



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah speaks to the media regarding the alleged murder of former DGP of Karnataka Om Prakash, in Bengaluru



Members of Bharatiya Kisan Union (India) bang plates during a protest over rising inflation, outside Divisional Commissioner's office, in Meerut



Himachal Pradesh HC Bar Association members stage a protest over alleged assault on an advocate by the local police, in Shimla



Nirbal Indian Shoshit Hamara Aam Dal (Nishad Party) workers take part in a bike rally, in Prayagraj, West Bengal

alloverindia



A slum-dweller carries drinking water collected from a tanker, in East Delhi

Ambedkar statue vandalised in MP's Shivpuri district; case registered

SHIVPURI (MP): Unidentified persons allegedly vandalised the statue of the chief architect of the Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar, in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district, police said on Monday. This is the fourth time unidentified persons have damaged the statue at Barela Tiraha in Pichhore town, an official said. The incident came to light in the morning when people noticed that a finger on Ambedkar's statue had been damaged, following which people, including Bhim Army workers, gathered in protest at the spot, said Kusum Goyal, Khod police station in-charge. Personnel from Khod police station and officials from the administration immediately reached the spot. Locals said it was a serious matter and a deliberate insult to people's sentiments. The official said the statue had been damaged thrice earlier. Police have registered a case and deployed personnel to maintain peace in the area.

6 killed, 3 injured as MUV overturns in MP

BHOPAL: Six persons were killed and three others injured when a multi-utility vehicle (MUV) overturned in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district on Monday morning, police said. The incident occurred at around 7 am near a roadside eatery under Sultanpur police station area, Additional Superintendent of Police Kamlesh Kharpuse said. According to initial information, the nine persons were returning to Indore from Patna in the MUV after attending a marriage function, he said. The driver lost control over the wheels and as a result, the vehicle overturned, the official said. Six persons were killed in the accident. The three other injured persons were admitted to the District Hospital in Raisen and undergoing treatment, he said.

3 killed, 12 hurt as truck hits multiple vehicles on highway in Pune

PUNE: Three persons were killed and 12 others injured after a truck crashed into five vehicles on the old Pune-Mumbai highway near Lonavla hill station here in Maharashtra, police said on Monday. The incident took place at 10.20 pm on Sunday at Battery Hill near Bor Ghat. The truck apparently suffered a brake failure while descending a slope. It then ran amok and hit five vehicles, a police official said. "A 10-year-old girl and her father, who were travelling in a car, and another person died in the accident," Lonavla police station's senior inspector Suhas Jagtap said. Twelve other persons were injured and rushed to a nearby hospital where they were currently undergoing treatment, he added.

Eight arrested with drugs in Himachal

BILASPUR (HP): The Bilaspur district police has arrested eight persons and allegedly recovered 15.83 grams of chitta (heroin) and 4.48 grams of charas from their custody, an official said. The accused include two youths from Punjab, three from Mandi and three from the Bilaspur district, a spokesman of the police department said on Monday. In the first case, a special team laid a barricade on the Kiratpur-Nerchowk four lane near the Baloh toll plaza on Sunday and intercepted a taxi and allegedly recovered 5.50 grams of chitta, leading to the arrest of the three people, police said. The accused have been identified as Harish Kumar, Sunil Kumar and Chaman Lal, all residents of the Mandi district. In the second case, the Bilaspur Police allegedly recovered 17 milligrams of chitta and 3.50 grams of hashish from a young man walking near Shri Laxmi Narayan Temple in the Diara Sector, Bilaspur city. The accused has been identified as Akshay Kumar, a resident of the Hawan village in Bilaspur district's Ghumarwin tehsil, as per police.

Woman who jumped off building to escape fire dies after 20 days

NOIDA: A 34-year-old woman who jumped off a fire-stricken building in Sector 18 to save herself died at a private hospital here after 20 days, police said on Monday. Pooja Gupta, who was severely injured after jumping from the fourth floor of Krishna Apara Plaza, succumbed to injuries on Saturday, they said. The fire broke out at the eight-storey Krishna Apara Plaza on April 1 due to a blast in the compressor of an air-conditioner in a shop on the ground floor of the building. Gupta who was working at a private company running its office in the building died on Saturday, D P Shukla, in-charge at Sector 20 police station, told PTI. Shukla said that most of the 22 people who were injured by jumping from the building were sent home after first aid. According to police, fire-fighters saved the lives of more than 170 people in the incident.

Flash floods, landslides ravage dozen villages in Jammu & Kashmir: Officials

PTI, RAMBAN (J&K): The flash-floods and landslides triggered by heavy rain and cloudbursts severely affected nearly a dozen villages in Jammu and Kashmir's hilly Ramban district, a senior government officer said on Monday and added the authorities had mobilised resources to restore essential services and provide relief to the affected people. Divisional Commissioner (Jammu) Ramesh Kumar also said various teams are on the ground to assess the damage.

Efforts are underway to provide an alternative road connectivity through the Mughal Road and the Sinthan Top road to the Kashmir valley as restoration of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway could take time due to the massive damage, he said. Heavy rain, coupled with cloudbursts and thunderstorms, on Sunday claimed three lives and left a trail of destruction in the district. Cutting across party lines, political leaders

urged the Centre to declare the tragedy a "national disaster" and provide adequate financial assistance to the families affected to restart their lives.

"About 10 to 12 villages, including Seri, Bagna, Panote and Khari, have suffered varying degrees of damage and our teams are on the ground to make a complete assessment so that the affected population are provided relief," the divisional commissioner told reporters.

Kumar visited the affected villages and was briefed about the situation by Deputy Commissioner Baseer-ul-Haq Chaudhary.

"Restoration of essential services, including water and electricity, is underway and joint teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), army, police and other agencies are on the ground to improve the situation," he said.

The divisional commissioner said the Jam-



People stand amidst the debris outside a hotel, a day after heavy rain triggered flash floods and landslides, in Ramban district of Jammu and Kashmir

mu-Srinagar National Highway had suffered extensive damage, with certain stretches sunk and washed away while some others were buried under sludge and boulders.

"The highway will take time to get restored, even as our efforts are under-

way. We will have to check the cracks for stability. The retaining walls have also been damaged," Kumar said, advising the stranded commuters to utilise the alternative Mughal Road and the Sinthan Top road for the time being. He said efforts were

CAF jawan killed in IED blast in Chhattisgarh

PTI, BIJAPUR: A jawan of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) was killed after an improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Naxalites went off in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Monday, police said.

The blast occurred between Toynar and Farsegarh villages, where a CAF team was out patrolling to provide security to road construction work, an official said. A road is being constructed from Toynar to Farsegarh.

The official said constable Manoj Pujari (26), belonging to the CAF's 19th battalion, inadvertently stepped over an IED, triggering the blast that killed him. He said a search operation was underway in the area.

The Maoists often plant IEDs along the road and dirt tracks in forests to target security personnel during patrolling in interior pockets of the Bastar region, comprising seven districts, including Bijapur. Civilians have fallen prey to such traps laid by ultras in the past.

Twice blessed: My encounters with Pope Francis

IGNATIUS GONSALVES

Thanks to Pope Francis, I hold a unique distinction—one I share with humility and gratitude. I may well be the only Indian journalist to have been blessed with not one, but two special meetings with the Holy Father. These encounters, though within the framework of the General Audience, were what ecclesiastical circles call "Private Audiences within the General Audience" intimate moments of grace amid the grandeur.

Both meetings took place over a span of six years, and the second was truly the crowning glory. As a proud Indian, I had the honour of draping a ceremonial silk shawl over the Pope's shoulders. His face lit up with childlike wonder.

"What is this?" he asked in careful, though slightly laboured, English—likely briefed by his secretaries that I spoke no Italian.

"It's a cultural gesture, Your Holiness," I explained. "You are now wrapped in our prayer, protection, love, and loyalty."

He was visibly moved. "Please pray for me," he repeated with touching sincerity.

On April 5, 2024, I

GOA-DAMAN ARCHBISHOP FERRAO AMONG THOSE WHO WILL VOTE FOR NEW POPE

AGENCIES: The Archbishop of Goa and Daman Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrao is among the cardinals who would be voting for a new Pope. Along with the Archbishop of Goa, Cardinals George Jacob Koovakad, Anthony Poola, and Cleemis Baselios will also vote in the papal conclave. The death of a pope starts a centuries-old ritual involving sacred oaths by the cardinals electing a successor, the piercing of ballots with a needle and thread after they're counted, and then burning them to produce either the white or black smoke to signal if there's a new leader for the world's 1.3 billion Catholics. Only cardinals under age 80 are eligible, and current regulations limit the number of electors to 120. According to the most recently updated Vatican statistics, there were 135 cardinals under age 80 and eligible to vote, though that number may change before the conclave begins.

turned 70. My journalism students gifted me a fest-schrift titled The Rainbow, which I had the privilege of presenting to Pope Francis, along with a few of my own books. When I showed him a family photo, he blessed it with the sign of the cross, lovingly repeating, "Good family, beautiful family."

I asked him for a special blessing—for the media, and for India. With a paternal warmth almost tangible, he raised his hands and gave the Petrine apostolic blessing, a moment that will forever be etched in my heart.

Typically, these encoun-

ters last about 90 seconds. Mine extended to a gracious three and a half minutes. The Vatican media captured 62 photographs during that time—splitting their attention between the Pope and the radiant blue of the silk shawl.

In the Acts of the Apostles, it is said that "the shadow of Peter" falls on those who come to Rome. I have been privileged to feel that blessing—not once, but twice. First on September 26, 2018, and again on September 18, 2024.

(Ignatius Gonsalves is a senior journalist and Vatican expert)

The much-awaited visit of the Pope remained unfulfilled

PTI, NEW DELHI: Pope Francis was likely to visit India next year but his sojourn could not materialise after he breathed his last on Monday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Pope Francis twice -- in 2021 and 2024 -- and extended an invitation for him to visit India that the pontiff had accepted.

Union minister George Kurian, who visited Vatican City last December, said the much-awaited visit was expected to take place after the celebrations of the jubilee year of Jesus Christ's birth by the Catholic Church in 2025.

The last papal visit to India was in 1999 when Pope John Paul II came to New Delhi to preside over the concluding celebrations of the Special Assembly of Synod of Bishops of Asia.

He had met the then vice-president Krishan Kant and prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Pope John Paul II also visited India in February 1986 and toured different parts of the country, including the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata and met the Indian leadership.

The first pontiff to vis-



Pope Francis appears on the central lodge of St. Peter's Basilica to bestow the Urbi et Orbi (Latin for to the city and to the world) blessing at the end of the Easter mass presided over by Cardinal Angelo Comastri in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican

it India was Paul IV, who visited Mumbai in 1964 to attend the International Eucharistic Congress.

Modi, along with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar first met Pope Francis in Vatican City in October 2021 on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rome.

The prime minister had extended an invitation to Pope Francis to visit India at an early date.

Modi also met Pope Francis on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy, in June last year and renewed the invitation for him to visit India.

Nobody should suffer at airports: HC on lack of wheelchairs and other facilities

PTI, MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court on Monday expressed concern over lack of proper facilities, including wheelchairs, at airports in the country for senior citizens and specially-abled persons, and said preventive measures are required as it is a matter of human lives.

Facilities like wheelchairs should be available on time so that the agony of travellers can be prevented, a division bench of Justices G S Kulkarni and Advait Sethna said.

All the facilities should be provided by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and airline companies suo motu (on its own), and it should be ensured that India leads by example, the court said.

"We are concerned about human lives. Nobody should suffer. What is required is sensitivity from the airport management

The mother-daughter duo in their plea said the 81-year-old woman had to give up her wheelchair for her daughter, who was suffering from acute arthritis, after they were given only one mobility aid on landing in Mumbai in September 2023

authority and all airlines. We have to be very sensitive to these issues. We want the highest international standards to be implemented in India by all airlines," the court said.

The bench was hearing two petitions - one by a senior citizen and her daughter and another by a 53-year-old man - raising the issue of non-availability of wheelchairs and other facilities at the Mumbai international airport.

The mother-daughter duo in their plea said the 81-year-old woman had to give up her wheelchair for her daughter, who was suffering from acute arthritis, after they were given only one mobility aid on landing in Mumbai in Sep-

tember 2023. The DGCA in an affidavit submitted to the bench on Monday said there was a shortage of wheelchairs at the airport due to several factors, including over-booking. The court, however, said it cannot accept such an excuse.

Preventive measures have to be taken, the HC said, adding a person may go to the airport hale and hearty but may suddenly take ill and require assistance.

"What happens then? These are human issues. Facilities should be available before time. This is an airport where sometimes flights get delayed for hours. For a normal person,

such delays may not matter, but for senior citizens or those who are specially-abled, such delays bring in a lot of agony and trauma," Justice Kulkarni said.

The issue pertains to thousands of passengers who face this problem everyday throughout the country, the HC said.

The court suggested the DGCA to impose heavy penalties on airline companies for negligence.

"When a passenger dies inside an aircraft or faces any other issue, then it amounts to neglect on part of the airlines. This is basic human rights," it said.

In foreign countries, children, senior citizens and specially-abled persons are considered above basic rights and are given the highest respect, the high court noted.

APPOINTMENTS

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