysis machines. Q. Mental health has been identified as a growing con-

cern. What steps are being taken? A: We are working to establish at least one dedicated brain health or mental health clinic in every district hospital. A recent example is the brain health clinic set up at the Indira Gandhi Hospital. Our goal is to ensure that each district has accessible, specialised mental health services. In addition, we are integrating traditional and holistic wellness approaches such as panchakarma therapy, along with yoga, meditation, and counselling services into stress management, trigger anxiety etc. We have established an Ayurvedic society that will oversee dedicated centres across all districts and appoint trained therapists.