

Western Times

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News Brief

10 killed as cab plunges into deep gorge in J&K

Jammu, March 29 (IANS) At least ten bodies were recovered on Friday from the accident site on Jammu-Srinagar national highway where a cab plunged into a gorge, said officials. Officials said that in the early hours of Friday a cab carrying passengers fell into a deep gorge after it went out of the driver's control near the Battery Chashma on the national highway in Ramban district. The officials said, "Ten bodies have been recovered from the accident site. Teams of police, SDRF and quick response team (QRT) were immediately pressed into service after the report about the accident was received."

"Incessant rain and darkness initially hampered the rescue operation, which was restarted with the first light on Friday. The operation is still going on", officials said.

Prez Murmu grief over loss of lives in accident

Jammu, March 29 (IANS) President Droupadi Murmu and J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday expressed grief over the loss of lives in the road accident in Ramban district. "The news of people getting killed after a vehicle fell into a gorge in Ramban area on Jammu-Srinagar national highway is very sad. I offer my condolences to the bereaved families," President Murmu said in a post in Hindi on X. Officials said the accident happened in the early hours of Friday after the vehicle went out of the driver's control near the Battery Chashma on the national highway in the district.

Security beefed up ahead of INDIA bloc protest

New Delhi, March 29 (IANS) Following a protest call by the INDIA bloc, security measures have been intensified on the routes leading to BJP headquarters in Central Delhi. Multiple layers of barricades and a significant contingent of paramilitary forces have been deployed along the DDU Marg, ITO, and other routes. A senior police official said, "Barricades have been strategically placed, and security personnel are prepared to intercept any attempt by protesters to access DDU Marg."

Wanted man held for killing bank employee at bar

New Delhi, March 29 (IANS) Delhi Police's Crime Branch has arrested a wanted man in connection with the death of a Bank employee following a quarrel that broke out between "Yaaran Da Adda" restaurant workers and customers over some misunderstanding during birthday celebrations in the outskirts of the national capital last month, an official said on Friday. The accused was identified as Aman (27), who was on the run since the commission of the crime on the intervening night of February 20-21. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Satish Kumar said that recently, specific information regarding absconding Aman that he would be coming near Jai Mata Store, Budh Vihar to meet his acquaintance. "A trap was laid and Aman was nabbed," said the DCP. Later, Jatun was shifted to hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

Sales turnover of GeM doubles to Rs 4 lakh cr

New Delhi, March 29 (IANS) The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has closed the 2023-24 financial year with a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of a staggering Rs 4 lakh crore which is double that of the corresponding figure for the previous fiscal year (2022-23), the Commerce and Industry Ministry said on Friday.

"This testifies to the portal's unique digital capabilities that have facilitated greater efficiency, transparency, and seamlessness in public procurement," the ministry said.

Nearly 50 per cent of this GMV has been attributed to the procurement of services, displaying a remarkable surge of 205 per cent in the segment over the previous year.

"By creating access to the market, GeM has been exceptionally successful in breaking down the cartel of

established service providers and paved the way for small domestic entrepreneurs to participate in government tenders from anywhere at any time," the ministry stated.

The contribution made by central entities including ministries and Central public sector enterprises have spurred the huge growth in GMV. These government organisations have contributed to nearly 85 per cent of the total Rs 4 lakh crore milestone.

The Ministry of Coal, Ministry of Power and Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas and their subsidiaries have emerged as the highest procuring entities at the central level. At the same time, there has also been an increased engagement from states that has helped in this phenomenal growth in GMV. The highest procuring states like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh,

and Delhi, have contributed to surpassing the public procurement target for this year. GeM's vast network of 1.5 lakh+ government buyers and 21 lakh sellers and service providers have made this incredible feat possible. By integrating 89421 Panchayats and 760+ Cooperatives within its procurement ecosystem, GeM has facilitated sustainable procurement while ensuring optimisation in public spending at the very last level of administration, the official statement said.

"Through its inclusive initiatives like 'Vocal for Local', 'One District, One Product', 'Startup Runway', 'Womaniya' etc., GeM has provided a level-playing field for domestic businesses to grow and thrive. Of the 4 lakh crore GMV, orders nearly 50 per cent have been awarded to marginalised seller seg-

ments such as artisans, weavers, craftsmen, MSEs, especially women-led and SC/STs, SHGs, FPOs and Startups.

GeM's collaboration with 5.2 lakh+ CSCs and 1.5 lakh+ India Post offices has served as a phenomenal force in maximising outreach and capacity-building at micro levels," said GeM CEO PK Singh.

He said GeM has become a one-stop shop for seamless public procurement as it offers over 12070 product categories and 320+ service categories. Earlier this year, GeM tied up with leading tech giant Tata Consultancy Services, which has helped to create a more versatile and secure technological infrastructure by adapting new-age technologies to further enhance user experience, improve transparency, and induce greater inclusivity, Singh added.



Christian devotees participating in Good Friday procession, in Patna on Friday. UNI

K'taka BJP slams CM Siddaramaiah's son for comment on Amit Shah

Bengaluru, March 29 (IANS) Karnataka BJP has slammed Yathindra Siddaramaiah, son of Chief Minister K. Siddaramaiah, on Friday, for making objectionable comments on Union Home Minister Amit Shah. BJP state President B.Y. Vijayendra said: "I strongly condemn the statement against BJP leader Amit Shah. Yathindra should apologise. If asked who is carrying out 'goondaism' in the state, people

across the state will give answer." "Fearing defeat in the Lok Sabha polls, the Congress party is encouraging such statements through leaders and it is condemnable," he added. Former Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda stated that some think that making loose comments on others is a big achievement and that "It is unfortunate that Yathindra joined the list." "Yathindra is a young politician and has a long way to go in politics. Let him talk about the achievements of his father CM Siddaramaiah, no one will oppose it. Why is he making comments against Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah?" "BJP leaders have decided to not make comments on leaders of other parties. The achievements of PM Modi for 10 years is the strength of BJP, following which, the party is going to get more than 400 seats in the Lok Sabha election," he stated.

Kerala Christians observe Good Friday, poll candidates join in

Thiruvananthapuram, Mar 29 (IANS) Good Friday was observed across churches in Kerala with a record turnout of the laity. The occasion of Good Friday is observed as a day of prayers, penance and fasting to commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on Calvary Hills more than 2,000 years ago. Christians in Kerala account for around 18 per cent of the 3.30 crore population of the state and belong to various denominations; the Catholics account for over 50 per cent of all Christians and the remaining belong to the

Syrian Orthodox, Jacobite, CSI, Mar Thoma besides the various Pentecostal churches as well as the new generation prayer groups. The churches have their own protocols for Good Friday service and for all, the mass on Good Friday is the longest of all the various masses in their religious calendar. While in some churches, the Good Friday mass begins around 8.30 a.m. and end around 1 p.m., in the Orthodox and Jacobite churches it ends after 2 p.m. The most important event on Good Friday in churches is the 'Way of the

Cross' -- the 14 stations on Christ's journey to Mount Calvary from Pilate's palace are enacted with the laity moving to each station, singing hymns as the story of the betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion of Christ is narrated by the priest. The second significant ritual that happens in all churches is the customary ritual of drinking 'choruka' (a concoction of bitter gourd juice and vinegar) by all. When the Good Friday mass reaches its last lap, the priest pours out a spoon of 'choruka' into the mouth of each and every person who has come for

the mass. This symbolises the cry, a crucified Jesus made just before he died, and how some onlookers took a piece of cloth, dipped it in cheap wine, put it on a piece of stick, lifted it to his mouth and tried to make him drink. And at the end of the mass is drinking of 'kanji' (the steaming hot gruel made with rice). The other highlight of this Good Friday was with the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in Kerala on April 26, candidates from the three political fronts was seen moving from one church to the other, wishing and greeting their voters.



BRS leader K Keshav Rao meeting Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at his residence, in Hyderabad on Friday. UNI

Top 10 pc students at IIM-Rohtak secure CTC of Rs 37.25 lakh per annum

New Delhi, March 29 (IANS) Indian Institute of Management-Rohtak (IIM-Rohtak) has concluded the placement season for the 13th batch of its flagship 2-year postgraduate programme with the top 10 per cent of the students receiving an average of Rs 37.25 lakh per annum package.

According to the IIM, the average CTC received by the students stands at Rs 19.27 lakh per annum (LPA).

The IIM said it showed a 3 per cent year on year (YoY) growth over the past year's average. The top 25 per cent were offered an average of Rs 29.28 LPA and the top 50 per cent got Rs 24.13 LPA respectively.

Prof. Dheeraj Sharma, Director, IIM-Rohtak told IANS, "This placement season experienced the participation of sizeable number of faithful loyal recruiters and engagement of numerous new companies. This year, the institute forged alliances with more than 200 companies. This includes new recruiters like Airtel Payments Bank, Bloomberg, Decathlon, Dell, Havells, IDBI Bank, and Maruti Suzuki. Loyal recruiters like Ado-

be, Aditya Birla, Tata Steel, Amazon, Barclays, Tata Steel, Capgemini, Cognizant, ICICI Bank, Mahindra and Mahindra continued to exhibit their faith in the ability of our students. This year also witnessed a good number of pre placement offers being given by various recruiters."

Prof. Koustab Ghosh, Dean said the sales and marketing was the most sought after domain and accounted for 30 per cent of the received offers, compared to 21 per cent last year, indicative of its popularity among students. Notably, the highest CTC has also been offered in the domain.

Maoist conspiracy case: NIA files supplementary charge sheet against 8th accused

New Delhi, March 29 (IANS) The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday submitted a supplementary charge sheet at a special court in Visakhapatnam against the eighth accused in a conspiracy case related to radicalisation of vulnerable youth towards Maoist ideology and extension of support to the banned outfit, CPI (Maoist). The accused identified as Ramakkagiri Chandra has been charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, and Arms Act by the agency in its first supplementary charge sheet. A senior NIA officer said that the accused was a state committee member of the Pragathish-eela Karmika Samakhya (PKS), a frontal outfit for the CPI (Maoist).

Gurugram: Astro turf prepared in Nehru Stadium worth Rs 7.79 crore

Gurugram, March 29 (IANS) The dream of hockey players in Gurugram to play hockey on the Astro turf field is soon going to be fulfilled.

The new Astro turf at Nehru Stadium located at Civil Lines has been installed at Rs 7.79 crore.

The officials said preparations are being finalised in the international-level Astro turf field. To ensure that all the work is completed as per the set targets.

Deputy Commissioner Gurugram, Nishant Kumar Yadav inspected the Astro turf ground on Friday and gave necessary directions to the concerned officials and the agency related to the construction.

"The work on the much-awaited Astro turf ground in Gurugram was started on March 14 last year. Which is now ready. Some finishing work is still left on the Astro turf which will be completed in the next few days," Yadav said.

Yadav further said that to protect this new turf from waterlogging during the rainy season, the existing ground has been raised by about two and a

half feet. This new Astro turf prepared at the hockey ground in Gurugram will give a new direction to the game of hockey players. With which they will be able to bring glory to the country in international sports competitions.

With the construction of this new Astro turf in Gurugram, that golden era of hockey in Haryana, especially in Gurugram, is going to return.

Deputy Director of Sports Department Giriraj Yadav said that this ground is 91.40 meters long and 55 meters wide, while 6 sprinklers have been installed in it, which cover a distance of 45 to 50 meters.

Goan seaman honey-trapped, lost Rs 1.35 crore

Panaji, March 29 (IANS) A seaman from Goa was honey-trapped on dating app and Rs 1.35 crore were extorted from him, police said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Santosh Desai said that three persons have been booked in this connection.

The accused persons were extorting money from the complainant since 2020, he said.

He said that the accused persons honey-trapped the complainant on dating app, made his video and demanded money, failing which they threatened to make it viral.

"We have received a complaint from one Delano Fernandes, 45, resident of Cansaulim in South Goa, stating that he was looted of Rs 1.35 crore by the three accused persons. We have registered the case and are trying to verify the names of accused persons," Desai said.

Police have registered an offence against Zeeta Fernandes, Mary Fernandes and Shankar Jadhav, whose identity is yet to be established.

"Finally, he lodged a police complaint at Verna Police station and now we are investigating it further," the police said.

India has democratised technology, aims to end digital divide: PM Modi

New Delhi, March 29 (IANS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said technology is meant to empower people from all strata of the society and India has achieved democratisation of new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) to help millions of people especially in rural parts of the country.

In an exclusive conversation with Microsoft Co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates, PM Modi said that for him, the best use of technology is in areas like healthcare, agriculture and education. "We have estab-

lished 2 lakh 'Ayushman Arogya Mandir' across the country where people can get quality healthcare from medical specialists from best hospitals with the use of modern technology," PM Modi told Gates.

Launched under the umbrella of Ayushman Bharat, Ayushman Arogya Mandir scheme has the goal to provide comprehensive, affordable and quality healthcare services to citizens across urban and rural areas.

The Namo Drone Didi and Lakhpati Didi initiatives are integral to the Prime Minister Modi's vision of fostering economic empowerment and fi-

nancial autonomy among women, especially in rural areas.

"When I speak to women involved in the 'Namo Drone Didi' initiative, they feel so happy that they could not ride a bicycle but now, they are using drones in the fields and have become innovators of modern agricultural methods," PM Modi emphasised.

The Prime Minister further said that he will not let digital divide affect people in the country and India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is a shining example for the world.



Union Tourism Minister and BJP Telangana State President G. Kishan Reddy interacting with people visit his visit to Secunderabad parliamentary constituency ahead of the Lok Sabha elections on Friday. UNI

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