



**Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi during a door-to-door campaign for the Delhi Assembly poll, at Jangpura in Delhi**



**Rescue work underway after a collision between an SUV and a truck, at Ranitali village, in Sonbhadra district, Uttar Pradesh**



**College students offering prayers during 'Saraswati Puja' celebrations, in Guwahati**



**People sit near a bonfire to warm themselves amid dense morning fog, in Jammu**

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### Maharashtra village passes ballot paper voting resolution

**PUNE:** A gram panchayat in Maharashtra's Sangli district has passed a resolution supporting the use of ballot papers instead of EVMs in future elections to "protect the Constitution," a gram sabha member has said. Bahe village in Walva tehsil of Sangli district is perhaps the second village in western Maharashtra to pass a resolution discarding EVMs for ballot papers. In December, the gram sabha of Kolewadi village in Karad (south) constituency in Satara district resolved to cast votes in future polls on ballot papers. "The gram sabha in Bahe village passed a resolution recently supporting the use of ballot papers in all future elections instead of Electronic Voting Machines. We also appeal to other villages and their respective gram panchayats to pass similar resolutions to safeguard and protect the Constitution and democracy," said a Bahe gram sabha member.

### TMC slams UP govt over 'rape-murder' of Dalit woman in Ayodhya

**KOLKATA:** The TMC on Monday criticised the Uttar Pradesh government after the recovery of a 22-year-old Dalit woman's mutilated body in Ayodhya, alleging that the northern state under the BJP rule is a "land of fear, atrocities and injustice." The party questioned Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's claims of maintaining law and order. "Uttar Pradesh under @BJP4India's rule is a land of fear, atrocities, and injustice. A 22-year-old Dalit woman's mutilated, unclothed body was found in a canal in Ayodhya - her eyes gouged out, her body bearing deep wounds and fractures. Her family alleges gang rape and murder, yet the BJP government remains silent. No arrests. No accountability," the TMC claimed on X.

### Drone found in border area of Punjab's Amritsar

**CHANDIGARH:** A drone was seized from a field near the India-Pakistan international border in Punjab's Amritsar district, a BSF official said on Monday. Acting on specific information, the Border Security Force (BSF) troops conducted a search operation in the border area of Amritsar on Sunday and a drone was seized from a field near Khanwal village, said the official. The BSF troops have thwarted yet another intrusion of a drone from across the border, said the official.

### Man arrested for opening fire during land dispute in Jammu

**JAMMU:** A man was arrested for firing shots during a land dispute that escalated on the outskirts of Jammu on Monday, officials said. The police action followed after a video of the incident, which occurred in the Lale Da Bagh area under the limits of Domana police station, went viral on social media. The dispute arose on Saturday over 21.5 marlas of land between Rekha Devi and Brij Raj Singh, the brother of the land's previous owner Brij Bhushan Singh Jamwal, police said. During the confrontation, Brij Raj Singh allegedly fired three shots though no one was injured in the firing, they said. Police have arrested Brij Raj Singh and booked him under the Arms Act, while two others are expected to be apprehended soon, the officials said.

### Student found dead in college hostel room in Kerala

**KOCHI:** A 21-year-old college student was found dead in her hostel room in Perumbavoor on Monday morning, police said. The deceased has been identified as Aneeta Binoy, a native of Parampuzha in Kottayam district. She was a final-year degree student at Rajagiri Viswajyothi College of Arts and Applied Sciences. According to the police, Aneeta was found hanging from the window panes at around 7 am. A note addressed to her parents was recovered from her room. Preliminary investigations suggest that it is a case of suspected suicide. Kuruppampady police have registered a case and initiated an investigation.

### Man held for secretly filming women in washroom in Nagpur

**NAGPUR:** A teacher of a school in Maharashtra's Nagpur district was arrested for allegedly secretly filming women using a toilet, police said on Monday. The police arrested the accused, Mangesh Khapre (38), a resident of Itwari, in connection with the incident that took place at a cultural centre at Sitaburdi on January 31, an official said. He said one of the women caught Khapre secretly filming women from the window of the toilet and raised an alarm, and people at the scene apprehended him. Police found 20 objectionable videos on the accused's mobile phone, the official said. He said Khapre had been involved in a similar incident at an event last year.

# Kumbh stampede: SC refuses to hear PIL, asks petitioner to move Allahabad HC

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Terming as unfortunate the January 29 stampede at Maha Kumbh where at least 30 people were killed, the Supreme Court on Monday refused to hear a PIL for guidelines over safety of devotees and asked the petitioner to move the Allahabad High Court instead.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said, "It is an unfortunate incident, something which is of concern. But you go to the Allahabad High Court." The stampede took place on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, one of the most auspicious days of the Hindu calendar, in which at least 30 people lost their lives and 60 were injured in a pre-dawn stampede at Sangam area in Prayagraj.

The bench noted the submission of the UP government, represented by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, that a plea was already filed



**Flower petals being showered on devotees gathered to take a holy dip at the Sangam on the occasion of Basant Panchami during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj, UP**

in the Allahabad High Court and the present petition should not be examined in the apex court.

He said a judicial inquiry was initiated.

Advocate Vishal Tiwari filed the PIL on January 30, a day after the incident in the stampede in Prayagraj. The petition filed under

Article 32 of the Constitution sought guidelines to prevent stampedes and protect the fundamental rights of equality and life under Article 21.

The plea, which made the Centre and all the states parties, sought a direction to them to work collectively in ensuring a safe and secure environment for devotees at

## AFTER STAMPEDE, 'AMRIT SNAN' ON BASANT PANCHAMI CONTINUES WITHOUT HITCH AT MAHA KUMBH

**PTI, MAHAKUMBH:** Millions of people from across the globe converged at the Sangam from break of dawn on Monday for the third grand 'Amrit Snan' of the Maha Kumbh, the ritual holy dip on Basant Panchami starting smoothly and proceeding without a hitch. The bathing ritual assumed special significance as it came days after a stampede during the previous 'Amrit Snan' on Mauni Amavasya (January 29) killed at least 30 people and left 60 others injured. Unlike the Mauni Amavasya dip on January 29 when crowd pressure built up at the Sangam Nose, many devotees this

time were seen taking bath at different ghats as the Uttar Pradesh government, shaken by the deadly stampede, adopted a "zero errors" approach. Determined to prevent any untoward incident, the state government has reinforced the security and crowd management measures in the Sangam area, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath monitoring the situation from his official residence in Lucknow since 3.30 am, officials said. DIG (Maha Kumbh) Vaibhav Krishna told PTI Videos that in light of the stampede, additional force has been deployed at the pressure points for crowd management.

the Maha Kumbh.

A petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution of India praying for a writ of mandamus or any other appropriate writs seeking issuance of specific directions, policies and regulations initiate guidelines and directions to state

governments to facilitate the people for Maha Kumbh avoid stampede incidents and to determine and initiate assessment to ensure safety, viability, etc., for the enforcement of fundamental right of equality and life under Article 21 of the Constitution and to call a status

report, the plea said.

All states shall establish in proper manner their facilitation centres at Prayagraj the Maha Kumbh. These centres shall provide and display the basic information regarding the safety measures and guidelines to the persons coming from their states.

## UNNAO RAPE CASE HC grants Sengar bail for surgery

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** The Delhi High Court on Monday granted interim bail to expelled BJP leader and Unnao rape case convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar to undergo an eye surgery on Feb 4.

A bench of Justices Yashwant Varma and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar suspended Sengar's sentence of life imprisonment and directed him to surrender before the jail authorities on Feb 5.

In view of the reprieve given by the division bench, single judge Justice Vikas Mahajan extended the same relief to Sengar in the case over the

custodial death of the survivor's father and temporarily suspended the 10-year jail term in this matter.

The division bench noted that the former MLA's cataract surgery was fixed on February 4 in AIIMS Delhi.

We are of the opinion that the sentence warrants to be suspended for the purpose of applicant's medical procedure which is fixed for February 4, 2025 subject to conditions identical to those set forth in December 20, 2024 order. The applicant shall surrender on February 5 before the jail superintendent, it said.

## Anti-conversion bill tabled in Rajasthan Assembly

**PTI, JAIPUR:** The Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025 was introduced in the ongoing Budget Session of the state Assembly on Monday.

The offence under the anti-conversion bill will be cognisable and non-bailable and triable by a court. The Bill is aimed at prohibiting unlawful conversion from one religion to another and has provisions for imprisonment of up to 10 years and a fine of up to Rs 50,000.

It was introduced by Health Minister Gajendra Singh Khinvsar and will be passed by the House following a debate during the session.

## FESTIVE DRUMMING



**A member of the Chinese community plays a drum during celebrations on the first day of the Lunar New Year of the Snake, in Kolkata, West Bengal**

## Manipur violence: SC seeks forensic report over audio clips against CM

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Saying the state was "limping back to normalcy", the Supreme Court on Monday sought a sealed-cover forensic report on the authenticity of leaked audio clips alleging the role of Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh in the ethnic violence.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar sought the report from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) within six weeks and posted the plea by the Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR) on March 24.

KOHUR, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, sought a court-monitored SIT probe into the alleged role of the chief minister in the ethnic violence.

Justice Sanjay Kumar, who was the chief justice

of the Manipur High Court before being elevated to the top court, said, "The chief minister of Manipur had hosted a dinner for me when I was elevated to this court, so if you have an issue with me hearing the matter then you can tell me. Bhushan said he did not have a problem at all.

The state is gradually limping back to normalcy and we will keep it (the matter) on hold at the moment, the CJ said. The bench would later see whether the top court or the high court should hear the case.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, was in agreement with the observations.

Bhushan, however, termed the contents of the audio leaks a "very serious matter" and said in the clips the chief minister was purportedly saying

that Meitei groups were allowed to loot arms and ammunition of the state government. "I have annexed transcripts of tape recordings," he added.

The solicitor general said the petitioner had ideological inclinations and there was a report by the three high court judges' committee stating there were efforts to keep the pot boiling.

"A truth lab confirmed that 93 per cent it is the voice of the chief minister," said Bhushan, "and truth labs are far more reliable than the FSL reports." The law officer questioned the veracity of the report of the truth lab.

On November 8, last year, a bench headed by former CJI D Y Chandrachud directed the Kuki organisation to produce material to indicate authenticity of some leaked audio clips.

## Fog disrupts 22 flights at Kolkata Airport

**PTI, KOLKATA:** The movement of at least 22 flights was affected at the Kolkata airport on Monday as a result of poor visibility due to dense fog, officials said.

At least six flights scheduled to arrive at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International (NSCBI) Airport and the departure of 16 flights to other destinations were delayed, they said.

According to an Airports Authority of India spokesperson, Low Visibility Procedures (LVP) were implemented due to the fog from 1.21 am to 8.45 am.

The air traffic control (ATC) declares LVP when visibility falls below 800 metres, after which 'follow-me' vehicles guide aircraft to their stands, he said.

The LVP is also activated when the cloud ceiling is below 200 feet.

## Rahul questions 70 lakh new voters in Maha, says EC must provide data

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that about 70 lakh voters, equivalent to Himachal Pradesh's population, were added to the electoral rolls in Maharashtra between the Lok Sabha and state elections, and demanded the Election Commission furnish data to opposition parties in the state.

Speaking to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, Gandhi raised several questions over the integrity of the Maharashtra polls held in November last year in which the BJP-led Mahayuti won a massive mandate, and said he was confident the EC would not provide the details sought by the opposition parties.

With a copy of the Constitution in hand, Gandhi said this is supported by the "vote of our people and

without a secure vote, the Constitution means nothing".

"Now, I want to bring to the notice of this House some data about Maharashtra polls. Between the Lok Sabha polls, which the INDIA bloc won, and the assembly elections, the number equivalent to the population of Himachal was added to the voting rolls of Maharashtra," Gandhi told the House, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in attendance.

Gandhi claimed that the difference between the Lok Sabha polls in June and the state polls in November was that almost 70 lakh voters suddenly arriving.

"More voters were added in Maharashtra in five months between the Lok Sabha and assembly polls than in five years," the former Congress president said.

## CLASSIFIED CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

### TOURS & TRAVELS

**Zion Tours - Holyland Pilgrimage-** 16th March & 11th May 2025, Amazing Vietnam- 07th May 2025, Georgia- A Hidden Gem- 19th May 2025, Exotic Turkey- 27th April 2025. Contact: 7498023167/ 8208537106. Margao Office: 2739932, 7822969683 Email: holyland@ziontours.net.in, www.ziontours.net.in

**Bus departing to Nasik on 6 February** for feast of Infant Jesus. For booking contact Eddie P Louis 9412026609/ 8454975977

**Special Package Bangkok + Pataya** = 42000/- (4n / 5days) Singapore + Malaysia + Bangkok = 115000/- (9n/10 days) Dubai = 65000/- (4n/5days) from Goa. (All Inclusive) Contact :7248913648. Nurvi Holidays. Fix Travels Date 25th March 2025

### VEHICLES AVAILABLE

**Honda City for sale.** Manufacture year 2016. 1st Driver only 36000km driven. Contact: 7378882026

**Hyundai Venue SX, automatic** purchased on Sep 2023, 4000kms, blue colour, petrol engine for sale. Price: 14.5 lakhs, slightly negotiable. Tel: 8793896015.

### VEHICLES WANTED

**We buy all Car's & Bike's.** Maruti, Toyota, Hyundai, Honda (Vintage Car's) etc, even accidental and scrap car's. Spot payment-8381027157

**Wanted Fortuner, Bmw, Audi,** Mercedes car not more than 10 years old whatsapp photos with model n year to 7972761466

## No steps to be taken by Centre, states to reduce forest cover: SC

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Monday restrained until further orders the Centre and the states from taking any step that would reduce forest areas.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and K Vinod Chandran was hearing a batch of petitions against the amendments to the 2023 forest conservation law.

"We will not permit anything which leads to reduction of forest area. We further order that until further orders, no steps will be taken by the Union of India and any state which will lead to reduction of forest land unless compensatory land is

provided by the Centre and the states," the bench said.

Additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, said she would file response on the applications filed in the matter within three weeks.

A status report would also be placed before the court prior to the next date of hearing, added Bhati.

One of the advocates appearing in the matter said the pleadings were complete and the issue raised in the pleas related to the amendments to forest conservation law of 2023.

The bench posted the hearing on March 4.

**We will not permit anything which leads to reduction of forest area. We further order that until further orders, no steps will be taken by the Union of India and any state which will lead to reduction of forest land unless compensatory land is provided by the Centre and the states**



available for other purposes. The bench said any fresh proposal for opening a zoo or starting a "safari" on forest land would now require the Supreme Court's approval.

It directed the state governments and union terri-

tories to provide the details of forest land within their jurisdiction to the Centre by March 31, 2024.

The top court said the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change would put all the details on "forest like area, unclassified forest land and community forest land", to be provided by the states and union territories (UT), on its website by April 15 last year.

"... we issue an interim order to the effect that any proposal for the establishment of zoos and safaris referred to in the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, enacted by the government or

any authority in forest areas other than protected areas, shall not be finally approved by the states/union territories, save and except with the prior permission of this court," it had said.

In its interim order, the bench asked the states and UTs to act as per the definition of "forest" as laid down by the top court in the 1996 judgment in the case of TN Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India.

The petitioners alleged the wide definition of a "forest" in the apex court judgement was narrowed under Section 1A inserted in the amended law.