

MUSTREAD

22 TN fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan Navy

Chennai: In a fresh incident, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 22 fishermen from Tamil Nadu early on Thursday morning while fishing in the high seas near the Palk Strait. The fishermen, hailing from Rameswaram in Ramanathapuram district, had ventured into the sea last night when they were arrested by the Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing in their territorial waters after crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). The fishermen were arrested while they were fishing near the Katchatheevu islet and their four mechanised boats were impounded by the Lankan Navy personnel. After their arrest, the fishermen were taken to Kanke-santhurai in Sri Lanka along with their boats for further action.

Kavitha demands RTC merger with govt, backs 'Chalo Secretariat' call

Hyderabad: Telangana Jagruthi president Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Thursday demanded immediate allocation of funds in the upcoming budget session to implement promises made to Road Transport Corporation (RTC) employees, including the merger of the corporation with the state government. Speaking to the media, Kavitha said both the previous BRS government and the Congress had promised to merge RTC with the government and a Bill to that effect had already been passed. "There is nothing new to do now except implement it. Once merged, RTC will become a full-fledged government institution," she said. Alleging exploitation of RTC workers, Kavitha called for the immediate reinstatement of dismissed employees and demanded that permanent staff be recruited instead of outsourcing workers. She sought a white paper on RTC finances, expenditure under the Mahalaxmi free bus scheme, and grants released so far.

SpiceJet signs MoU for 10 aircraft

New Delhi: SpiceJet has received a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the induction of 10 aircraft, marking a fresh milestone in the airline's ongoing capacity expansion and network rebuilding efforts. The development comes close on the heels of the airline's board approving a calibrated ramp-up of its fleet to 60 aircraft. The expansion will be executed through a mix of wet and damp leases, along with the phased return of grounded aircraft to service, as the carrier steadily regains operational momentum. SpiceJet's recovery has accelerated in recent months.

Rajnath Singh calls for Global Maritime Cooperation

Visakhapatnam (UNI)

Stressing the growing complexity of maritime security challenges, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday called for stronger global naval cooperation, asserting that "no single navy, however capable, can address these challenges alone."

Delivering the opening address at MILAN 2026, here, the Minister highlighted the urgent need to safeguard national waters from "nefarious terrorist activities" spreading across regions.

Singh said that traditional threats now coexist with emerging risks such as piracy, maritime terrorism, illegal fishing, trafficking, cyber vulnerabilities and disruptions to critical supply chains. He also brought out the impact of climate change in intensifying natural disasters, making humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations more frequent and demanding.

Emphasising that cooperation



among navies is no longer optional but imperative, the Defence Minister noted that the responsibilities of maritime forces have expanded significantly in recent decades amid increasingly interconnected global challenges.

"The role of Navies in international peacemaking has only increased over time. There has been an exponential economic growth dur-

ing the last few decades leading to a massive increase in international trade and transport. There has also been a rise in contests for ownership of straits and channels, sometimes causing threats of flare-up. Increasing international attention to underwater resources, particularly rare-earth minerals is adding a new dimension to this tension. In addition, there is a need to guard our waters from the nefarious terrorist activities which are spreading tentacles across countries and regions," he said.

Reflecting on the evolution of naval power across the globe, Singh said, "The increase of naval power has historically been equated with the era of mercantilism and colonialism."

Yediyurappa signals solo BJP push for 2028

Bengaluru (UNI)

Signalling a decisive political line for the future, veteran BJP leader BS Yediyurappa on Thursday set the tone for the 2028 Karnataka Assembly elections by calling for the party to secure power independently, carefully avoiding any reference to its alliance with the Janata Dal (Secular), and asserting that he remains ready to play an active role despite being 82.

Felicitated for completing 50 years in public life at the BJP state executive meeting in Bengaluru, Yediyurappa used the occasion not merely as a commemorative milestone but as a political message to party cadres: the road to 2028 must be paved with organisational strength and self-reliance.

Calling upon workers to "dislodge



the corrupt Congress government ruling the state," he stressed that the BJP must strive to come to power on its own strength in the next Assembly polls.

The emphasis on an independent mandate is significant in Karnataka's

Union Home Minister to launch VVP-II in Assam

New Delhi (UNI)

Home Minister Amit Shah will launch the Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II) in Assam on Friday, in an attempt to strengthen villages along the borders and promote inclusive development in border areas.

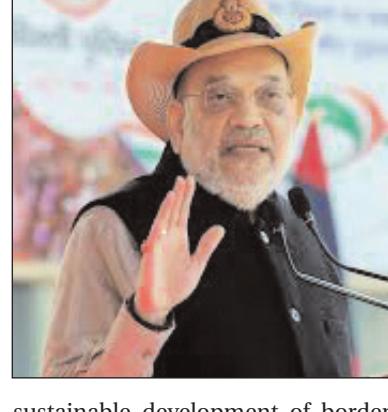
According to an official statement, the programme will be formally launched at Nathangpur village in Cachar district, southern Assam.

The initiative will significantly enhance border security and enable residents to be the "eyes and ears" of the country.

The contribution by the border population will help prevent cross-border crimes and strengthen internal security.

The Vibrant Villages Programme-II is a Central Sector Scheme with an outlay of Rs 6,839 crore, up to the financial year 2028-29.

VVP-II will be implemented across fifteen states and two union Territories (UTs), and has been designed to drive comprehensive and



sustainable development of border villages through a convergence-driven approach.

The focus is on upgrading essential infrastructure, enhancing access to basic services, and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities in a bid to foster secure, resilient and prosperous border communities in line with the wider vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Five killed as MSRTC bus collides with autorickshaw in Maha's Amravati

Amravati: In a tragic road accident on the Warud-Rajura road in Maharashtra's Amravati district, five people, including a 13-year-old schoolgirl, lost their lives after a state transport bus crashed head-on into an autorickshaw, police officials said on Thursday.

The accident occurred on Wednesday when a Shivai bus operated by the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) was travelling from Warud to Wardha via Talegaon.

Four victims - autorickshaw driver Kailash Ghanshyam Nagdive (42), passengers Chintaman Nagdive (60), Mahi Mangulkar (13), and Haribhau Shinde (83) - died on the spot, according to Warud police.

Soren hails parents of Kerala child Aalin Sherin Abraham

Ranchi: Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has paid heartfelt tribute to the late child Aalin Sherin Abraham of Kerala, praising her parents for their extraordinary courage and compassion in donating her organs and setting an inspiring example of humanity for the nation.

In a post on his X handle, the Chief Minister said that the name of the young child has moved the entire country.

He remarked that losing a child is the most unbearable moment for any parent, and in such deep grief, the decision of Sherin N. John and Arun Abraham to donate their daughter's organs reflects remarkable bravery, sacrifice, and empathy.

Raj Thackeray-Eknath Shinde meeting won't affect alliance: Sanjay Raut



parties. However, Raut's remarks reflected the simmering discontent within the Thackeray camp over the development.

"Our political battle is against the tendency represented by Eknath Shinde," Raut said, accusing Shinde of betraying the Shiv Sena, which was founded by Hindu Hriday Samrat Bal Thackeray, stabbing the party in the back and betraying its ideology. He alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had supported Shinde for political gains.

"Those who have betrayed Maharashtra and the Marathi people will continue to face our opposition," Raut added, claiming that Shinde's political rise was built on the "theft" of the Shiv Sena name and its 'bow and arrow' symbol.

Setback for SIT as Sabarimala Tantri secures bail in gold case

Kollam (UNI)

In a significant development in the sensational Sabarimala gold misappropriation case, the Vigilance Court in Kollam has granted bail to Kandararu Rajeevaru, the Tantri (chief priest) of Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple.

The court's decision is widely viewed as a setback for the Special Investigation Team (SIT), which had strongly opposed his release and sought continued custody as part of its ongoing probe.

Rajeevaru had been arraigned as an accused in connection with the alleged misappropriation of gold used in the gold-plating of the temple's door frames and the Dwara-pala idols.

Salim Khan stable under close ICU watch

Mumbai (UNI)

Mumbai: Veteran screenwriter Salim Khan remained stable on Thursday, a day after undergoing a medical procedure following a minor brain haemorrhage.

The 90-year-old writer continues to be monitored in the Intensive Care Unit at Lilavati Hospital in Mumbai's Bandra, with doctors maintaining close observation of his condition. No new official health bulletin has been issued by the hospital, in keeping with the family's wishes for privacy.

Salim Khan had suffered a sudden spike in blood pressure on Tuesday which led to a minor brain haemorrhage. On the

widespread debate, given the spiritual and traditional significance of his role in temple affairs.

During the bail hearing, the court examined the prosecution's arguments seeking to link the Tantri directly to the alleged financial and administrative irregularities.

However, the court observed that there was no *prima facie* material clearly establishing his involvement in the misappropriation of gold.

It took note of the defence argument that the Tantri's responsibilities are confined strictly to ritualistic and spiritual functions and that he does not exercise administrative control over temple construction works, procurement processes, or financial transactions.

UP Dy CM slams SP over governance during UP council session

Lucknow (UNI)

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Thursday launched a sharp attack on the Samajwadi Party (SP) during proceedings in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council, asserting that had the party performed well during its tenure, it would not have been sitting in the Opposition.

The remarks came during question hour after SP member Ashutosh Sinha raised concerns about land purchases related to the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi. Sinha alleged that earlier for the project was purchased in the name of a trust, but later transactions were made in the Gov-

ernor's name.

Responding to the allegations, Maurya said that during the SP regime, around 7.7 million devotees visited the temple annually, whereas the number has now increased to

Ajay Rai, Pramod Tewari slam UP govt over lathi-charge

Lucknow (UNI)

The Uttar Pradesh Congress on Thursday held a peaceful satyagraha at the party's state headquarters in Lucknow, protesting against the alleged lathi-charge on party workers during the February 17 Assembly gherao organised under the "MNREGA Bachao Sangram."

The protest was led by Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) President Ajay Rai, who accused the BJP-led state government of suppressing democratic dissent.

Addressing party workers in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue at the Congress headquarters, Rai said that peaceful protest is a constitutional right in a democracy, but the state government is adopting "repressive policies" to silence the opposition. He alleged that the police

hoped to wean him off ventilator support by today, he continues to remain on a ventilator, with recovery expected to take more time considering his age.

Congress stages Satyagraha in Lucknow

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Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut to be released on bail

Mumbai (UNI)

Shiv Sena (Thackeray faction) MP Sanjay Raut on Thursday said that the recent meeting between Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde would not impact the alliance between the two

parties. However, Raut's remarks reflected the simmering discontent within the Thackeray camp over the development.

"Our political battle is against the tendency represented by Eknath Shinde," Raut said, accusing Shinde of betraying the Shiv Sena, which was founded by Hindu Hriday Samrat Bal Thackeray, stabbing the party in the back and betraying its ideology. He alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had supported Shinde for political gains.

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