

Western Times

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News Brief

J&K: CRPF trooper dies during routine exercise

Srinagar, March 21 (IANS) A CRPF trooper fell unconscious on Thursday in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district and was later declared dead.

Police said that a CRPF constable named Sreejith J. of the 162 Battalion fell unconscious during a routine exercise in the district police lines in Kupwara. "He was immediately shifted to a hospital in the town where doctors said he was dead on arrival," sources said.

Replacement of four District Magistrates in West Bengal ordered by ECI: Sources

Kolkata, March 21 (IANS) The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday directed the replacement of four District Magistrates in West Bengal before the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls, sources in the office of the state's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) said.

The four districts where the replacement of the DMs has been ordered by the ECI, include East Midnapore, East Burdwan, Jhargram and Birbhum. Sources in the CEO's office said that none of these DMs are Indian Administrative Service (IAS) cadre officers and all of them belong to the West Bengal Civil Service (Executive) category.

SC dismisses pleas seeking stay on fresh appointments to ECI

New Delhi, March 21 (IANS) The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed pleas seeking to stay fresh appointments to the Election Commission of India (ECI), made under the legislation which excludes the Chief Justice of India (CJI) from the process of appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the other Election Commissioners. "Applications are dismissed. Reasons to follow," said a Bench presided over by Justice Sanjiv Khanna. The Bench, also comprising Justice Dipankar Datta, was hearing the interlocutory applications seeking to restrain the Centre from filling the vacancies in the poll panel in accordance with the Chief Election Commissioner and the other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.

Punjab Health Secy gets notice on Moosewala's father's harassment claim

Chandigarh, March 21 (IANS) The Punjab government has issued a show-cause notice to Ajoy Sharma, Principal Health Secretary, after Sidhu Moosewala's father alleged 'harassment' regarding the birth of his second child. "However, you proceeded to act in the matter without bringing this issue to the notice of your Minister-in-charge and Hon'ble Chief Minister and without taking any orders from them," the government said in a notice.

Congress' bankruptcy is moral and intellectual, not financial: JP Nadda

New Delhi, Mar 21 (UNI) BJP President JP Nadda on Thursday hit out at the Congress for blaming the government for blocking its accounts and said, "Instead of correcting their errors, Congress is blaming authorities for their troubles". Taking to social media post-X, Nadda said, "Be it the ITAT or the Delhi HC, they have asked the Congress to comply with the rules, and pay the taxes due but the Party never did so". Nadda's comments came after the Congress Chairperson

levelled serious allegations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that "Prime Minister has made a systematic effort to cripple the party financially".

"This issue affects not just the Indian National Congress, but our democracy itself. Funds collected from the public are being frozen and money from our accounts is being taken away forcibly" she alleged. Rebutting the Congress charges, Nadda said, "Congress is going to be rejected by the people,



and fearing a historic defeat, their top leadership addressed a press conference and ranted against Indian democracy and institutions. They are conveniently blaming their irrelevance on 'financial troubles'. In reality, their bankruptcy is moral and intellectual, not financial". Hitting out over the corruption charges, Nadda said, "For a party which has looted from every sector, in every state and at every moment of history, to talk of financial helplessness is comical....adding that

Congress can use the money accumulated from all their scams starting from jeep to chopper scam via Bofors for their electioneering". In an apparent attack on Rahul Gandhi, the BJP President said, "Congress part-time leaders say India being a democracy is a lie.... may I humbly remind them that India was not a democracy only for a few months between 1975 and 1977 and that time the Prime Minister of India was none other than Mrs. Indira Gandhi".



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi arrive to brief the media, at AICC headquarters, in New Delhi on Thursday. UNI

Rs 10 crore cash seized in Telangana during searches ahead of polls

Hyderabad, March 21 (IANS) Police in Telangana have so far seized Rs 10 crore cash in the run-up to May 13 Lok Sabha elections in the state while the Command and Control Centre of the Police Department in Hyderabad has been directed to monitor the transportation of liquor through CCTVs.

The police have also seized unlicensed weapons, explosives, gelatine sticks and gold during the searches conducted so far.

This was revealed during a meeting held by Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari with departments of various officials on the implementation of the model code of conduct.

She asked them to

work in coordination to effectively implement the model code of conduct in the wake of the Lok Sabha elections.

Senior officers of Police, Excise, Commercial Taxes, Forest, Revenue, Transport and other departments participated in this meeting. The Chief Secretary asked the officials to work more efficiently in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections with the same spirit as they did in the recently held Legislative Assembly elections.

Officials informed that in addition to setting up special check posts on the border states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, effective surveillance has been

stepped up in coordination with the check posts of the neighbouring states. Special control rooms have been set up by all major departments for the conduct of elections and the implementation of the code of conduct.

Check posts have been set up by various departments in the state. Of these, there are 444 check posts by the police department and nine interstate check-posts. Fifteen check posts and 52 enforcement teams have been set up by the transport department. These check posts will work round the clock. During the inspections carried out by the transport department teams, Rs 34.31 lakh was seized.



Korean Cultural Centre in India celebrating Holi where Indian and Korean together were immersed in different colours, in New Delhi on Thursday. UNI

Constituency Watch: Bengal BJP President confident of increasing victory margin in Balurghat

Kolkata, March 21 (IANS) This is probably for the first time that Balurghat, the sole Lok Sabha constituency on the Indo-Bangladesh bordering South Dinajpur district of West Bengal, is so much in the limelight.

In all probability Balurghat this time will witness a four-cornered contest as the Congress has announced its decision to field a candidate from there although the Left Front has already nominated the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) candidate Joydeb Siddhant.

The main candidate for whom the Balurghat constituency has become a high-profile seat this time is state BJP President Sukanta Majumdar, who is the sitting Lok Sabha member from there.

By his own admission, his target this time is to increase his winning margin from a little over 33,000 votes achieved in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. There are many reasons for his confidence.

He is known as an MP who has nurtured his constituency during the last five years and has been active in negotiating with the Union government to get funds for the development of the district. The

most significant development is the improvement in railway networking. "The train by which I travelled to Balurghat today was unimaginable five years back. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi says that a 'Viksit Bharat' is never possible without 'Viksit Bengal', he means it, the reflection of which is evident from the

improvement in the railway network in the district during the last couple of years," Majumdar said after his first tour of Balurghat after being re-nominated by his party. The Trinamool Congress has fielded Biplab Mitra, the only member of the state cabinet from South Dinajpur district, as the party candidate from Balurghat.

Phone tapping case: Telangana HC dismisses petition of suspended intelligence officer

Hyderabad, March 21 (IANS) The Telangana High Court on Thursday dismissed the petition of suspended intelligence officer D. Praneeth Rao, who challenged a lower court's order handing him over to police custody in a phone tapping case.

Praneeth Rao, the former Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) of the Special Intelligence Branch (SIB), is being questioned by the Special Investigation Team about the allegations that he tapped the phones of opposition leaders prior to 2023.

A lower court had last week remanded him to police custody for seven

days. Challenging the order and complaining that he was being questioned round the clock, the suspended DSP had filed the Memorandum of Criminal Revision Petition.

During the hearing on the petition, public prosecutor P. Nageshwar Rao had submitted to the court that Praneeth Rao was being questioned as per the orders of the lower court.

The High Court was also told that the police station where he was being inquired has all the required facilities. The public prosecutor told the court that the petitioner was speaking to his par-

BJP veteran Gunjal joins Congress; may take on Om Birla

Jaipur, March 21 (IANS) Veteran BJP leader Prahlad Gunjal on Thursday joined the Congress in the presence of former Rajasthan Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot and PCC chief Govind Singh Dotasra, along with many other leaders at the state Congress office. Congress leaders said the party was planning to give a ticket to Gunjal and field him against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

"I will give my 100 per cent to help the Congress win in the Hadoti region," said Gunjal after joining the Congress.

"We will work as a team this is what I assure you. I have been living with niti (policies) and riti (eth-

ics) however I was left tormented," he added.

"The BJP has nothing left in Kota except 'Bada bhai sahab' and 'Chhotu bhai sahab'", he said without taking the name of Lok Sabha Speaker Birla who is also known as 'Bade bhai sahab' in Kota.

Sources said that the veteran leader is annoyed with the BJP and has a running feud with Om Birla. However he has been a supporter of former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje.

Speaking on the occasion, ex-CM Gehlot said, "Leaders with mass support base are being eliminated in the BJP. Democracy is being torn to pieces in the country today."

"Good leaders in the BJP are feeling suffocated. First the party makes allegations and as soon as that person joins the BJP he becomes a clean and polished person. This situation persists across the country," he added.

"Gunjal has joined the party after being influenced by the policies of the Congress at a time when democracy is in danger in the country," said senior leader Gehlot.

PCC chief Dotasra alleged that there was dictatorship in the BJP and power had shifted into the hands of some people while leaders with mass base were being eliminated. "Gunjal is a strong leader.

Election Commission posts new Punjab DCS, DIGs

Chandigarh, March 21 (IANS) Punjab Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sibin C on Thursday said the Election Commission of India has appointed Himanshu Agarwal, who was the Deputy Commissioner of Gurdaspur, as the new Deputy Commissioner of Jalandhar. Likewise, Vishesh Sarangal has been appointed as Deputy Commissioner of Gurdaspur. In addition, Jagdale Nilambari Vijay has been posted as DIG of the Ropar Range, while Rakesh Kumar Kaushal has been appointed as DIG of the Border Range, he added. Earlier in the day, the ECI had ordered the transfer of several non-cadre officers who are posted at leadership positions as Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) in Punjab.

Transfer of four DMs: Bengal Govt ignored ECI's guidelines on postings

Kolkata, March 21 (IANS) The Election Commission of India's (ECI) directive on Thursday to remove four District Magistrates (DMs) in West Bengal could have been avoided, had the state government chosen not to ignore the guidelines for entrusting officers with poll duties.

According to sources in the West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer's (CEO) office, even before the election dates were announced top officials of the commission during their visit to the state clearly said that only DMs coming from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) cadres can be given election related duties.

It had stressed that under no circumstance should those promoted as DMs from the state civil service cadre be used for poll duties.

None of the transferred DMs are IAS-cadre officers and all of them belong to the West Bengal Civil Service (Executive) category.

Sources said either this guideline remained unnoticed by the state administration or the latter

chose to ignore it.

However, sources added, the matter did not remain unnoticed by the ECI, which is evident from Thursday's directive on the transfers of DMs of East Midnapore, East Burdwan, Jhargram and Birbhum.

"Under the directive, all

respective state governments have been instructed to promptly transfer non-encadred officers from their current roles as DM and SP/SSP, with immediate effect, and submit a compliance report to the Commission," the concluding lines of the directive from the ECI read.

Elvish Yadav to be produced in Gurugram court on March 27

Gurugram, March 21 (IANS) Bigg Boss OTT winner Elvish Yadav is to be produced in a court on March 27 in connection with an assault case involving fellow YouTuber Sagar Thakur a.k.a. Maxtern, the police said.

While confirming the latest update in the matter, SHO Sector 53 police station, Rajender Kumar told IANS, that the court of Harsh Kumar, Judicial Magistrate First Class, has fixed his appearance on March 27.

He will be produced by the Uttar Pradesh police in the Gurugram court after the Gurugram police takes Yadav into custody, he said.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Gurugram police had applied for a production warrant for Yadav in a Gurugram court.

The incident occurred at a shopping mall in the Sector 53 area on March 8.

He said once Elvish is brought in on the production warrant, he will be questioned regarding the assault case and they will also seek information regarding others involved in the incident based on the information obtained during the interrogation.



Participants of the inaugural edition of International Strategic Engagement Programme (IN-STEP) calls on the Vice President, Jagdeep Dhankhar at Upa-Rashtrapati Nivas, in New Delhi on Thursday. UNI

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