



Kedarnath shrine opens after 181 days

► Army showers flowers from helicopters, DGCA suspends helicopter service; palanquins reach Badrinath

Rudraprayag(GNS): The doors of Kedarnath Temple were formally opened at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, the fourth day of the Chardham Yatra. As per tradition, the eastern gate of the temple was opened first, and the chief priest, the Rawal, and other right holders entered and began the worship. During this, the ashes applied to the Jyotirlinga during the closing of the doors last year were removed and distributed among the devotees as prasad.

On the occasion of the opening of the doors, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami arrived at the shrine and performed the first puja in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. After the puja process was completed with Vedic rituals, the main gates of the temple were now opened to the general public, and darshan has begun.



Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has suspended all helicopter services operating from Fata, Sirsi and Guptkashi with immediate effect for violating rules. The Shankaracharya's throne, along with the festive palanquins of Uddhava and Kubera, have traveled 20 kilometers from Pandukeshwar in Chamoli district to reach Badrinath Dham. The doors of Badrinath Dham will be opened tomorrow morning at 6 am.

Hormuz crisis could have a direct impact on India's security and economy: Rajnath

Countries need to move forward with new thinking and adapt themselves to the changing environment

New Delhi(GNS): Amidst the ongoing conflict in West Asia, Defense Minister Rajnath Singh has said that the problems arising in Hormuz are not just distant events, but can have a direct impact on India's security and economy. Singh, who is on a three-day visit to Germany, while addressing the Defense and Security Committee of the German Parliament, said that the world today is facing new security threats. Rapidly changing technology has made the situation more complex. He said that in the current situation, countries need to move forward with new thinking and adapt themselves to the changing environment.



According to media reports, the Defense Minister also advocated for increased cooperation between the defense industries of India and Germany. His visit comes at a time when the impact of the tensions in West Asia that have been ongoing for the past 50 days is being felt globally. Singh stated that for a developing country like India, this is not just an international issue, but a direct threat to energy security and economic stability. He explained that India is dependent on West Asia

for its energy needs. Therefore, any disruption in this region can have immediate repercussions. This is why India has already adopted a proactive and coordinated strategy to

Referring to the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-reliant India campaign), Rajnath Singh said that this initiative is not limited to procurement alone. It is an open invitation to countries across the world to collaborate with India to develop technology, innovate, and create new solutions. He praised Germany's industrial capabilities, saying that the strength of its large companies as well as small and medium-sized industries is commendable, especially in the field of emerging and advanced technologies. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasized on further strengthening the relations between India and Germany, saying that the two countries are natural partners in many areas.

Rajnath Singh said that in the coming times, there is a need to further strengthen defense and strategic cooperation between the two countries.

German airline Lufthansa cancels 20,000 flights

Iran war makes fuel expensive; Europe only has 6 weeks of jet fuel left

New Delhi(GNS): German airline Lufthansa has decided to cancel 20,000 short-haul flights from May to October. Jet fuel prices in Europe have nearly doubled due to the Iran war. The company says this will save approximately 40,000 tons of jet fuel. The airline has reduced around 120 flights daily since Monday, a move that comes as the Strait of Hormuz closure has disrupted oil supplies and raised concerns about jet fuel supplies in Europe.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has warned that Europe has only six weeks of jet fuel left. Major changes in the network, loss-making routes closed

Lufthansa said on Tuesday it would keep its summer flight schedule stable by making changes to its short-route network. The company will release a full plan in late April or early May. The airline has made major changes to its network. Loss-making routes from Frankfurt and Munich are being discontinued, while flights from Zurich, Brussels, and Vienna will be increased. This will provide passengers with better connections to long-haul flights. Long-haul flight capacity will be slightly reduced by the end of the summer. Six large aircraft will be removed, two Boeing 747s will not fly over the winter, and four Airbus A340-600 aircraft will be permanently retired in October. The company is also grounding 27 aircraft from its Cityline fleet to reduce costs, citing high fuel prices and employee disputes as the main reasons.

Chhattisgarh reaches 43°C, railway station is awash with water

● Delhi schools ring hourly drinking bells; tourists faint at the Taj Mahal

New Delhi(GNS): Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Odisha, and Bengal have seen temperatures hovering between 40°C and 45°C for the past five days. Heatwave alerts are in place in



many areas. In Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, water sprinklers are being used on railway platforms after temperatures reached 43.8°C. A heatwave alert has been issued in 30 districts of Uttar Pradesh. Six tourists who visited the Taj Mahal in Agra fell ill. The mercury in Prayagraj is above 44°C. The number of tourists has decreased in Udaipur and Jaipur, Rajasthan. For the first time, a "warm night" warning

has been issued for nine districts in Madhya Pradesh, including Bhopal. Night temperatures will exceed 27°C, and heat waves will prevail even at night.

Meanwhile, temperatures in Delhi are expected to exceed 45°C this week. Consequently, schools in Delhi have been instructed to ring the bell every 45-60 minutes to remind students to drink water to prevent dehydration.

Lenskart Tilak Controversy: Protests in MP-UP, Maharashtra, and Chhattisgarh

Employees were made to wear sacred thread at the store; Dhirendra Shastri told the owner to open a company in Lahore.

New Delhi(GNS): Chhattisgarh. For Controversy has four days, people erupted over the associated with dress code of eyewear Hindu organizations company Lenskart. have been visiting Protests are taking Lenskart stores in place in several several cities, applying states, including tilak (a sacred thread) and tying Uttar Pradesh, sacred thread (sacred thread) to employees. Maharashtra, and



Meanwhile, Baba Last week, a company policy document went viral on social media. It prohibited employees from wearing bindis, tilaks, and burqas. Hijabs and turbans were permitted, subject to certain conditions. Dhirendra Shastri of Bageshwar told the company's promoters, "You should open your company in Lahore. Why are you dying in India? Is this your uncle's India? Yes! This is my father's India."

UK - People born after 2008 will not be able to buy tobacco

Generation Ban Act passed in both houses, effective January 1, 2027

London(GNS): Britain has taken strict measures to curb smoking. Now, a new generation of people are preparing to permanently ban the purchase of cigarettes.

The government has passed the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which prohibits people born after 2008

from purchasing tobacco-related products for life. The bill has been passed by Parliament, and now only King Charles III's formal assent is pending, after which it will become law. It will apply throughout the United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The govern-

ment introduced this bill in 2024 and listed it as one of its top priorities. According to the new rules, the law will come into effect on January 1, 2027.

Smoke-free policies in over 70 countries

According to the World Health Organization (WHO): In 2004,

Ireland became the first country to ban smoking in workplaces, restaurants, and bars. By 2007, only 10 countries had indoor smoking bans. By 2023, 71% of the world's population (about 5.6 billion people) would be covered by some form of smoke-free policy.



Notice of breach of privilege against the Prime Minister

Sanat Jain

Congress MP KC Venugopal has submitted a privilege motion against Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. In his letter, Venugopal alleges that Prime Minister Narendra Modi made objectionable remarks about Lok Sabha members in his address to the nation on April 18, 2026, raising serious questions about the thinking of the members. The Congress MP stated in his letter that the dignity of Parliament and the rights of MPs were violated in his address to the nation. The Congress alleged that Prime Minister Modi's comments regarding the voting and intentions of opposition MPs amount to contempt. This is a very serious matter and immediate action must be taken. Venugopal

stated in his letter that this is not just a matter of a Member of Parliament's privilege, but a serious assault on the dignity of democracy and the independence of Parliament. He urged the Lok Sabha Speaker to ensure that such incidents do not recur. He urged that proceedings for breach of privilege be initiated immediately. It appears that Congress is becoming increasingly aggressive. Congress has been in power for a long time, which is why it lacked the methods of opposition. Judging by the way Congress MP KC Venugopal targeted Prime Minister Modi's address to the nation by linking it to the special rights of MPs, it can be said that, having been in opposition for so long, Congress has not only learned to respond to the ruling party but has also mastered how to corner it. The ruling party has mis-

used power and constitutional institutions to corner opposition leaders. In the name of democracy and law, the opposition has been terrorized. Now, Congress is breaking free from this practice. It has not only learned to respond to the ruling party in the same manner, but is also leaving no opportunity to corner the ruling party in the courts. Speaking out in the courts, the court's decisions are different for the ruling party and different for the opposition. The opposition is also becoming increasingly vocal in front of the throne, which is increasing the difficulties for the ruling party. Even judges sitting in the judiciary are finding it increasingly difficult to blindly support the ruling party. A new, organized shift is now being witnessed within the opposition. The aggressive nature of the Congress party is

clearly mirrored by the Jana Sangh and the Bharatiya Janata Party. The Congress party has now learned to oppose with the same aggression it used to display when it was in the opposition. They have learned to oppose with evidence. Opposition MPs have now learned to speak their minds fearlessly. As a result, the ruling party's problems are increasing day by day, and their accountability is also increasing. It is no longer easy for judges in the judiciary to make decisions under government pressure. Senior advocates from the Bar Council, High Courts, and Supreme Court are also becoming vocal and aggressive, presenting their views before the courts. The government pressure that was once prevalent in the judiciary is now gone. The opposition is now leaving no stone unturned to break

into this situation. This can be understood in the following way: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has personally presented her case in the High Court and Supreme Court in the SIR and ED cases. Recently, former Chief Minister Kejriwal presented his case before Swarn Kanta Sharma in the Delhi High Court. Voting was scheduled for the 23rd and 29th in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Meanwhile, the opposition is protesting the convening of a special session of Parliament to make the Nari Bandhan Act an election issue. In response to the Prime Minister's address to the nation, he targeted the opposition party, the Congress, by filing a privilege notice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demonstrating its unwavering resolve to resist.

Editorial

Student suicide: Is it the burden of dreams or a systemic failure?

The suicides of four students within two months at the National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra, are not just a tragedy and failure of a single institution, but a profound question mark on Indian society, the education system, and our collective insensitivity. These incidents shock us to the core of the circumstances that force the country's best talents to give up on life. No young person who reaches such prestigious institutions after enduring rigorous competition simply gives up on life; they make this decision when they see darkness all around. This darkness is not merely personal but the combined result of societal, familial, and institutional failures. A major question is: are these student suicides a result of the burden of dreams or a failure of the system? The mental pressure, competition, and expectations that young people, considered the future of India, are under today is unprecedented and worrying. Dozens of students commit suicide every year in educational cities like Kota. We turn these incidents into statistics, but behind every statistic lies a story of a living dream, a struggling family, and shattered hopes. The rising number of suicides in Kota, Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, and other educational centers indicates that our education system is fundamentally flawed. It's not just the pressure of studies; it's a crisis of the mental structure in which success has become synonymous with life, and failure with the end of life.

According to data presented to Parliament by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, 98 students committed suicide in higher educational institutions between 2018 and 2023. The highest number of these incidents occurred in prestigious institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology, followed by NITs and central universities. This fact shatters the notion that only weak students suffer from mental stress. The truth is that the most talented and sensitive students often feel the most pressure because they have high expectations of themselves and are unable to accept failure.

Books are the lamp of life, the bridge to solutions

Lalit Garg



(Special on World Book and Copyright Day, 23 April 2026)

Every year on April 23rd, the entire world celebrates books, a precious treasure of knowledge, creativity, and human civilization. Launched by UNESCO in 1995, this day is not merely a formal event but a global commitment to honor authors, protect creative rights, and promote reading culture. The selection of this date is also extremely meaningful, as it marked the passing of great literary figures like William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes, whose works shaped human civilization. The main message of this day in 2026 is that individuals should read according to their interests and make reading a joyful experience. Today, the need is to consider reading not a burden, but a means of self-development and self-satisfaction. In this context, Rabat, the capital of Morocco, has been declared the World Book Capital for 2026, underscoring the fact that book culture is not the preserve of any one country but a shared heritage of all humanity.



Books are not just a collection of paper and words; they provide a direct experience of life. They are a living history of time, society, and emotions. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore said that higher education not only provides information but also makes life balanced and peaceful. This is precisely what books do: they develop wisdom, compassion, and tolerance within human beings. Books serve as true friends in times of crisis, a fact clearly evident during the global pandemic, when people found refuge in books amidst loneliness and uncertainty. The history of book culture in India is very ancient and glorious. Texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, and Mahabharata not only guided Indian society but also provided the light of knowledge to the entire world. Ancient universities like Nalanda University and Takshashila University were centers of knowledge, where students came from far and wide to study. Manuscripts written on palm leaves and birch bark preserved the Indian knowledge tradition from generation to generation. This tradition was not limited to religious texts only, but it included various dimensions of science, medicine, literature and philosophy.

In life's darkest moments, books truly illuminate the path like a lamp. When a person is surrounded by problems, stress, and conflict, books provide a new perspective. They are not just a storehouse of knowledge, but also a true friend, philosopher, and guide, awakening one's consciousness. Books teach us that the solution to every problem lies not outside, but in the understanding and vision within. The Chinese philosopher Confucius also said, "Ignorance is the darkness of the mind, and knowledge is its light." Similarly, the great philosopher Acharya Mahapragya, emphasizing

simplicity and balance in life, explained that true knowledge is that which brings peace and balance to the mind. Books help cultivate this balance—they empower us to think, understand, and make patient decisions. In modern India, numerous efforts have been made to strengthen book culture. Institutions like Sarvodaya Sahitya Bhandar, founded by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, and Adarsh Sahitya Sangh, founded by Acharya Tulsi, played a vital role in disseminating moral and inspirational literature to the masses. The aim of these efforts has been not only to disseminate knowledge, but also to build character and promote human values. Even in today's times of expanding technological resources, the utility and importance of books has remained undiminished. Although many new mediums of study have developed, the intimate touch and depth of printed books remain unparalleled. Books broaden a person's thinking, give them a sense of right and wrong, and provide a balanced perspective on life.

Under Narendra Modi's leadership, several notable initiatives have been taken to promote book culture in India. He has reinforced the spirit of respect for knowledge in society by promoting the gift of books instead of bouquets. Additionally, various campaigns have been launched across the country to promote reading and the development of libraries, aiming to awaken youth's interest in learning. These efforts are not limited to increasing literacy but are important steps towards building an aware, sensitive, and empowered society. The great scientist and former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said that a good book is like many friends. Indeed, books are extremely helpful in a person's mental, social, cultural, and moral development. They inspire self-reflection, provide perspective to understand the inconsistencies in society, and motivate positive

change. Renowned author Toni Morrison's statement that if the book you want to read is not available, you should write it yourself is also noteworthy. This idea encourages creativity and self-confidence. In today's age of instant information, when distractions abound, the need for deep study and contemplation has become even greater. Books are the only medium that provides a person with concentration, patience, and depth. They not only provide information, but also give direction to life and inspire individuals to become better human beings.

Books are also the foundation of mental peace and emotional stability. When the hustle and bustle of life distracts the mind, a good book acts like meditation, bringing focus and calm. The great Chinese thinker Mencius said that human nature is inherently good, requiring only the right direction. Books provide that direction. They become true companions in loneliness, comfort in sorrow, and instill hope in despair. Through books, we connect with the experiences of many great men, understand their struggles, and gain inspiration for our own lives. Indeed, books are the Kalpavriksha and Kamadhenu of life-building. Sitting under their shade, one can attain knowledge, wisdom, peace, and resolution. They cultivate a mindset within us that allows us to seek solutions to every situation. Books broaden our thinking, refine our sensibilities, and lead us towards becoming better human beings. Therefore, it can be said that books not only illuminate life but also make it meaningful, balanced and rich.

As we celebrate World Book Day, it becomes clear that books are not just a memory of the past, but the foundation of the future. They have the potential to bring about lasting and positive change in society, a change that arises not from external pressure, but from inner consciousness.

Where the pain of separation itself becomes worship, the faith, devotion, service and dedication of a dedicated seeker become sadhana

Vinod Kumar Singh

Tearful tributes on the 24th Mahanirvana Day of Sadguru Dev Mahatma Sushil Kumar Ji)

If the soul of Indian culture comes alive before us in a single thread, it is the Guru-disciple tradition—a divine stream in which knowledge flows not merely through words but through the vibrations of consciousness. It is the bridge that connects the living entity to Shiva, the soul to the Supreme Being, and the limited to the infinite. When the disciple abandons their inner ego, doubt, and conflict and reaches a state of complete surrender, the Guru ceases to be mere-

ly a guide; they themselves become the path, the destination, and the very embodiment of spiritual practice. The proximity of such a compassionate, omniscient, and merciful Sadguru, Mahatma Sushil Kumar Ji, is an invaluable chapter in my life, indescribable in words, and with whom the loving shadow of Mother Vijaya Ji completes that spiritual experience. Remembering Sadguru is not merely a tribute, but an attempt by the soul to reconnect with its source. This sacred period of April evokes a deep stir within me every year. The midnight of April 23rd and 24th is not merely a date, but a moment of divine transformation—when Sadgurudev shed his

physical body and imbued himself with the entire universe. It was a moment of separation, but hidden within that separation was a profound union that still resonates in the heart of every seeker. This process of merging from a limited body into infinite consciousness teaches us that the Guru is never distant; he only expands his form.

Separation normally shatters the mind, but in the presence of a Sadguru, this very separation takes the form of spiritual practice. It ceases to be anguish; it becomes a penance that refines the disciple from within. This separation forces us to look within, makes us aware of our limitations, and teaches us what

true surrender is. When the disciple reaches this state, he or she experiences that the Guru resides not somewhere outside, but within his or her own inner being. The proximity of the Sadguru is not merely a presence; it is an experience—an experience that eliminates the need for words. His gaze possessed the power to read every emotion hidden within the disciple; There was a compassion in his touch that could melt even the hardest of hearts; and there was a truth in his words that reached straight to the soul. Sitting beside him, it felt as if time had stopped and life was unfolding in its true form. Many memories of my life are still illuminated by the same

divine light that I received in the presence of Sadguru. Among those memories, there's an incident that changed the course of my life. June 8, 2001, when Sadgurudev and Mother Vijaya were in Gurugram, was not just a date for me, but the beginning of a spiritual awakening. Coincidentally, it was also my birthday, and I harbored a childlike desire to receive Sadguru's special blessings that day. I brought three cane sticks from Sector 18, Noida, decorated them, and silently placed them on Sadguru's seat. At the time, it was just a simple offering, but I had no idea that this very moment would expose my hidden ego.

43 delegates from 18 countries visit Delhi Assembly

New Delhi, (GNS): A delegation of 43 participants from 18 countries visited the Delhi Legislative Assembly on Tuesday as part of the 37th International Training Programme in Legislative Drafting organised by the Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE), with Speaker Vijender Gupta underscoring the centrality of precise law-making in democratic governance.

Addressing delegates from countries including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Oman, Kenya, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Tanzania, Gupta said, "Legislative drafting lies at the core of democratic governance. The precision of a law determines how effectively it secures rights, ensures accountability and shapes the everyday lives of citizens." Placing the Assembly in its historical context, Gupta said the present building, constructed in 1912, earlier served as the seat of the Imperial Legislative Council and later the Central Legislative Assembly under the Government of India Act, 1919. He recalled the election of Vitthalbhai Patel as the first Indian President of



the Assembly in 1925, describing it as a milestone in asserting legislative autonomy during colonial rule.

Referring to the participation of national leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi in key deliberations held at the Assembly, Gupta said the institu-

tion has historically served both as a site of governance and a platform for democratic expression. As part of the visit, delegates toured the Assembly House, viewed a documentary on Vitthalbhai Patel, and were introduced to the coffee table book "Ek

Shatabdi Yatra", a copy of which was presented to PRIDE Director Rajkumar for the Lok Sabha Library.

Highlighting recent initiatives, Gupta said the Assembly had transitioned to solar energy and adopted the National e-Vidhan Application, enabling fully paperless proceedings. He said the digitisation of the Assembly Library was underway to enhance research access and preserve institutional records. The Speaker also said a Sangrahalaya was being developed within the premises to showcase the Assembly's institutional journey, along with plans for a light-and-sound programme to present its historical evolution to the public. Emphasising the importance of the training programme, Gupta said legislative drafting goes beyond technical precision and reflects the substantive values of democracy. He encouraged participants to exchange best practices and engage in dialogue, adding that the visit offered insights into the functioning and procedures of the Delhi Assembly.

e-commerce fraud busted in Delhi, 2 held with 14 iPhones

New Delhi, (GNS): The Delhi Police have busted an alleged Rs 35 lakh online shopping fraud linked to an e-commerce delivery network and arrested two men, an official said on Tuesday. The accused, identified as Jaspreet Singh (21) and Himanshu (30), were apprehended and 14 sealed iPhone 16 handsets worth around Rs 10 lakh have allegedly been recovered, the official said.

The police said the case came to light after a complaint was lodged by Sumit Aggarwal, a resident of Shastri Nagar, who reported that he had placed orders for 50 iPhone mobile phones through the e-commerce platform between April 12 and April 16. A case was registered and an investigation was initiated. During the probe, the police visited the e-commerce facility on GT Karnal Road, where officials shared shipment details. Analysis revealed that a majority of the consignments were assigned to delivery agent Jaspreet Singh. "He was traced and apprehended. During interrogation, he disclosed that he, along with his associate Himanshu, misappropriated the consignments for wrongful gain. Himanshu was arrested at his instance," the officer said. On their disclosure, the police recovered 14 sealed iPhones.

Wanted criminal lands in police net after gunfight

New Delhi, (GNS): According to the police, information was received that Mohammad Rizwan, who is wanted by the Uttar Pradesh Police, was in Amar Colony area, and a trap was laid to intercept him.

However, when the police team attempted to apprehend Rizwan, he opened fire in a desperate bid to escape.

The team retaliated and Rizwan sustained a bullet injury in his right leg, and was subsequently overpowered by the police team, a senior officer said. He was immediately taken into custody. The police said Rizwan had come to Delhi with the intention of committing a crime, but was apprehended before he could execute his plan. A case has been registered and further probe is on.

DDA informs NGT it will complete O zone drone survey in two months



New Delhi, (GNS): Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has informed National Green Tribunal that it will complete a drone survey of the Yamuna floodplain, or the O zone, in about two months. The survey area spans 165 sq km and includes the buffer areas. The O zone is the entire floodplain along the 22-km stretch of the Yamuna in the city. DDA has reclaimed 7 acres after demolition drives on April 16 and 17 at Madanpur Khadar and Jhangola villages and Revenue Estate-Indraprastha, all within the zone.

The tribunal took suo motu cognisance of a Media report in 2024, titled "161 illegal colonies on O zone making river water toxic." The report highlighted that colonies with 2.3 lakh households were unattached to the sewer network and were contaminating the river. In a report dated April 20, DDA told NGT that the boundary of the zone had been digitised based on the approved planning document and the khasra layer, as provided by GSDL, was added over the available digitised boundaries of the zone. The drone survey is part of the second phase of documenting the zone.

"The drone flying operations for the second phase started in the Green Zone on Feb 5," DDA said. The Survey of India has stated that with an average output of approximately 3.5 sq km per day per team, two teams would require about 18 additional working days to complete surveying the remaining 122 sq km, the authority told NGT. This was subject to the availability of permissions (ATC etc.) and favourable weather conditions, the report added. The Green and Red zones are part of the O zone. DDA added that the timeline pertains only to the drone survey. About another month is required for post-processing work.

DDA said that it has requested the land owning agencies, such as MCD and Land and Development Office, to remove encroachments on their respective land.

DDA said it has designated officers to ensure that there is no further encroachment on the O zone with continuous monitoring, and it has asked MCD to do so too.

On April 10, DDA sent the copy of the high court orders to the commissioner of police "with directions to ensure that all station house officers" within the O zone maintain vigilance against unauthorised constructions and encroachments and "provide assistance to DDA whenever required," the report added.

Art lives on as Dastkar rebuilds with resilience after tragedy

New Delhi, (GNS): The green-and-yellow decor at Dastkar may resemble any other event at the venue at first glance. But a closer look reveals the strain - artists wear tired smiles, conversations circle back to a shared loss, and stalls stand noticeably leaner. In the aftermath of a recent fire, Solidarity Bazaar, a fundraising event till April 20, brought artisans back together - reaffirming that while the flames may have destroyed their work, they haven't dimmed their spirit.

A fire in the early hours of March 15 at Dastkar's Nature Bazaar venue in Chhatarpur damaged 42 stalls during the



Bonanza Bazaar, destroying inventory and artworks. No casualties were reported, but the loss of art has deeply hit the community.

"From ashes, we rise" The fire consumed craft shaped not just by skill, but by memory - pieces that carried generations of practice. In the days since, grief has given way to a quiet resilience. Blossoms of the Heaven shows the framed scraps of pashmina shawls,

marked 'From ashes, we rise,' hold the artisan's efforts and tell a story of survival. Manzoor Ahmad Khan shares, "Our loss is among the highest, around 22 crore. Pashmina doesn't sell in this weather, so recovery has been slow. We've been selling here for nine years... while we're managing, the artisans we work with have been hit the hardest."

'Long way to go' Artisans share that the support from Dastkar is helping them make progress, but there is still a long way to go. Selling hand-embroidered art from Kashmir for eight years, Naqeeb says, "We suffered losses of around 1.25 crore. Our inven-

tory included chain stitch embroidery using silk and wool threads, with a significant stock of carpets that were destroyed in the fire. While we've sourced fresh stock from Kashmir, it will take a long time for us to recover from this setback." Putting up his stall for around a decade, Chand Mohammad explains, "We suffered a loss of around 50 lakh. Each piece takes at least three months to make; for instance, a heavily embroidered dupatta can take around a year to make. Even making the fabric takes time."

Holding out hope' Though the bazaar lacked its usual bustle, artisans maintained a positive outlook.

Mubeen and Sana, who sell hand-embroidered and ajrakh-print fabrics, were among the affected artisans. With a poster that read "Fire-affected stall, please support us," the two greeted customers with warm smiles. "Pura stall jal gaya tha. Hamara 60 lakh ka nukshan hua. Gujarat se phirse naya samaan leke aaye hain. Phirse shuru kareng toh dheere dheere ban jayega," he said.

Meenakshi Sharma, founder of an upcycling brand, shares that their team is standing tall in the face of tragedy. "We had a permanent shop in Gali-e-Khaas, so we lost inventory from two shops in the fire."

Delhi heatwave advisory: School bells to alert students to drink water every hour

New Delhi, (GNS): With temperatures rising and the IMD warning of an impending heatwave in the capital, the Directorate of Education (DoE) has rolled out a series of precautionary measures for all Delhi government, aided and private recognised schools. Among the key steps is a "water bell" system, under which schools must ring a bell every 45 to 60 minutes to remind students to drink water and prevent dehydration during school hours.

Schools have also been directed to pair students under a "buddy system" so they can monitor each other's health and identify early signs of heat stress or discomfort.

As per the circular issued on Tuesday, outdoor morning assemblies are to be shortened, shifted indoors, or con-



ducted in shaded areas. Open-air classes have been prohibited during the heatwave period. The DoE has also instructed schools to ensure easy access to safe and cool drinking water at multiple points across campuses, while making it mandatory for students to carry sufficient water bottles from home.

All outdoor physical activities have been suspended, with schools advised to instead conduct short awareness sessions on heat-related

illnesses, hydration and preventive care during class hours and assemblies.

Teachers have been asked to regularly share IMD heatwave alerts with parents, while schools must ensure students are informed through notices and morning assemblies. Parents, in turn, have been advised to send children in light cotton clothing and reinforce hygiene practices such as daily bathing. Each school will appoint a nodal teacher to oversee implementation of the measures, including the water bell system and awareness programmes. Schools have also been directed to display heatwave precaution posters across classrooms and corridors and ensure immediate first aid support when required.

HC raps authorities for lack of security for district judges

New Delhi, (GNS): Delhi High Court on Tuesday pulled up police and govt over lack of adequate security for district judges, saying such an approach raises serious concerns. It was dealing with a plea by an association of district judiciary, seeking personal security officers and proper safety arrangements for their judges. HC highlighted that the authorities couldn't wait for an untoward incident before taking steps and questioned the delay in bolstering security. It observed that the demand for round-the-clock security appeared justified and deserved proper consideration, but the response of the state appeared to be insensitive and lacking seriousness.

Senior advocate Kirti Uppal, appearing for Judicial Service Association, said several states had already provided security to judicial officers, but similar steps had not been effectively taken in Delhi.

The high court declined to take the minutes of the earlier



meeting on record and directed that a fresh meeting be convened within seven days to find concrete and workable suggestions. District court judges deal with heavy caseloads and are exposed to risks, HC pointed out. The court earlier directed the Union home ministry, Delhi govt and police to convene a meeting and examine the issue. It emphasised that the safety of judicial officers was a serious issue and couldn't be ignored, while seeking a detailed report of the meeting.

The association has sought PSOs for district judges along with proper security arrangements at their residences. It pointed out that many judges travelled without any security and had faced incidents such as stalking, threats and aggressive behaviour on roads.

3.5cr aftercare plan: WCD to trace assess & support youths leaving CCIs

New Delhi, (GNS): A month after Delhi budget allocated Rs 3.5 crore for the aftercare of young adults leaving child care centres and their integration into the mainstream, the women and child development (WCD) department has initiated steps to the end.

The plan is to strengthen the scheme, starting with tracing these youths and building a database to bring them into the official fold, which will be followed by an assessment of their individual needs. This push comes amid a stark gap on the ground. Aftercare homes, meant to support young adults transitioning out of institutional care, remain severely underutilised in Delhi. A Media report last Dec highlighted that only eight out of 100 seats were occupied at the After Care Home for Girls at Nirmal Chhaya Complex in Hari Nagar.

The cracks show up in indi-

Delhi Court Frames MCOCA Charges Against Lawrence

New Delhi, (GNS): A Delhi court on Tuesday framed charges against gangster Lawrence Bishnoi under Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) in a 2021 case concerning an alleged crime syndicate involved in extortion and kidnapping. The case will now proceed to trial.

Justice Prashant Sharma noted that the "organised crime syndicate" was run by Sandeep, Naresh Sethi, Priyavrat, Anil Rohila, Rahul Sachin, Akshay Antil, Virender Pratap, Sandeep Jhanjhariya, Deepak, Bintu, Keshav, Kashish, Prityavrat Fauzi, Omprakash Dagar, and Naresh Kumar. The case goes back to March 16, 2021, when a proposal to invoke MCOCA was initiated, followed by the registration of an FIR on March 30, 2021.



Charges under MCOCA and the Arms Act have been framed against 19 others also. -- Sampat Nehra, Jagdeep, Rajkumar Basodi, Ravinder Singh, Naresh Sethi, Priyavrat, Anil Rohila, Rahul Sachin, Akshay Antil, Virender Pratap, Sandeep Jhanjhariya, Deepak, Bintu, Keshav, Kashish, Prityavrat Fauzi, Omprakash Dagar, and Naresh Kumar. The case goes back to March 16, 2021, when a proposal to invoke MCOCA was initiated, followed by the registration of an FIR on March 30, 2021.



vidual cases as well. A complaint from a resident of Khajoori Khas in northeast Delhi flagged the lack of rehabilitation and aftercare support for orphaned youths once they turn 18, along with difficulties they face in accessing basic documents, such as Aadhaar cards and birth certificates.

The issue drew the attention of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which wrote to the department in March 2026, calling for greater sensitisation and

action in this regard. The infrastructure exists, and so does the need, but the system has struggled to connect the two. Sources say the revamped approach aims to address this disconnect.

Backed by the allocation of the dedicated fund of Rs 3.5 crore, the department has initiated the process of identifying eligible beneficiaries across child care institutes, before assessing their individual needs. The eligibility net is being cast wide. It includes those nearing 18 who still need care and protection, young people without a safe home to return to, and those for whom reintegration with their biological families is not advisable.

Even those who return to their families yet require continued support, or those ready to live independently with minimal guidance, will be considered.

In a first, 35 officials get CM's Awards

New Delhi, (GNS): In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Delhi Government on Tuesday conferred the 'Chief Minister's Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Governance and Public Service Delivery 2026' on 35 officials, marking a major push towards administrative reforms and recognition of public service.

The awards were presented on Civil Services Day by Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who commended the role of civil servants in strengthening governance and ensuring efficient service delivery.

Organised by the Administrative Reforms Department, the event recognised officials for innovation and citizen-centric initiatives. Awardees received medals and commendation certificates, and the government



announced that the awards will now be held annually.

The selection process involved a high-level committee led by the Chief Secretary, which evaluated nominations based on parameters such as innovation, emergency response and digital governance improvements.

Among those honoured in the first category were Veditha Reddy (Directorate of Education), Sunny K Singh, Ajay Kumar, Kumar Abhishek and Vibhav Shukla (Revenue Department), Dr Ajay Kumar Bisht (Services Department), DB Gupta (Planning

Department), Pradeep Tayal (General Administration Department), Sanjeev Gosain (Food and Civil Supplies) and Arvind Kumar (Labour Department). In the second category, awardees included Dr Munisha Agrawal (Health and Family Welfare), Dr Praveen Kumar (A&U Tibbia College), Krishna Kumar Singh (Public Works Department), Ravindra Kumar (Irrigation and Flood Control), K Murugan (IT Department), Manmeet Singh Walia (General Administration), Lata Kumari Negi (Women and Child Development), Dr Chetna Anand (Environment Department), Deepak Chaudhary (PWD) and Manoj Singh (Tihar Jail).

The third category saw honours for Shurbir Singh (DTL), Rupesh Kumar Thakur (Urban

Development/DUSIB), Jitendra Yadav (MCD), Dr K Mahesh (Delhi Khadi and Village Industries Board), Dr Tapasya Raghav (Health), Harinder Singh (NDMC), Kailash Chand Meena (DJB), Dr Amit Kumar Jain (DMRC), Satish (NDMC) and Bablu (Environment Department).

In the fourth category, Shashi Kant Sharma (General Administration Department), Geeta Ranjan (Finance), Deepa Pasi (Social Welfare), Bharat Lal (General Administration) and Jai Prakash Manjhi (Food and Civil Supplies) were also felicitated. Addressing the gathering, Sandhu emphasised that public trust remains the cornerstone of civil services. "The true test of governance lies in how effectively and sensitively services reach the last person," he said, urging officials to be more accountable, technology-driven and result-oriented.

As mercury soars, Delhi schools on heatwave alert

New Delhi, (GNS): In view of the rising temperatures, schools across the national capital have been directed to implement strict heat wave safety measures, including a mandatory "water bell" system to prevent dehydration among students.

The Directorate of Education (DoE), Government of Delhi, in a fresh directive, has reiterated compliance with guidelines issued earlier this month, warning of adverse weather conditions in the coming days. Under the new instructions, all government, aided and private unaided recognised schools must curtail outdoor assemblies or shift them to shaded or indoor spaces, ensuring minimal duration. Open air classes have been completely prohibited. A key feature of the advisory is the introduction of the "water bell" initiative, requiring schools to ring a bell every 45-60 minutes to remind students to drink water regularly. The authorities have also made it mandatory for schools to ensure the availability of safe and cool drinking water



at multiple accessible points on campus. The DoE has further instructed schools to avoid all outdoor physical activities and instead focus on indoor engagements during this period of extreme heat.

To enhance awareness, schools have been directed to prominently display Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material issued by the Health Department and conduct brief awareness sessions during class hours or assemblies. These sessions will focus on preventive measures, hydration, and identifying symptoms of heat-related illnesses.

After 4-year gap, Delhi to procure wheat from Food Corporation of India again

New Delhi, (GNS): The Centre has accepted Delhi govt's request to restart wheat procurement in the capital through Food Corporation of India (FCI) after a gap of four years. This is expected to strengthen the local agricultural ecosystem by ensuring that farmers receive the minimum support price for their produce. Procurement will commence from April 24 at the FCI depot in Narela and the Najafgarh mandi.

Chief minister Rekha Gupta said, "This is an important step in prioritising farmers' interests. With coordinated efforts between the Centre and Delhi govt, farmers in the capital will be able to secure fair value for their produce and become more economically empowered". The development follows a recent letter by Gupta to Union consumer affairs, food and public distribution minister Pralhad Joshi. In her communication, CM flagged that the absence of local procurement was forcing farmers to sell below MSP, adversely impacting their incomes.

Noida airport may have to replace expat CEO with Indian one to launch ops

New Delhi, (GNS): Less than a month after being inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Noida International Airport (NIA) may have to replace its foreign CEO with an Indian one before it can start flight operations.

The Union home ministry is learnt to have rejected Bureau of Civil Aviation Security's (BCAS) proposal for amending the current rule that disallows expats from being CEOs of a greenfield airport, sources said. This decision has also been conveyed to the civil aviation ministry.

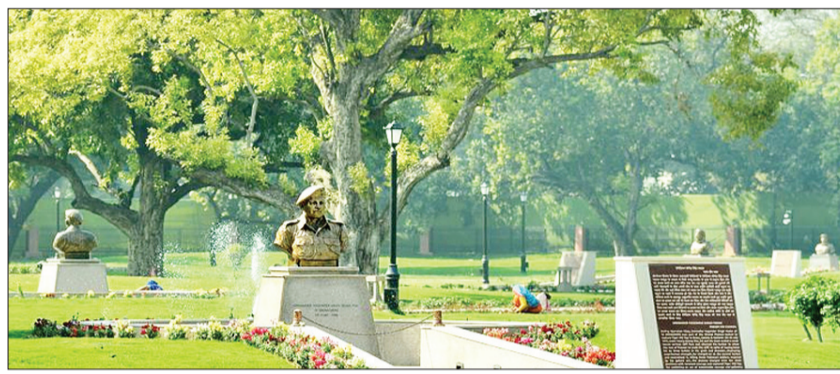
From inception stage, NIA has been headed by its Swiss CEO Christoph Schnellmann, an old India hand of concessionaire Zurich AG who had also played a key role in the development of Bengaluru airport. But the home ministry's stance means NIA stakeholders will have to find an Indian CEO at the earliest so that the airport, already significantly delayed, does not see a further lag in getting operational.

43% trees in Central Vista dead; experts question relocation strategy

New Delhi, (GNS): Nearly 43 per cent of the 3,609 trees transplanted for the Rs 20,000 crore-worth Central Vista project in Delhi perished recently. The trees were moved for major projects like the new Parliament building and Kartavya Bhawans.

The development has prompted criticism regarding the efficacy of transplantation as a mitigation strategy for major infrastructure developments. Why does transplantation of trees often have a low success rate?

Landscape planners and horticulturists point fingers at the government's apathy in uprooting, translocating and transplanting trees.



"The government usually gives the contract to someone who hardly cares for the trees. For him, the tree is simply a hindrance to his beautification or construction plan. It is also very heartless the way they uproot and transport the trees without following any proto-

col or involving any experts," Jyotsna Dayal, who runs landscaping company Rocks 'n' Roots, told The Tribune. She also rued the way government contractors barricade the entire compound without allowing the press or experts as if "they are hiding

something". She said the exercise usually should take three months but these people rush through the work in a matter of days.

Dayal, who has worked with the Bengaluru airport, said, "Unfortunately in India, we are only transplanting trees to further beautify a location's aesthetic, but not out of concern for the environment, or the life of the tree itself. Delhi is one of the world's fastest growing metropolises but also the most polluted, and while the simple answer has always been rooted right in front of us, we have failed to recognise it."

A common issue is that the trees are not part of the plan-

ning, and are only noticed just when the bulldozer is ready to take them apart. We take it for granted that no one will notice that they are gone. Proper planning needs to be done for future plantation using only those varieties of trees that do not succumb during shifting and have good cropping vigor, according to experts.

Dayal adds that the government should consider maintaining "tree banks" like in Singapore, which maintains a stock of more than 5,500 from 40 different species. "We must also install an agency or tree mission that decides where to plant, what to plant, what to cut and where to shift the trees.

'Insects in food': Protest at Lady Hardinge

New Delhi, (GNS): Several students at Delhi's Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC) have raised concerns over food safety and living conditions on the campus, alleging repeated instances of insect-infested food being served in the mess and incidents of dog bites linked to the presence of stray canines on hostel premises.

Other concerns flagged by the students include poor hygiene, waterlogging in hostel areas and extreme heat in rooms in the absence of adequate cooling arrangements.

The issue came to light after social media posts showed visuals purportedly from the campus, including cooked food with visible insects or larvae and packs of stray dogs roaming freely inside hostel corridors, washrooms and even rooms.

According to students who spoke to Media on condition



of anonymity, complaints about food quality are frequent. "There have been several instances where students realised only after eating that the food was contaminated. Some have even fallen ill," a student said, alleging that repeated complaints about insects in meals have not led to any improvement.

The students said efforts to replace the mess contractor have been stalled over pending dues. "We are told a fresh tender can only be issued if the outstanding mess fees are cleared. In the past, many students stopped using the mess and withheld payment due to

poor quality of food," a student said.

According to them, stray dogs entering the hostel premises have become a recurring safety concern. "There have been cases of dog bites, but nothing has changed despite repeated complaints. When we raise this, we're told we can move out, but staying outside is not affordable," another student said.

She added that infrastructure constraints worsen the problem. "Poor ventilation forces us to keep the doors open at night. That makes it easier for the dogs to enter; once, I woke up to find one sleeping next to me."

The students said the situation is particularly difficult in summer, with inadequate cooling arrangements making the hostel rooms "unbreathable". They have asked for permission to install ACs at their own cost.

Making it to JEE (Advanced) is tougher than ever general cut-off at record 93.4 percentile

New Delhi, (GNS): The bar for entering the IITs has steadily risen, with the JEE (Main) cut-off for JEE (Advanced) for general category climbing to a record 93.4 percentile in 2026, up from 89.7 in 2019, reflecting intensifying competition and a sharp post-pandemic surge in high scorers.

Cut-offs across all categories - EWS, OBC-NCL, SC and ST - as well have risen sharply over the past few years to a record high this year, signalling intensifying competition at every level of the exam, which is consistent across successive years, with no category showing a reversal in trend in the latest cycle.

Eight year data from National Testing Agency releases between 2019 and 2026 show that while the general cut-off stood at 89.7 percentile in 2019, it remained largely in the 88-91 range till 2023 before witnessing a steep



jump to 93.1 in 2025 and further this year. The rise mirrors a broader trend across categories. The EWS cut-off has increased from 78.2 in 2019 to over 82 in 2026, while OBC-NCL has moved from 74.3 to around 80.9. For SC candidates, the threshold has climbed from 54 to nearly 64, and for ST candidates from 44.3 to about 52. In percentage terms, this translates into gains of roughly 4-10 percentile points across categories over the period.

The pandemic years provided a brief dip. In 2021 the general cut-off fell to 87.8, before rising to 88.4 percentile in 2022, one of the lowest in recent years, amid disruptions and multiple exam attempts. However, the recovery since then has been swift, with the cut-off rising by nearly five percentile points in three years.

The upward shift coincides with a surge in the number of candidates. Unique registrations have grown from about

11-12 lakh in 2019-20 to over 15 lakh in 2025-26, significantly increasing competition for a relatively fixed number of IIT seats. The increase in candidate volume has outpaced the expansion in available seats during the same period.

There is a quiet shift underway in the ambitions of India's engineering aspirants, and IIT Hyderabad director B S Murthy finds it encouraging. Cut-offs are climbing, a reflection of both heightened competition and a growing awareness among students that entry into the IITs demands more than intent, it requires sustained excellence.

"Everyone wants a seat in an IIT now," he said, noting that this realisation has pushed students to work harder and aim higher. Yet, alongside this surge in aspiration, Murthy voiced a measured concern: the need to draw more students toward core engineering disciplines.

Vijay Goel meets Chief Secy on stray dog menace

New Delhi, (GNS): Raising concerns over the rising incidents of stray dog bites in the national capital, former Union Minister Vijay Goel on Tuesday met Delhi Chief Secretary Rajiv Verma at the Secretariat, urging immediate intervention to address what he termed as a "serious public safety issue".

In a memorandum submitted during the meeting, Goel alleged that guidelines issued by the Supreme Court of India on handling stray dogs were being openly violated across the city. He stressed that the apex court had clearly directed that stray dogs be removed from public spaces and relocated to shelter homes without being released back, while aggressive or biting dogs should be permanently housed in such facilities.

The BJP leader further highlighted that feeding of stray dogs on roads, in societies and apartment complexes is prohibited, and should be restricted to designated feeding points identified by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. He called for strict action against individuals violating these norms, stating that enforcement agencies must act decisively.



Goel also flagged what he described as "misinformation" circulating on social media, claiming that residents' welfare associations (RWAs) have no authority to act against unauthorised feeding. "RWAs have full authority to intervene and can even file FIRs in such cases," he asserted.

Pointing to infrastructural gaps, Goel said the MCD has failed to establish adequate shelter homes and that existing feeding centres remain insufficient and poorly marked. He also criticised the civic body's 311 mobile application, calling it ineffective and lacking adequate public outreach. Warning of worsening conditions if left unaddressed, Goel urged the Delhi government to take immediate, concrete steps.