

News Brief

Temporary structure at JLN stadium collapses in Delhi, 2 rescued

New Delhi, Feb 17 (IANS) Two people were rescued after they got buried under the debris of temporary structure at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru stadium which collapsed on Saturday morning, a fire department official said.

Sharing the details, the Director of Delhi Fire Service, Atul Garg said that a call has been received about collapse of a temporary structure in JLN stadium. "So far two person removed and are safe. Rescue teams are on ground," Garg said.

NCSC recommends Prez rule in Bengal, says women were harassed in Sandeshkhali

New Delhi, Feb 17 (IANS) The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) on Friday recommended the imposition of President's rule in West Bengal in its report on Sandeshkhali violence submitted to President Droupadi Murmu.

NCSC Chief Arun Halder said, "The commission has submitted its report to the President. The report recommends the imposition of President's rule in West Bengal. "The Commission has said that women were harassed in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali.

The report also said that the supporters and party workers of the ruling Trinamool Congress harassed women. Halder said the people of Sandeshkhali shared the details about the torture and violence they faced.

Siddaramaiah's budget - a 'bundle of lies': Bommai

Bengaluru, Feb 16 (IANS) Senior BJP leader Basavaraj Bommai on Friday said Chief Minister K. Siddaramaiah's budget is a "bundle of lies" to cover up his government's "failures".

Slamming Siddaramaiah, Bommai said the chief minister has "destroyed the sanctity of the financial statement by attacking the Centre and making false claims".

The BJP leader claimed that as compared to last year, only Rs 1,000 crore had been spent out of Rs 25,000 crore borrowed.

incumbent government would be placed before the people," Bommai said.--IANS

Bengal ration case: ED probes Bangladesh links of arrested bizman

Kolkata, Feb 16 (IANS) Enforcement Directorate (ED) sleuths have started probing the Bangladesh links of Biswajit Das, the Kolkata-based businessman who was arrested by the central agency sleuths in connection with the ration distribution case in West Bengal.

Sources said that Das, a close confidante of West Bengal Minister Jyotipriya Mallick and Trinamool Congress leader Shankar Adhya, used to visit Bangladesh frequently.

PM Modi guides workers to achieve 370 seats for BJP



New Delhi, Feb 17 (UNI) Setting the agenda for 2024 Lok Sabha election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, while stating that BJP will win 370 seats and NDA 400 seats, asked the party workers to work hard to achieve the target.

Guiding the party workers during the two-day BJP National Council

meeting at the Bharat Mandapam here, the PM said that for the party, 370 is not just a number but it would be a tribute to Dr Syama Prasad Mukherjee who laid down his life for the country.

Addressing a press conference, BJP National General Secretary Vinod Tawde said, "For the 370 seats of the BJP, Modi an-

nounced the name of the candidate and the candidate is 'Lotus Flower'.

He said that selections of candidates will go on but the party workers have to work hard for the next 100 days so that the 'Lotus Flower' wins.

Tawde said the PM asked the party workers to meet all the beneficiaries of the government

schemes and this will start from February 25 all over the country. He said Modi also asked all the party workers to work at the booth level for the next 100 days. The should also make it a point to see how another 370 votes are added at each booth.

Vinod also asked the party workers to reach out to all the first time voters



and tell them about the development that had taken place in the last 10 years. Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister inaugurated the two-day BJP National Council meeting.

He was received by party president J P Nadda. Modi also visited an exhibition put up at the venue. More than 11,000 delegates from across the

country are expected to be present in the meeting.

Many senior leaders including Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh are also participating in the meeting. BJP president J P Nadda inaugurated an exhibition showcasing the remarkable achievements of the 10 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

government. Taking to social media handle X, Nadda said, "Under the visionary leadership of PM Shri @narendramodi ji, BJP has spearheaded transformative changes benefiting every Indian. Join us as we celebrate a decade of progress and pledge to continue working tirelessly for the nation's development".

If I were to join BJP, I will inform media first, says Kamal Nath

New Delhi, Feb 17 (IANS) Amid speculation that he may switch to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Kamal Nath on Saturday told the media that if he were to take a decision in this regard, he will inform the media first.

Rumours have been doing the rounds that Kamal Nath and his son, Nakul Nath, may soon join BJP. "Why are you all getting excited? It is not about denying. I will inform you all if there is something like that," Kamal Nath said. Earlier in the day, Congress leader Digvijaya Singh reacted to speculations over Kamal Nath joining the BJP. "I spoke to Kamal Nath on Friday, he was in Chhindwara. A person who started his political

journey and stood with the Nehru-Gandhi family when Indira Gandhi was sent to jail, do you think he will ever leave Congress and the Gandhi family?" Congress MP Nakul Nath removed 'INC' from his social media bio, giving further momentum to the rumours that he is going to join the BJP. Furthermore, Nakul Nath, the lone Congress MP from Madhya Pradesh, who was supposed to continue his meeting with party workers in his family bastion Chhindwara from February 14 to 18, stopped the meeting and left for Delhi along with his father. All these sequences gave rise to the speculation that Kamal Nath, considered close to the Nehru-Gandhi family, is likely to end his decades long association with the grand old party

ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

On February 10, IANS had reported that a rift between Kamal Nath and former AICC president Rahul Gandhi erupted following the party's loss in the assembly election in November last year.

Sources had then also claimed that a deal between Kamal Nath and the BJP that was "derailed" due to some reasons, was "brought back" on track again with several top leaders from the BJP having supported the same.

However, seasoned politician with over 40 years of experience, Kamal Nath left the political watchers guessing. Though all is not going well between Rahul and Kamal Nath, the latter was regularly visiting to meet Sonia Gandhi.

Himachal CM presents budget of Rs 58,444cr with fiscal deficit of Rs 10,784cr

Shimla, Feb 17 (IANS) Announcing a four per cent dearness allowance for employees and a scheme to encourage natural farming, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu on Saturday presented a budget of Rs 58,444 crore for 2024-25 with the fiscal deficit of Rs 10,784 crore, which is 4.75 per cent of the state domestic product.

The focus of the budget was on strengthening state's mainstay agriculture, horticulture and dairy sectors. In the populist but deficit budget, Thakur, who holds the finance portfolio, said the economic reforms would help the state to be self-reliant. Daily wages have been enhanced from Rs 375 to Rs 400, outsource employees will get minimum wages of Rs 12,000. The

MLA Local Area Development Fund has been enhanced from Rs 2.10 crore to Rs 2.20 crore. The current MLA priorities limit has been enhanced from Rs 175 crore to Rs 195 crore and MLA Discretionary Grant from Rs 13 to 14 lakh in each assembly segment. He said as his government assumed charge, the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) was restored. "A total of 1,15,000 employees have already opted OPS. All employees who have come to OPS have received the General Provident Fund (GPF) subscription. About 5,000 employees who have shifted from NPS to OPS, have been issued Pay and Pension Orders (PPOs) as per the OPS after their retirement." Talking about the steps taken for financial prudence, Thakur, who presented his second budget,

said the adverse financial situation that the government inherited from the previous government "is known to everyone". "Our Government is facing many challenges due to financial mismanagement and wasteful expenditure spree practised by the previous government. Due to wrong policies in the past, the total liabilities in the form of loans have risen to Rs 87,788 crores. "The total debt liabilities have increased from Rs 47,906 crore in 2018 to Rs 76,651 crore in 2023. The previous government implemented the Sixth Pay Commission recommendations for government employees at the end of its tenure, which could have been implemented earlier. "Due to this delay, the arrears on account of the revised salaries of the employees kept increas-

ing and their liabilities were handed over to our government. But the present government did not allow the pace of development to slow down due to lack of resources. As soon as we assumed power, we took tough decisions and started efforts to mobilise additional resources. "Due to changes in state excise policy, an increase of Rs 359 crore is expected in state excise duty in 2023-24 as compared to the previous year. Last year, Rs 1,370 crore were received as VAT, which is estimated to be Rs 1,773 crore by the end of 2023-24." The Chief Minister said the state excise duty and VAT together are expected to register a growth rate of 22 per cent. "It is estimated that approximately Rs 116 crore will be received through 'milk cess'.



By registering for the national convention of the Bharatiya Janata Party, workers ensured their participation in this Mahakumbh. Anurag Thakur told that, I am proud that I am a worker of the world's largest political party which has Antyodaya at its core.

Day after being stripped of portfolio, court rejects first-ever bail plea filed by Jyotipriya Mallick in PDS case

Kolkata, Feb 17 (IANS) A Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) Special Court in Kolkata rejected the first bail plea filed by former West Bengal Minister Jyotipriya Mallick on Saturday, just a day after he was stripped of his ministerial portfolio. Mallick is currently in judicial custody because of his alleged involvement in the multi-crore PDS case in his capacity as the West Bengal Food & Supplies Minister from 2011 to 2021. Mallick's bail plea was significant on two counts. First, he moved the plea just a day after he was stripped of his ministerial portfolio on Friday and second, this was the first time that he moved a bail petition since his arrest by the sleuths of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in October last year.

Political observers say that the West Bengal Government's action against

him has convinced Mallick that he will now have to fight his own battles as the Trinamool Congress leadership has distanced itself from him. On Saturday, while moving his plea, Mallick's counsel pleaded that his client does not have any connection with the PDS case and hence should be granted bail. He also argued in support of the petition citing Mallick's poor health. While rejecting the bail plea, the PMLA court said that the next

hearing in the matter would be on February 20. With the Lok Sabha polls around the corner, the Mamata Banerjee Government is under pressure to clean up its image as a regime mired in corruption. The Opposition BJP is breathing down its neck and will make it a point to corner the Mamata Government on the issue of graft and the numerous scams that the Trinamool Congress leaders have been involved in.

29 injured as temporary structure near JLN stadium collapses in Delhi

New Delhi, Feb 17 (IANS) Twenty-nine people were injured after a temporary structure, being installed for a wedding ceremony, at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru stadium collapsed on Saturday morning, police said.

Sharing the details, Director of Delhi Fire Service, Atul Garg, said that a call was received at 11:21 a.m. about the collapse of a temporary structure in JLN stadium.

"On spot, a temporary tent structure at gate no-2 had collapsed and three fire tenders were rushed to the spot," said Garg.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South), Ankit Chauhan, said that one pandal for marriage under preparation at Jawaharlal Nehru stadium at gate no. 2 had fallen and a call regarding the incident was received around 11:15 a.m.

"Total 29 people were injured, of which 18 were sent to AIIMS while 11 to Safdarjung hospital for treatment. As of now, no causality has been reported. Police, fire department personnel and ambulances are there on the spot for other rescue efforts," said the DCP.

SC to hear on Monday Siddaramaiah's plea seeking quashing of FIR filed for blocking traffic

New Delhi, Feb 17 (IANS) The Supreme Court is slated to hear on Monday the plea filed by Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah seeking quashing of an FIR lodged against him and other Congress leaders in connection with blocking a

road during a protest in 2022. As per the details published on the website of the apex court, a bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Prashant Kumar Mishra will take up the special leave petition for hearing on February 19.

The plea before the apex court challenges the decision of the Karnataka High Court dismissing the petition filed by CM Siddaramaiah and others seeking quashing of trial proceedings in the Special Court. Imposing a cost of Rs 10,000 on each of the petitioners, a bench of Justice Krishna S. Dixit of the Karnataka High Court on February 6 ordered CM Siddaramaiah to remain present before the MPs/MLAs on February

26. Rapping the Congress leaders, the High Court said that blocking the road because one is a representative of the people cannot be accepted. The FIR was booked against CM Siddaramaiah and other Congress leaders with Bengaluru's High Grounds police station on April 14, 2022. The Congress party had organised a protest over a suicide case of a contractor Santhosh Patil and had demanded the resignation of then Minister K.S. Eshwarappa. During the protest, traffic was thrown out of gear on the busy Race Course Road. The traffic had come to halt for several kilometres causing severe inconvenience to the public.

Rajasthan: ED seizes digital evidence, mobile phones, cash at hoteliers premise

Jaipur, Feb 17 (IANS) The ED has seized digital evidence, mobile phones, hard disks and Rs 35 lakh cash in raids conducted at hotelier and businessman Meghraj Singh's premises. Officials said that files related to the Mines Department were also found during the raid in his offices and house. "More than 24 pieces of digital evidence have been seized. These are electronic devices which the ED Cyber Team will crack at its Delhi headquarters," the officials said. The officials said that the ED has sealed all the bank accounts of his MRS Group due to which the company will not be able to do any kind of transaction.

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