



Tribal people block the Ranchi-Jamshedpur road during Ranchi bandh in protest against the construction of a flyover in Ranchi, Jharkhand



Police stop Anganwadi and ASHA workers during their protest march to demand regularization of their services and increase in salary, in Srinagar



Devotees during a religious procession marking the martyrdom of Hazrat Ali, first Imam of the Shiite, in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



Volunteers during the cleaning of a river during Clean Senapati River Campaign organised by the district administration on World Water Day, in Senapati district, Manipur

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A child drinks water from a tap, on World Water Day, in Nadia, West Bengal

### Criminal with Rs 3 lakh bounty killed in encounter in Bihar

**ARARIA (BIHAR):** A criminal, who was wanted in several murder cases and carrying a bounty of Rs 3 lakh on his head, was killed in a police encounter in Bihar's Araria district, an officer said on Saturday. Four policemen were also injured in the encounter that took place on Friday night in Narpatganj area, Additional Director General of Police-STF Kundan Krishnan said. The criminal, identified as Chunmun Jha alias Rakesh Jha, had been on the run and was wanted in several cases of jewellery showroom loot in Bhojpur and Purnea districts, the officer said. The Bihar Police's Special Task Force (STF) had been tracking him for several days.

### J&K: About 8 houses gutted in fire in Srinagar, no casualty

**SRINAGAR:** At least eight houses were gutted in a blaze in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar on Saturday, leaving 11 families homeless, officials said. There was no loss of life in the incident, they said. Fire broke out this morning in a house in Shaheed Gunj locality. The flames spread to the adjacent houses in the congested locality and engulfed several houses, the officials said. At least eight houses were gutted in fire, leaving 11 families residing there homeless, they said, adding that a probe is on to ascertain the cause of the fire.

### Fire at shoe showroom in Delhi's Shaheen Bagh, no casualty

**NEW DELHI:** A massive fire broke out in footwear showroom in southeast Delhi's Shaheen Bagh area on Saturday morning, leading to major traffic jams near the area, a Delhi Fire Services official said. No casualty has been reported in the incident, the official said. The call regarding the fire at Bata shoe showroom was received at 11.17 am on Saturday, he said. Initially, six fire tenders were deployed to control the blaze but now 12 fire engines are working on the spot. According to firefighters, it will take more time to douse the blaze as they have been unable to enter the first floor of the building. So far, 12 fire engines are working on the spot.

### Cops alert as drone camera crashes inside AIIMS campus in J-K

**JAMMU:** A drone camera was seized after it crashed on a residential building inside the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) campus in Jammu and Kashmir's Sambha district, officials said on Saturday. The campus falls under the 'no-flying zone' category, and the presence of the drone has prompted a security alert, police said. After being informed by some residents who noticed the drone falling on Friday night, a team from Vijaypur police station seized it from the roof of a residential building in the campus, they said. An FIR has been registered under the relevant sections of law and an investigation is on, they said.

### Arunachal police seize 4.5 kg of cannabis, arrest four

**ITANAGAR:** Police have seized 4.497 kg of cannabis (ganja) in Chimpu area here and arrested four persons linked to an organised drug network operating from Assam, an officer said on Saturday. On March 17, during a routine naka checking at the Chimpu check post here, police intercepted a motorcycle and seized 1.440 kg of cannabis concealed under the seat, Capital Superintendent of Police (SP) Rohit Rajbir Singh said. The two motorcycle riders were immediately taken into custody. Both are residents of Chimpu-I village, here.

### Man booked for marrying three women under false claims

**SONBHADRA (UP):** A man has been booked for allegedly cheating three women into marriage by claiming to be an excise department employee and obtaining loan worth lakhs in the name of one of them, Robertsganj police here said on Saturday. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) at Robertsganj station, Kalu Singh, said an investigation has been initiated against Rajan Gehlot after Kiran, an assistant teacher from Sant Kabir Nagar, filed a complaint.

### Infant dies at state-run child welfare centre in Kerala

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** A five-month-old inmate at the Kerala State Council for Child Welfare (KSCCW) here died at a state-run hospital reportedly due to ill health on Saturday, sources said. Police said the boy developed some uneasiness and was shifted to the hospital where he his last. Though there were also reports that the death was due to milk aspiration and the infant was suffering from some breathing issues when it was admitted to the hospital, police didn't confirm this.

# DMK-led committee asks Centre to extend freeze on parl

**PTI, CHENNAI:** Asserting that the proposed delimitation exercise based on population would not be "fair" to southern states, the DMK-led Joint Action Committee meeting on Saturday demanded that the Centre should extend the freeze on Parliamentary constituencies, based on the 1971 Census population, by another 25 years and decided to submit a joint representation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the ongoing Parliamentary session.

## DELIMITATION

A political consensus also emerged to fight against "population" as the yardstick to determine delimitation and it was resolved during the meeting, which was held to ensure "fair de-



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin addresses the joint action committee meeting on the issue of Lok Sabha constituency delimitation, in Chennai

limitation", not to lose representation for southern states. Politically, the meeting, which was attended by three chief ministers, a deputy CM and leaders of 14 parties including the BRS, BJD and D from six states in a show of solidarity on the issue, was a shot in the arm

for Chief Minister M K Stalin and his party DMK, ahead of the Assembly election in Tamil Nadu next year.

"The upcoming or future population-based delimitation of constituencies based on the next census will greatly affect a few states. We should all be absolutely

sure that delimitation based on the current population cannot be accepted," Stalin asserted. He also said a legal option could be explored and favoured setting up an expert panel to draw up the political and legal action plan.

Addressing the meeting, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan termed the proposed delimitation as a 'sword of Damocles' hanging over the states, especially in southern India, which implemented programs to control the population. He urged the Centre to engage in "meaningful dialogues" before going ahead with the process. Delimitation, if done after the Census, will lead to an increase in seats for northern states and a reduction for southern states. "Such a cut in seats for the south and an increase for the north will suit the BJP as it holds greater influence in the north," he claimed.

## Fast-track court to try gruesome Meerut murder, autopsy reveals savagery

**PTI, MEERUT/SHIMLA (UP):** The Uttar Pradesh Police Saturday said they plan to take the Saurabh Rajput murder case to a fast-track court while a post-mortem revealed the extreme brutality with which he was killed and the body dismembered allegedly by his wife and her lover.

## MEERUT KILLING

Rajput's head was severed from the body, both hands were cut off from the wrist and his legs were bent backwards, suggesting an attempt to fit the body in a drum, the autopsy report disclosed. The cause of death has been attributed to shock and excessive bleeding.

After the murder, Muskan Rastogi and her lover Sahil Shukla travelled to Himachal Pradesh's Kasol on March 10 and checked into a hotel by introducing themselves as husband and wife. They left on March 16, the hotel operator said, adding the accused duo's driver accompanied them.

They stayed in their hotel room the whole day, going out once a day in their car which was unusual, and had minimum interaction with the staffers who were not allowed to clean their room, he said. During check-out, they told the hotel operator that they had come from Manali and would return to Uttar Pradesh.

## K'taka bandh by pro-Kannada groups peaceful under tight security

**PTI, BENGALURU:** The dawn-to-dusk statewide bandh called by pro-Kannada groups to protest the alleged assault on a state-run bus conductor in Belagavi last month for not knowing Marathi passed off peacefully on Saturday.

There were no untoward incidents as police made elaborate arrangements to prevent any disruption of law and order during the shutdown.

Ahead of the bandh, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara appealed to people to protest peacefully, warning that any attempt to disturb law and order or resort to vandalism would be dealt with an iron hand.

In several parts of the state, pro-Kannada groups took to the streets, staging protests and urging shop-



Pro-kannada activists raise slogans during their protest at Town Hall amid statewide bandh, in Bengaluru

keepers to support the bandh. However, most shops remained open as usual.

In Bengaluru, activists gathered at Mysore Bank Circle, raising slogans and holding placards. Some demonstrators staged a protest at the BMTC and KSRTC bus stands in Majes-

tic, urging bus drivers and conductors to support the bandh. As their agitation intensified, police took them into preventive custody.

Leading the agitation, Kannada Chalavali (Vatal Paksha) convener Vatal Nagaraj staged a demonstration at Majestic.

## Search ops underway amid challenging conditions

**PTI, NAGARKURNOOL (TELANGANA):** A month into the partial collapse of the SLBC tunnel here, rescue teams on Saturday continued the search operation to locate the seven persons trapped inside the tunnel amid challenging conditions, including muck, water seepage and broken parts of the huge Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM).

## SLBC TUNNEL

The operation was going on in full swing, including desilting, and more than 400 workers are working on a daily

basis, a senior official said.

It has to be ensured during the operation that the life of the rescuers is not put at risk, he said.

"It's an unprecedented rescue effort," he told PTI.

The Telangana government on Saturday sanctioned Rs five crore towards payment of expenditure for the execution of the operation.

On February 22, a portion of the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) project tunnel collapsed leading to a total of eight individuals-including engineers and labourers-getting trapped.

## JOYOUS DANCE



Children dance during the 'Dol' festival procession, also known as 'Dolo Jatra', at Dharmanagar area, in North Tripura district

## Justice Gavai: Manipur's difficult phase will end soon, State to prosper

**PTI, CHURACHANDPUR:** Supreme Court judge, Justice B R Gavai, on Saturday expressed hope that the "current difficult phase" in ethnic strife-torn Manipur will be over soon with the assistance of the executive, legislature and judiciary and the state will prosper like the rest of the country.

Justice Gavai, who led a delegation of Supreme Court judges that visited Manipur, called upon the people of the state to work together to restore peace and harmony.

Justice Gavai, along with Supreme Court judges Vikram Nath, M M Sundresh and K V Vishwanathan, visited a relief camp in Churachandpur district and met internally displaced persons, officials said.

The delegation also virtu-

**Justice Gavai, who led a delegation of Supreme Court judges that visited Manipur, called upon the people of the state to work together to restore peace and harmony**

ally inaugurated a legal services camp, a medical camp and a legal aid clinic from the Mini Secretariat at Lamka in the district, they said.

Chief Justice of Manipur High Court, Justice D Krishnakumar, and Justice Golmei Gaipulshilu were also present.

Addressing the gathering, Justice Gavai said, "Our country is a true example of unity in diversity. India is home for all of us. We know that you all are going through a difficult phase but with the assistance of every-

one, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, this phase will be over in a short period." "Our Constitution is a great document. When we compare our country to our neighbouring countries, we will realise our Constitution has kept us strong and united. Have belief in the Constitution... one day, complete peace will return to Manipur and the state will prosper like the entire country," he added.

He urged the people of the state to work together to restore peace and normalcy. He lauded the natural beauty he witnessed while travelling from Imphal to Churachandpur.

Sharing his experiences of the relief camps, he expressed delight in noting that training programmes were being imparted.

## Odisha reports 3 child marriages daily, Nabarangpur district tops list

**PTI, BHUBANESWAR:** Odisha has reported at least three child marriage cases every day during the last six years, despite several initiatives taken by the administration, according to government data.

Activists working in this field attribute tribal practice, dowry, migration of labourer families and parents' fear that daughters may elope to this startling figure. The data reveals that 8,159 child marriages have taken place across Odisha from 2019 to February 2025. Of them, 1,347 cases have been reported from

Nabarangpur, the highest among all 30 districts of Odisha during that period.

While Ganjam district is in the second spot with 966 cases, Koraput comes next with 636. It was followed by Mayurbhanj (594), Rayagada (408), Balasore (361), Keonjhar (328), Kandhamal (308) and Nayagarh (308).

The lowest of 57 such instances have been found in Jharsuguda district in those six years.

Social activist Namrata Chadha said, Child marriage cannot be fully stopped overnight. We have to create such an environ-

ment and society for the girl children and their parents so that they will not take such steps.

Marrying off underage children is a traditional practice of the tribals, especially for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, she said.

Chadha said parents who usually migrate to other places for livelihood also conduct marriage of their girls before legal age hoping to secure their future and also for her safety as they fear the girl may elope with someone bringing shame to the family.

The social activist said dowry also drives such marriages, as the older the bride, the higher the demand.

The menace could come to an end if we are able to provide them proper education or skill development training so that they become self-employed so that they do not think marriage is the only step left for a girl's future, Chadha said.

To stop child marriages, the Odisha government has been organising awareness campaigns at panchayat, block and Anganwadi levels every three months, an official said.