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President Droupadi Murmu pays tribute to a portrait of former President Dr. Zakir Husain on his birth anniversary, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi

Car falls into gorge in Shimla, 2 killed

SHIMLA: Two persons were killed on the spot when their car fell into a gorge in Chopal area of Himachal Pradesh's Shimla district, police said on Saturday. The accident took place near Chambi on Chopal-Jhina road on Friday evening, when the vehicle which was on its way from Chambi to Badlavag fell into a gorge. Locals near the spot heard the sound of the car crashing and informed the police. The deceased were identified as Ramkrishan Sharma and Surjit Singh, both residents of village Baldavag in Chopal, police said. Investigations are underway to find out the cause of the accident, they added.

Headmaster, class teacher held over rape of girl student in Nashik district

NASHIK: Police on Saturday arrested the headmaster and a teacher of a private school in Maharashtra's Nashik district over the alleged rape of a 13-year-old girl student, an official said. The alleged incident took place in Iगतपुरी taluka on Friday, he said. According to the police, the Std VI student's class teacher, Gorakhnath Maruti Joshi, took her to the house of the headmaster Tukaram Govind Sable (53), who allegedly raped the teenager and sent her home. The girl felt uneasy at home. When her family members probed, she told them about the sexual assault, the official said. The family then approached the police, resulting in the duo's arrest.

Tally of nerve disorder GBS rises to 180 in Pune; Mumbai records first case

PUNE/MUMBAI: The tally of suspected Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) cases in the Pune region has reached 180, with the detection of seven cases, while a 64-year-old woman became the first patient diagnosed with the nerve disorder in Mumbai, officials said. The seven cases in Pune comprise four fresh cases and three from previous days, an official from the health department said on Friday. "Of the 180 suspected cases, 146 have been diagnosed with GBS. At least 35 patients are from Pune Municipal Corporation, 88 from newly added villages in the PMC area, 25 from the Pimpri Chinchwad civic limits, 24 from Pune Rural and eight from other districts.

NGOCC urges Mizoram CM not to handover Lengpui Airport to IAF

AIZAWL: NGO Coordination Committee (NGOCC), a conglomerate of major civil society organisations and student bodies headed by Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA), has urged Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma not to handover Lengpui airport in Aizawl to Indian Air Force (IAF). NGOCC leaders met Lalduhoma on Friday and urged him that the state government review its decision to handover the airport to the IAF. Lalduhoma told the leaders that Lengpui airport is the only airport in the country, which is owned and managed by the state government.

Delhi HC rejects pleas by CAs, audit firms against NFRA's powers

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has rejected a challenge to the provisions on the power of the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) to investigate and penalise the misconduct of chartered accountants. A bench of Justices Yashwant Varma and Dharmesh Sharma dismissed petitions filed by individual chartered accountants and auditing firms, such as Deloitte Haskins and Sells LLP and Federation of Chartered Accountants Association, saying there was no merit in their challenge.

Bengaluru Metro Rail ride gets costlier by 50 per cent

BENGALURU: The Metro rail ride in Bengaluru will be costlier by about 50 per cent as the Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRL) on Saturday effected a hike on the recommendation of the Fare Fixation Committee, which will come into force from Sunday onwards. According to the BMRL's press release, it has also introduced separate tariffs for peak and non-peak hours just like the hail taxi riders - Ola and Uber. The maximum fare has been enhanced from Rs 60 to Rs 90 and the minimum balance has been increased from Rs 50 to Rs 90.

Four youths arrested for assaulting excise team in Kerala's Kollam

KOLLAM (KERALA): Four youths were arrested on Saturday for allegedly manhandling an excise team that came to conduct searches following a tip-off about drug peddling in a village in this district, police said. The arrested individuals have been identified as Sinan, Nihlas, Al Amin, and Nihar, all natives of Chavara. They have been booked for assaulting a five-member excise team, including a woman officer, and obstructing them from performing their duties, police said. According to the police, the excise department had received complaints about rampant drug trafficking near the boat jetty in Panmana, Chavara, on Friday night. Acting on the tip-off, a team, including a woman officer, reached the spot for an inspection.

Hamas releases 3 frail-looking Israeli hostages for 183 Palestinian prisoners under Gaza ceasefire

AP, DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP): Hamas-led militants released three gaunt, frail-looking Israeli hostages and Israel freed nearly 200 Palestinian prisoners Saturday in the latest exchange of a ceasefire agreement that has paused 16 months of war in Gaza.

The hostages' condition and scenes of Hamas forcing them to speak in a handover ceremony sparked outrage in Israel and could increase pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to extend the ceasefire beyond its current six-week phase.

Netanyahu has signaled he would resume the war, even if that meant leaving dozens of hostages in Hamas captivity.

Before a crowd of hundreds, armed militants led Eli Sharabi, 52; Ohad Ben Ami, 56; and Or Levy, 34, onto a stage to make statements before handing them over to the Red Cross. The



Israeli captives from (L-R), Ohad Ben Ami, Eli Sharabi and Or Levy, who have been held hostage by Hamas in Gaza since October 7, 2023, stands escorted by Hamas fighters on a stage before being handed over to the Red Cross in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip

three civilian men were among about 250 people abducted during the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, that sparked the war.

The joy of some Israelis watching their release turned to shock and tears

when they saw their emaciated state. The men appeared in poorer condition than the 18 hostages previously set free.

Later Saturday, Israel released 183 Palestinian prisoners, some also appearing gaunt and weak. The Red



A former Palestinian prisoner is surrounded by a crowd after stepping out of a bus in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah on February 8, 2025, as part of the fifth hostage-prisoner swap under a fragile Gaza truce

Crescent said seven were taken to hospitals.

It was the fifth exchange since the ceasefire began January 19.

The Red Cross said it was "increasingly concerned about the conditions surrounding release operations" and urged all parties

to ensure releases are dignified and private.

Many Palestinians released during the ceasefire have appeared emaciated and pale, and have alleged abuses in Israeli custody.

Hostages' condition sparks concern. The hostages' condition

and statements under duress - a departure from previous releases - sparked outrage in Israel. An Israeli Health Ministry representative, Dr Hagar Mizrahi, noted "severe malnutrition" and a "significant decrease" in body weight.

"We will not remain silent about this. A message has been passed on to the mediators, and action will be taken accordingly," said Gal Hirsch, Netanyahu's coordinator for hostages.

Hamas' military wing, the Qassam Brigades, said it had made efforts to preserve the hostages' lives "despite the (Israeli) bombardment."

The ceasefire's current phase does not appear to be affected by US President Donald Trump's stunning proposal to transfer the Palestinian population out of Gaza, welcomed by Israel but vehemently rejected by Palestinians and most of the international community.

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CABLE-CUTTING PLAGUES EXAM PREP FOR PUPILS

Students across the State have become heavily dependent on stable internet connections to access learning materials, attend online classes and submit their assignments. But the recent cable-cutting drive has created a massive disruption in the essential service, leaving students unable to access educational resources, participate in online classes and prepare for exams.

Fernandes said that the disruption was occurring at an especially critical time when students were preparing to answer their exams. The uncertainty and instability caused by these recurring outages have not only affected their ability to study but have also put their entire academic future at risk.

"As educators we are struggling to provide the necessary support to our students, many of whom rely on these online systems to complete their education and examinations," Fernandes said.

The parents have appealed to the Prime Minister to intervene in the matter and to ensure that the disruption in educational services is not affected. They have feared that if the issue is not resolved swiftly then they will have no option but to consider granting general promotion or awarding pass certificates to students without proper examinations, which would undermine the quality of education in the State.

Meanwhile, the Electricity Department has issued a public notice asking cable operators to remove their cables and infrastructure from electricity poles within the next 10 days failing which the department will remove them.

Goa Cable TV Networking and Service Providers Association president Molly Fernandes said, "The internet services were disrupted. We received several complaints from our clients, who were upset. We have been regularly paying fees to the Electricity Department for using the poles to tie cables. We have now completed all formalities with the department of information and technology."

When asked whether students and parents have complained about the impact on education due to the sudden disruption in internet services in the State, the Director of Education Shailesh Zingde said, "I have not come across anything from parents and students. They might have submitted their grievances to the Department of Information and Technology."

GOA'S BABU WINS 3 SILVER MEDALS IN PENTATHLON

Babu, who won the gold medal in the last National Games, said, "The weather was very cold and it affected me. My timing was good, but one shot hurt me in the competition.

The time difference to claim the gold medal was mere five seconds."

Babu is likely to be rewarded for his performance at the Games by the State government.

DELHI VOTES FOR DOUBLE ENGINE

The elections were largely seen as a bipolar contest between the AAP, which made a determined bid for a fourth term, and the BJP. While the AAP had 62 members in the outgoing house, the saffron party had just eight legislators.

The Congress, which had ruled for 15 consecutive years under Sheila Dikshit from 1998, came a cropper in the Assembly elections failing to get even a single seat for the third straight time. Its candidates suffered crushing defeats with a majority of them even losing their deposits

With Delhi now in its kitty after a battle of prestige given its symbolic importance as the country's capital, the BJP has extended its footprint, the victories helping it put behind some of the reverses of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections where it bagged 240 seats, short of the 272 majority mark.

Coming days after the Union budget which gave crucial tax concessions to the middle class, the BJP's winning Lok Sabha streak in Delhi continues after it won all seven seats last year. But the premise this time was different.

Ground level issues such as water, drainage and garbage went up against volatile campaigns by both parties with voters grimly evaluating their quality of life in a polluted city.

The BJP also pushed ahead and made 'sheesh mahal' an oft recalled buzzword for the lavish chief minister's residence following the renovations by Kejriwal and allegations of corruption in the Delhi excise policy. It clearly hit home.

For the AAP national convenor, the face of the party launched on an anti-corruption plank in 2012, it was a tantalising seesaw ending in despair. He lost by 4,089 votes to BJP's Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma, son of former Delhi chief minister Sahib Singh Verma.

Chief Minister Atishi, who took over after Kejriwal stepped down last year when he was jailed, won by 3,521 votes against BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri.

It was a dramatic downside for the AAP, which won 67

of the 70 seats in 2015 when it established its dominance by wiping out both the Congress and the BJP and 62 in 2020. The promise of mohalla clinics, model schools, free water and electricity seemed to have lost their sheen.

At BJP offices, there were drumbats of victory and euphoria, party workers waving flags, holding lotus cutouts, dancing and smearing colours of celebration on each other. And Modi was the mantra.

The Congress headquarters wore a desolate look and workers at the AAP office shell-shocked, their leaders huddled in conference as they pondered the future.

The BJP ruled Delhi between 1993 and 1998 when the party had three chief ministers--Madan Lal Khurana, Sahib Singh Verma and Sushma Swaraj.

TRUMP SUFFERS SETBACK, JUDGE HALTS PLANS TO PULL USAID WORKERS OFF THE JOB

Both moves would have exposed the US workers and their spouses and children to unwarranted risk and expense, the judge said.

Nichols pointed to accounts from workers abroad that the Trump administration, in its rush to shut down the agency and its programs abroad, had cut some workers off from government emails and other communication systems they needed to reach the US government in case of a health or safety emergency.

The Associated Press reported earlier that USAID contractors in the Middle East and elsewhere had found even "panic button" apps wiped off their mobile phones or disabled when the administration abruptly furloughed them.

"Administrative leave in Syria is not the same as administrative leave in Bethesda," the judge said in his order Friday night.

In agreeing to stop the 30-day deadline given USAID staffers to return home at government expense, Nichols cited statements from agency employees who had no home to go to in the US after decades abroad, who faced pulling children with special needs out of school midway, and had other difficulties.

But the judge declined a request from two federal employee associations to grant a temporary block on a Trump administration funding freeze that has shut down the six-decade-old agency and its work, pending more hearings on the workers' lawsuit.

Nichols stressed in the hearing earlier Friday on the request to pause the Trump administration's actions that his order was not a decision on the employees' request to roll back the administration's swiftly moving destruction of the agency.

"CLOSE IT DOWN," Trump said on social media of USAID before the judge's ruling.

The American Foreign Service Association and the American Federation of Government Employees argue that Trump lacks the authority to shut down the agency without approval from Congress. Democratic lawmakers have made the same argument.

Trump's administration moved quickly Friday to literally erase the agency's name. Workers on a crane scrubbed the name from the stone front of its Washington headquarters. They used duct tape to block it out on a sign and took down USAID flags. Someone placed a bouquet of flowers outside the door.

The Trump administration and Musk, who is running a budget-cutting Department of Government Efficiency, have made USAID their biggest target so far in an unprecedented challenge of the federal government and many of its programs.

Administration appointees and Musk's teams have shut down almost all funding for the agency, stopping aid and development programs worldwide. They have placed staffers and contractors on leave and furlough and locked them out of the agency's email and other systems. According to Democratic lawmakers, they also carted away USAID's computer servers.

"This is a full-scale gutting of virtually all the personnel of an entire agency," Karla Gilbride, the attorney for the employee associations, told the judge.

US JUDGE BLOCKS MUSK'S COST-CUTTING TEAM FROM TREASURY DATA

The temporary restrictive order, which remains in effect until a February 14 hearing, also says any such person who has accessed data from the Treasury Department's records since President Donald Trump's January 20 inauguration must "immediately destroy any and all copies of material downloaded."

Musk, the world's richest person, is leading Trump's federal cost-cutting efforts under the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

The case was brought against the Republican president, the Department of the Treasury and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent by attorneys general from 19 States on Friday.

They alleged the administration violated the law by ex-

panding access to sensitive Treasury Department data to staff from Musk's DOGE.

The Tesla, SpaceX and X chief is neither a federal employee nor a government official, although US media reported this month that he had been registered as a "special government employee."

DOGE does not enjoy full status as a government department, which would require approval by Congress.

But Musk, a top Trump donor and ally, and his team have rampaged through federal agencies in the first weeks of the new administration, pausing foreign aid programmes, slashing budgets and attempting to lay off scores of government workers.

Judge Engelmayer's order early Saturday said the states that sued would "face irreparable harm in the absence of injunctive relief."

"That is both because of the risk that the new policy presents of the disclosure of sensitive and confidential information and the heightened risk that the systems in question will be more vulnerable than before to hacking," he wrote.

Musk ran into controversy last week with reports he and his team were accessing sensitive data stored at the Treasury Department.

An internal assessment from the Treasury called the DOGE team's access to federal payment systems "the single biggest insider threat the Bureau of the Fiscal Service (BFS) has ever faced," US media reported.

The lawsuit from states including New York and California alleged that the Trump administration granted "virtually unfettered access" to BFS payment systems to "at least one 25-year-old DOGE associate" who had the "authority to view or modify numerous critical files."

That access "poses huge cybersecurity risks, including risks to States and States' residents that their information will be used and processed, unchecked, in a manner not permitted by federal law," says the states' lawsuit filed in the US District Court in Manhattan late on Friday.

It also said that reports indicated "that data from other federal agencies is being fed into an open-source Artificial Intelligence ("AI") system owned and controlled by a private third party."

New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin said on Friday that Trump "has allowed an unelected billionaire to infiltrate key federal agencies and systems that store Social Security numbers, banking information, and other extremely sensitive data for millions of people."

More court challenges have taken shape as Trump has moved rapidly to overhaul the government's spending and workforce.

NOTHING SMART, MINDLESS DESTRUCTION AT WORK IN PANJIM

Though the Smart City work in front of Café Bhonsle and other establishments is going on for some time, spewing dust and mud all over the shops, things took a turn for the worse on Saturday, when shop owners realised the blunders of Smart City works.

Angry shopkeepers appealed to Panjim MLA and Revenue Minister Atanasio 'Babush' Monserrate, who in turn contacted Smart CEO Sanjit Rodrigues and directed him to demolish the triangle.

The stakeholders complained that the structure has been built without consulting any of the shop owners whose businesses are touching the road. They said that the construction of the gigantic triangle is mindless, if one vehicle is passing on the now narrow road, another vehicle cannot pass. Additionally, the parking space has been destroyed, in a totally insensitive move.

"Today all shop owners called Revenue Minister Atanasio Monserrate and Smart City CEO Sanjit Rodrigues. We are against the gigantic triangle at Cafe Bhonsle square. We are not against any development and all shop owners are with the government. However, we want them to restore the parking and the garden as it was. Only one tanker can pass at a time on this narrow road. My underground power cable worth Rs 3.5 lakh to Rs 4 lakh was cut off and they have given me a temporary connection," Milind Bhonsle, partner, Cafe Bhonsle said.

Photographs clicked by shop owners showed that when one tanker passes on the adjoining road, there is no space for any other vehicle to pass.

The stakeholders said that given that parking space in Panjim is at a premium, such a mindless Smart City project has further tarnished the name of the mission. The triangle in front of Café Bhonsle was an iconic spot in Panjim where people would gather every morning, have a sip of tea at the café and then read the newspapers and exchange news from food to politics by sitting on the much smaller triangle.

They said it is high time that the Smart City Mission consult stakeholders and people in each area of Panjim to respect not only the wishes of the public, but also study the history of the city and preserve its heritage and culture, as its history dates back to the Kadamba Dynasty, way back in the 12 Century.