



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a press conference at Nabanna in Howrah.

"Withdraw Waqf Bill," TN CM Stalin urges PM Modi

MI News Service, Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting him to withdraw the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

In a letter to PM Modi on Wednesday, Stalin said the Constitution grants every citizen the right to follow their respective religion and it is the duty of the elected governments to uphold and protect this right. However, the proposed amendments to the Waqf Act, 1995 have not taken into consideration the constitutional protection given to minorities and are "bound to severely harm the interest of Muslim community."

The chief minister sought the Prime minister's personal intervention on this issue and underlined that the Tamil Nadu Assembly passed a

resolution a few days ago to urge the Centre to withdraw the Bill.

The provisions in the existing Waqf Act are time tested and they provide protection to the properties of the Waqf. The amendments proposed to the Waqf Act will weaken the powers and responsibilities of Waqf Boards in the management and protection of waqf properties.

The large-scale modifications proposed across wide range of sections in the existing Act will dilute the very spirit of the Act itself. For example, the proposed mandatory inclusion of two non-Muslim members in State Waqf Boards will undermine the religious autonomy of the Muslim community's ability to manage its religious and charitable endowments independently. Removal of the 'Waqf by user' provision

threatens the status of many historical Waqf properties, he emphasized.

The stipulation that the individuals who practiced Islam for at least five years only can donate properties to Waqf will prevent non-Muslims from donating properties to Waqf which will hinder the syncretic culture of the country. Since the existing Waqf Act, 1995 is adequate and has clear-cut provisions to safeguard the interest and properties of Waqfs, it is our view that there is no need for such far reaching amendments to the existing Waqf Act, 1995. Considering all such aspects, the Tamil Nadu Assembly on March 27, 2025 passed an unanimous resolution to urge the union government to completely withdraw the proposed Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, the Chief minister in his letter to the PM said.

Mamata Banerjee condemns medicine price hike, Ram Navami controversy and Waqf bill

MI News Service, Kolkata: As West Bengal readies itself for the grand celebrations of Ram Navami, slated for the coming Sunday (April 6), the state government has made elaborate arrangements to ensure a seamless and peaceful celebration of the day.

With processions being planned across various districts of the state and leadership roles already designated, security has been prioritized. To this end, the state government has canceled all leave of police personnel to bolster law enforcement presence and maintain order. Amid these preparations, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressed the media on Wednesday on the issue and also raising strong objections to the substantial hike in prices of long list of medicines and calling for public demonstrations against the increase. Effective April 1, the costs of approximately 900 essential drugs have surged, a development that has drawn sharp criticism from the Chief Minister. Expressing her dismay, she stated, "I am deeply troubled and saddened by this unjustified hike. It is imperative that the underprivileged have access to essential commodities at reasonable prices. Food, clothing, and shelter are fundamental necessities, and healthcare should not be a luxury."

Elaborating on the extent of the price hike, Banerjee revealed that cholesterol medications, widely used by nearly 80 per cent people, have witnessed an alarming 31 per cent jump in prices. The cost of medicines for heart ailments has also soared by 57.9 per cent and 28.3 per cent respectively, while

some essential medicines have seen an escalation of up to 45.5 per cent. Prices of blood pressure medication has also gone up by 19 per cent. Slamming the central government for its perceived apathy, she asserted, "The Centre remains indifferent to the struggles of the poor and the middle class. I vehemently protest this price hike and demand its immediate rollback."

In response to this issue, the Chief Minister has called for statewide protests on April 4 and 5, urging citizens to join rallies at the block level. She reassured the public that no demonstrations would take place on Ram Navami day, stating, "We respect religious sentiments and will not organize protests on Ram Navami day. Instead, demonstrations will be conducted on previous two days."

Banerjee also voiced concerns over the imposition of GST on health insurance policies, urging the Prime Minister to reconsider its enforcement. Meanwhile, discussions continue regarding whether armed processions should be permitted during Ram Navami. On Tuesday, Kolkata Police Commissioner Manoj Verma emphasized that anyone found carrying weapons in processions on that day would face legal consequences. However, Banerjee's comments introduced some ambiguity. "Punjabis also carry kirpans. One must adhere to traditions accordingly," she remarked. Further addressing the issue, Banerjee condemned political factions that exploit religious processions to incite violence. "I challenge the 'Jumla Party' to celebrate other religious festivals as

well. Those who foment unrest through armed processions must comply with regulations," she asserted.

Dismissing false reports suggesting her resignation, Banerjee revealed that an FIR has been filed against those disseminating such misinformation. At the press conference at Nabanna, she denounced certain groups for spreading fake news and doctored videos aimed at creating social unrest. "Why should I even have to answer questions about my religious identity? Yesterday, false reports claimed that I had resigned. How many more lies will they manufacture? An FIR has already been lodged," she declared.

Banerjee cited previous instances where videos from Bangladesh were falsely portrayed as events from Murshidabad, suggesting a deliberate attempt to fuel communal discord. Without naming specific parties, she accused opposition groups, particularly the BJP and the CPM, of orchestrating misinformation campaigns to manipulate public perception.

Criticizing the BJP over the Waqf Amendment Bill, Banerjee accused the party of fostering division in the country. "The 'Jumla' party thrives on divisive politics. We, on the other hand, uphold the Constitution above all," she stated. Taking a swipe at the Left, she added, "The more they engage in such tactics, the faster they will fade into political irrelevance."

Reaffirming her commitment to countering misinformation, Banerjee pledged to safeguard communal harmony and uphold peace in the state.

Contentious Waqf Bill tabled in LS, Rijiju says it deals with properties, not religion

MI News Service, New Delhi: Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday tabled the much anticipated Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, in the Lok Sabha, which seeks to improve the functioning of Waqf properties, address complexities, ensure transparency and introduce technology-driven management.

Tabling the bill which was examined and redrafted by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), Rijiju said the legislation has nothing to do with religion, but deals only with proper-

ties. "The government is not going to interfere in any religious institution. The changes made in the Waqf law by the UPA government gave it overriding effect over other statutes, hence the new amendments were required," Rijiju said amid noisy opposition protest, adding, "You (opposition) tried to mislead the people on issues which are not part of the Waqf Bill."

Rijiju also claimed the consultation process of the JPC was the largest ever exercise carried out by

a parliamentary panel in India's democratic history. The minister said more than 97.27 lakh petitions and memorandums were received by the JPC through physical and online formats and the JPC had gone through each of them before finalising its report. As many as 284 delegations submitted their views on the Bill besides the Waqf boards of 25 states and Union Territories, he said. Legal luminaries, charitable

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Social Democratic Party of India activists took part in a protest rally for Waqf protection, and demanded the withdrawal of recent amendments to the Waqf Bill, in Kolkata

"May god shower blessings upon India!" say Myanmar locals about Operation Brahma

MI News Service, New Delhi / Mandalay: The local residents of this earthquake devastated second largest city of Myanmar have hailed India's extensive support in providing aid to them in their time of distress. Soon after the 7.7 magnitude tremor rocked the city and the region on Friday, India launched "Operation Brahma" by providing all necessary aid to the tremor victims and launched a massive rescue and relief operation on war footing. According to a resident of Mandalay, "We bow our head to India and its people for their support and launching a massive rescue and operations for the victims. I expressed my profound thanks on behalf of the all the people here for such huge Indian efforts. He said, "We got a great sense of relief when you came. You (Indians) are very hard-working people. We are very happy as we have benefited a lot from the arrival of nearly 100 NDRF personnel to assist the rescue efforts. May god shower blessings upon India and its leadership", he said. Similarly one NDRF member Kavita Singh said, "The tremor was so devastating that there was very little or no possibility of people being alive under the rubble. But now a few days have already passed, and we are now only retrieving dead bodies from under the rubble", she said. Singh also acknowledged that the NDRF team has received necessary support from the locals. She shared an incident wherein a family came to the NDRF team and hoped for positive results following the team's efforts for the rescue operations. "We are very proud and thankful that you have come to help us", the locals told them.

Thousands of refugees settled in Manipur since 1960s, reveals Ex-CM

MI News Service, Imphal: Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh has admitted that thousands of refugees have settled in the strife torn state since 1960s "with the knowledge of the authorities" and those people were provided all assistance for their rehabilitation in different parts of Manipur.

Singh, who resigned as the Chief minister in February leading to the imposition of President's Rule in the restive state, also wondered what happened to those families and whether those people were added to the electoral roll.

His comments, made in a lengthy post on X on Wednesday, came a day after BJP MLAs of Manipur sought a "review" of the 2001 Census and implementation of the NRC before carrying out delimitation exercise in the state.

When Singh was the Chief minister, the Centre also accused him of settling many illegal immigrants from Myanmar, who were largely responsible for the unabated ethnic violence in the state leaving more than 250 people dead since May 2023.

"Official records show that even before we became a full-fledged state, thousands of refugees were settled here with the

knowledge of the authorities at the time. As early as the late 1960s and early 70s, documents reveal the presence of over 1,500 families who had crossed over and were provided assistance for rehabilitation," Singh said in the post.

Manipur first became a Union Territory on November 1, 1956, before being granted full statehood on January 21, 1972.

Singh wondered, "What happened to those families? How were they integrated? How many generations have grown since then?... Were they eventually granted full rights? Were they added to electoral rolls?"

These questions have never been fully addressed in the public domain and the issue has remained largely unspoken, even as the demographic structure of the state changed over the years, the BJP leader claimed.

Paokai Haokip, then Member of Parliament from Manipur, wrote a letter to KC Pant, Minister of State for Home Affairs, informing him about the presence of over 1,500 refugee families who settled in Manipur by 1967. Singh said in the post, sharing a copy of the letter.

"His correspondence is just one among several

that confirm how deeply rooted and long-standing this issue is," the former chief minister said.

Wondering whether Manipur was "a dumping ground for refugees from the very beginning", Singh said it is important to ask whether there were legal mechanisms in place to ensure these individuals remained in refugee status.

Were they extended benefits meant for indigenous communities? These are not small matters; they touch the core of our identity, our social balance, and the direction we're heading in as a society," he said.

Singh said it is time to revisit this chapter and not to assign blame, but to understand what happened, reflect on its implications, and chart a fair and balanced path forward, as the issue has far-reaching consequences and will shape the state's present and future.

"From my experience in active politics and high office, I understand the weight it carries to a representative of the people. It's easy to go with the tide, but true responsibility lies in standing firm on facts. We owe it to our people to be truthful, defend their dignity, and be forward-looking. That's what it means to be a statesman, not just a politician," he said.

PM Modi to visit Thailand to attend BIMSTEC Summit

MI News Service, Bangkok: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the first head of state who will arrive here on Thursday after last week's devastating earthquake. On a two-day visit to the city where he will hold talks with his Thai counterpart Paetongtarn Shinawatra and attend the 6th BIMSTEC Summit.

Modi will be given a grand welcome by the Indian community in Thailand and is scheduled to meet Shinawatra at the Government House, where he will be accorded a ceremonial welcome.

On Thursday evening, the Prime Minister will join the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) leaders from Thailand, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal,

Myanmar and Bhutan to oversee the signing of the Agreement on Maritime Cooperation. The BIMSTEC summit will bring Modi face to face with Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, among others. It was not immediately clear whether Myanmar military junta leader Min Aung Hlaing is attending the Summit in person. Myanmar is grappling with the aftermath of the massive 7.7 magnitude earthquake that devastated its second-largest city, Mandalay, and other parts of the country on last Friday.

This would be the first physical meeting of the BIMSTEC leaders since the 4th BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2018. The last summit was held in Colombo in

March 2022 in virtual format.

Modi will also call on Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn, also known as Rama X, and Queen Suthida on Friday.

Prime Minister Modi and his Thai counterpart Shinawatra are scheduled to visit Wat Pho, one of the top six temples in Thailand that is famous for its massive reclining Buddha statue. Besides the gigantic reclining Buddha, the temple is well known for numerous Buddha images all around it. It was the first centre in Thailand for public education, offering science, religion and literature courses. The Prime Minister will attend the BIMSTEC Summit on Friday morning, where the regional grouping is expected to adopt the Bangkok Vision 2030.

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Kunal Kamra apologises to his audience for facing inconvenience

MI News Service, Mumbai: After playing a game of hide and seek with the Mumbai police for more than a week Comedian Kunal Kamra on Wednesday apologised to fans over police notices issued to them for attending his controversial show that has led to a massive political uproar.

A banker who attended Kamra's show in Mumbai was summoned as a witness after a case was registered

against the comic over his alleged jibes against Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, police said.

The comic is facing multiple FIRs for his alleged 'traitor' comments against Shinde during his latest stand-up show "Naya Bharat".

Comedian Kunal also apologised to a banker who reportedly had to cut short his trip after being

summoned by the Mumbai Police in a defamation case against the comedian Kunal Kamra apologised for the inconvenience caused to the man and promised to schedule his vacation anywhere in India. "I am deeply sorry for the inconvenience that attending my show has caused to you. Please email me so that I can

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Indian Navy boosts regional security as INS Tarkash seizes over 2500 kg narcotics

MI News Service, Mumbai: In one of biggest hauls in recent times, Indian Navy Frigate INS Tarkash has successfully intercepted and seized over 2500 kg of narcotics and other contrabands from an unregistered vessel in the Indian Ocean.

Informing this sources in the Indian Navy said on Wednesday that the successful seizure of such a large quantity of narcotics in the Indian maritime zone in Indian ocean by INS Tarkash, which is a frontline frigate

of the Indian Navy operating under the Western Naval Command, was considered to be a huge achievement of the navy's anti drug operations. This operation also underscores the Indian Navy's unwavering commitment to combating maritime crime and bolstering regional security. Deployed in the Western Indian Ocean since January 2025 for Maritime Security Operations, INS

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Cleanliness awareness prog at Barasat station Priyanka Gandhi condole demise of workers in factory fire

Lost and Found I, Amit Kumar Gupta, S/o Shyam Sunder Gupta...



Mandirbazar Development Block South 24 Parganas Memo No: 62/MBZ Date: 28.03.2025

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER e-Tender Notice No. E-DRM-Engg-ADRA-23-26-25 Dated : 01.04.2025

Notice I am Sharmistha Das w/o Santanu Das, residing at 1475, Block-B, Satabdi Park P. S-Panchasayan-Kol-99.

Notice e-Tender Notice No. : MC_SC_Curtain 2025, dt. 29.03.2025. Sealed Open tenders are invited by Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer, Eastern Railway, Sealdah, Room No. 42, 1st Floor, DRM Building, Kaizer Street, Kolkata-700014

E-Tender Notice No. : Engg/Storm Water/24-25/LLHR-3, dated 02.04.2025. E-Tender are invited by Chief Works Manager, Carriage and Wagon Workshop, Eastern Railway, Liluah, Howrah-711204

CHITTRANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS OPEN E-TENDER No. COS/CR/PUB/E-Tender/19/0162 Date: 01/04/2025

E-TENDER NOTICE No. NIT/02/25/19, dated 01.04.2025. E-Tenders are invited by Principal Chief Materials Manager, Eastern Railway, 2nd Floor, Fairlie Place, 17, Netaji Subhas Road, Kolkata-700001

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MI News Service, Banaskantha: Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday expressed deep sorrow over the tragic death of several workers in a firecracker factory explosion in Banaskantha, Gujarat, which occurred on Tuesday.

Lakh ex-gratia to the families of the workers killed in the firecracker factory fire in Gujarat's Banaskantha district.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav also announced Rs 2 crore ex-gratia to the injured and Rs 2 lakh ex-gratia to the families of the workers killed in the firecracker factory fire in Gujarat's Banaskantha district.

Public Notification Regarding Energization CESC siding at Budge Budge Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under-noted section of Eastern Railway...

Section Electrification of Existing un-wired line of CESC siding at Budge Budge from loc no. 26/8, Ch.26/197.00. (from Sealdah) to loc no. 30/CESC/9, Ch.30/634.00 (from Sealdah) & upto 30/FCI/13, Ch.30/355.00 on Sealdah Division of Eastern Railway for public carriage of goods and passenger traffic (Electrified Section).

Date of Energization: 16.04.2025 WARNING TO ROAD USERS It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25 kv AC, Electric Traction over the above mentioned section...

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DEBRA THANA SAHID KSHUDIRAM SMRITI MAHAVIDYALAYA (Autonomous, Government Aided, NAAC Accredited 'A' Grade College, affiliated to Vidyasagar University)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER Tender Reference No. dtkskn/NIT76/252nd call dated: 01/04/2025 Tender ID - 2025. DHE, 832363.1

Name of the work Supply and installation of Computers and Laptops Bid Submission Start Date 02/04/2025 at 11 AM Bid Submission End Date 16/04/2025 at 6 PM

শ্রী সুরজ দাস পিতা - শ্রী গোপীনাথ দাস সাকিম- মহেশপুৰ, পোৰ সুগন্ধা, থানা পোলাবা, জেলা- হুগলী, পিন-৭১১০১১, বিসত ইং- ২৪/০৪/২০২১

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[Part II Sec 3(ii)] The Gazette of India: Extraordinary

Table containing numerical data, likely a list of plots or measurements, organized in rows and columns.

Plot number to be acquired in Mouza-ChakBankola, Jurisdiction List No-19, PS-Pandabeswar, Dist-Paschim Bardhaman (West Bengal). Plot number to be acquired in Mouza-Banbahal, Jurisdiction List No-26, PS-Pandabeswar, Dist-Paschim Bardhaman (West Bengal).

'Run for a Girl Child' marathon to be held at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on April 13

New Delhi : 'Run for a Girl Child' marathon aimed at promoting adolescent development and women empowerment will be held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on April 13, Sewa Bharti -- a voluntary organisation operating since 1979 -- said in a statement on Wednesday.

The run organised by Sewa Bharti will begin at 5 am at the stadium and will feature three categories -- a 10 km timed race, a 5 km fun run and a 3 km fun run, the statement said.

Sewa Bharti said eminent personalities from sports, business, entertainment and public service have also been invited to participate in the marathon.

This initiative has received support from former cricketers Virender Sehwag and Shikhar Dhawan, Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora and former athlete and Rajya Sabha MP PT Usha, the statement said.

The marathon aims to raise awareness about the importance of supporting young girls through



education, skill development and social initiatives. Philanthropic entrepreneurs and businesses have also been encouraged to join the event. "Sewa Bharti is committed to involving all sections of the society in this effort. Through

'Run for a Girl Child', we aim to provoke thought among people about the welfare of women and the girl child," Sewa Bharti president Ramesh Agarwal said. Event coordinator Nidhi Ahuja said it has been held in

Telangana for the past decade and was recently conducted in Gujarat's Surat, where nearly 10,000 people participated.

"This year, we are launching it in Delhi with a target of 5,000 participants, including professional runners, youth, residents from various communities, and women and girls from SEWA Bastis/slums. Our goal is to make this an annual event," she added.

Ahuja said Sewa Bharti has already established 132 adolescent development centers in Delhi's service settlements to reach one lakh girls.

The official T-shirt for the marathon was also unveiled during a pre-event gathering.

Sewa Bharti runs programs focused on education, healthcare and self-reliance across 1,123 service settlements in Delhi. The marathon is one of its initiatives to bridge gaps between different sections of the society and provide opportunities for women and girls.

SC notes objections to clauses of AIFF draft constitution

New Delhi : The Supreme Court on Wednesday heard the objections to the clauses of the All India Football Federation's (AIFF) draft constitution prepared by former apex court judge L Nageswara Rao. Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, amicus curiae in the case, referred to the national sports development code to submit before a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Joymalya Bagchi that only the secretary and the treasurer should be asked to observe the cooling off period.

"We want that the constitution of the AIFF should be in alignment with national sports code and FIFA regulations," he said. The hearing remained inconclusive.

The draft constitution, prepared by Justice Rao on top court's directions, proposed some radical changes, including a person holding the office for a maximum period of 12 years during their lifetime subject to serving a maximum of two successive terms of four years each.

While it said a cooling off period of four years had to be observed after eight years as an office bearer of the sports body, the draft said a person couldn't remain a member of the sports body after attaining 70 years of age. Under the draft constitution, the executive committee of the AIFF would have 14 members, who would be under the age and tenure restrictions. There will be one president, two



vice presidents (a man and a woman), one treasurer and 10 other members, it added.

Of the 10 other members, five would be eminent players including two women. The draft constitution also has provisions for the removal of the office bearers, including the president, through a no-confidence motion which the existing constitution of the AIFF does not have.

The top court had commenced the hearing on March 25 on the pleas related to the finalisation of AIFF's constitution.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, who is also assisting the bench as an amicus curiae, started the submissions by referring to important clauses of the AIFF's Constitution and said some members and former players had objections to certain clauses. The top court had earli-

er asked former apex court judge L Nageswara Rao to prepare the Constitution of the AIFF. The bench subsequently took note of the draft constitution and asked Justice Rao to prepare a report after taking note of the objections of several stakeholders to the various constitutional schemes.

The bench was hearing a plea related to the finalisation of the constitution of the AIFF after taking note of "clause-by-clause" objections of the stakeholders from the realm of football in the country.

The bench took note of Sankaranarayanan's submissions that in certain respects, the suggestions to the draft constitution were accepted except those "in breach of either the judgements of this court or the national sports code".

Over 1 million resources hired through GeM in 2024-25: Govt

1 MILLION+ WORKFORCE HIRED (FY 24-25)

GeM ensures compliant & efficient workforce procurement through its Manpower Outsourcing Service



New Delhi : Public procurement platform GeM has facilitated the hiring of over one million manpower resources by government organisations during 2024-25, an official statement said. Manpower outsourcing of GeM (Government e-marketplace) provides government buyers with a seamless solution to hire outsourced resources. Over 33,000 service providers on the platform enable buyers to engage manpower based on diverse criteria, including minimum wages and fixed remuneration, the commerce ministry said. Various skilled and unskilled roles such as security personnel, horticulture staff, multi-tasking staff, data entry operators, and facility management professionals can be hired through the portal. "GeM has achieved a significant milestone by facilitating the hiring of over 1 million manpower resources by government organizations in 2024-25," it said. CEO of GeM Ajay Bhadoo said, "Our manpower outsourcing service not only simplifies the hiring process for government organisations but also ensures strict labour compliance through our comprehensive service level agreement".

No concept of dropping out in higher education multiple options for students: Minister

New Delhi : There is no concept of dropping out in higher education as students have multiple options and they migrate from one course or programme to another, Union Minister of State (MoS) for Education Sukanta Majumdar said on Wednesday.

The MoS shared the information in response to a written question in Rajya Sabha about drop out and suicide rates in IITs, NITs, IIMs and central universities.

"As in the higher education sector, students have multiple options and they choose and migrate from one course or programme to another, as such there is no concept of drop out in Higher education. However, to increase access in higher education, the government has taken various steps like financial assistance and scholarships like Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Protsahan (PM-USP) Scheme, fee waiver or reduction of disadvantaged groups, promote study loans like PM-Vidyalakshmi scheme, establishment of more institutes, student support system like establishment of counselling cells, strengthening of grievance redressal mechanism, providing remedial coaching, initiatives under online and digital learning (ODL) like SWAYAM, National Digital Library (NDL) and e-PG Pathshala," he added.

Majumdar informed that in light of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a slew of initiatives for academic reforms have been undertaken like multiple entry and exit options, Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) etc.

"To address the issue of suicide, the government is taking multi-pronged measures and provides psychological support to students, teachers and families for mental and emotional well-being to avoid incidence of suicide.

"An initiative of Ministry of Education, MAN-ODARPAN, covers a wide range of activities to provide psychological support to students, teachers and families for mental and emotional well-being," he said.

Delhi govt tightens pollution control measures announces EV push

New Delhi : Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced in the assembly on Wednesday that the Delhi government will introduce a new policy for issuing Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates to vehicles from other states, in a bid to tackle air pollution. The move comes in response to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report titled 'Vehicular Air Pollution in Delhi', which flagged lapses in the national capital's pollution control mechanisms. Gupta also announced a significant expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in Delhi, stating that by 2026, the city will have 48,000 charging points- 18,000 government-operated and 30,000 semi-private.

Additionally, six new air quality monitoring centres will be set up to improve pollution tracking and enforcement. The chief minister further revealed plans to establish a new eco-park dedicated to processing electronic waste, aiming to curb air pollution



caused by improper disposal of e-waste. "These steps are crucial in strengthening Delhi's fight against pollution, ensuring stricter enforcement and better infrastructure," Gupta said while speaking on the CAG report.

As air pollution remains a persistent challenge in Delhi, the government's latest measures aim to address policy gaps and improve

regulatory oversight to ensure cleaner air for residents.

CM Gupta made these announcements on the final day of the first Budget Session of Delhi's eighth Legislative Assembly. The BJP won 48 out of 70 seats in the February elections, ending AAP's decade-long rule and marking its return to power in the national capital after 27 years.

Protests broke out against Hamas in Gaza. What do Palestinians think about this militant group

Deir Al-Balah (Gaza Strip) : Thousands of Palestinians chanted against Hamas during anti-war protests last week in the Gaza Strip, the biggest show of anger at the militant group since its attack on Israel ignited the war.

Protesters said they were venting anger and desperation as they endure a new round of war and displacement after Israel ended a ceasefire. They levelled unusually direct criticism at Hamas even while remaining furious at Israel, the United States and others for their plight. Public expressions of dissent have been extremely rare since Hamas seized power in Gaza in 2007. The militant group has violently dispersed occasional protests and jailed, tortured or killed those who challenged its rule. Hamas has faced no significant internal challenge since the start of the war and still controls Gaza, despite losing most of its top leaders and thousands of fighters.

There is also nearly universal anger at Israel, whose offensive has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and flattened entire neighbourhoods. Israel has blocked all humanitarian aid for a month and renewed its offensive. Israel blames the high death toll on Hamas because it operates in densely populated areas, accusing it of showing no concern for Palestinian civilians.

"The protest was not about politics. It was about people's lives," said Mohammed Abu Saker, a father of three from the bombed-out town of Beit Hanoun who joined a demonstration. "We can't stop Israel from killing us, but we can press Hamas to give concessions."

Is Hamas popular?

Nearly all Palestinians support some form of resistance to Israel's military occupation and expansion of settle-

ments - which predate Hamas' founding in the 1980s. In general, support for Hamas in the occupied West Bank and Gaza tends to increase when it battles Israel and subside during periods of relative calm.

The Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research, which has conducted scientific polling in Gaza and the West Bank for decades, found before this war began that about equal numbers of Palestinians supported Hamas and the secular Fatah movement led by President Mahmoud Abbas, who recognises Israel and cooperates with it on security. But polls taken since the start of the war show Hamas has been consistently more popular than Fatah. The change is particularly pronounced in the West Bank, where support for Hamas rose immediately after the October 7, 2023 attack.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people that day, mostly civilians, and took 251 hostages.

In Gaza, the polls provide some evidence that support for Hamas rose slightly in the immediate aftermath of the attack, but since then has returned to about where it stood previously.

Hamas has not had the support of most Palestinians, in either territory, either before or after the war began. Wartime polling in Gaza is especially challenging due to a lack of access to some regions and mass displacement. There is also potentially even more pressure on respondents to answer a particular way. Tahani Mustafa, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, said it's difficult to gauge Hamas' support. "I wouldn't say it's either popular or unpopular at this point in time," she said. The Associated Press contacted dozens of Palestinians about Hamas in recent months. The vast majority



declined to be interviewed or requested anonymity, fearing retribution from Hamas - or from Israel if they voiced support for the group. Many said they were just struggling to stay alive.

Israel's offensive has killed over 50,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were civilians or combatants. The ministry is led by medical professionals but reports to the Hamas-run government. Its toll is seen as generally reliable by UN agencies and independent experts, though Israel has challenged its numbers. Israel says it has killed some 20,000 militants, without providing evi-

dence. Hamas has not disclosed the full extent of its losses.

How does Hamas handle dissent?

Hamas has violently suppressed dissent since seizing power from the Palestinian Authority - led by Fatah. Rights groups say both Palestinian authorities crack down on protests and detain and torture critics.

In the past, Hamas has killed people it accused of being collaborators with Israel, as well as some who have challenged its rule. There are no confirmed reports of anyone being killed for taking part in the latest protests.

Israel and Western nations consid-

er Hamas a terrorist organisation because of its long history of attacks that have killed Israeli civilians.

Gaza residents, speaking on condition of anonymity out of security concerns, say plainclothes Hamas security men have patrolled the territory throughout the war, maintaining law and order while also quashing dissent.

But Hamas' detractors may have other reasons for staying quiet.

Any perceived criticism of armed resistance against Israel is generally frowned upon in Palestinian society and seen as treasonous by some, especially during wartime.

Family elders of Beit Lahiya, where the first protest erupted last week, released a statement backing demands to end to the war while reaffirming their support for armed resistance. Saeed Abu Elaish, a medic from Jabalya, one of the most heavily damaged areas in Gaza, lost his wife, their two daughters and several relatives in an Israeli airstrike. He said he's sick of hearing Hamas leaders call for more sacrifice. "Stop this war. Stop these massacres," he said. But he was also angry at Israel's expressions of support for the protests, accusing it of exploiting them. "It's mainly against Israel before it's against Hamas," he said.

Many Palestinians see armed resistance as the only path to independence because peace negotiations and forms of nonviolent resistance - like boycotts - have largely failed.

"There is a red line in the Palestinian national discourse. You simply don't criticise armed resistance," Mustafa said. "To do that will then provide the kind of pretext that Israel and the international community are looking for" to support Israel's actions.

Why is there no alternative to

