



IN BRIEF
Minister's phone stolen in his LS constituency
A personal assistant of Union Minister Giriraj Singh has lodged a complaint with police here that the mobile phone through which the BJP leader operates his social media platforms, has got stolen, the police said on Thursday.

CBI seeks sanction to prosecute six officials
The Central Bureau of Investigation has sought prosecution sanction against six Karnataka officials, including two IPS officers, for their alleged role in the I-Monetary Advisory (IMA) group scam.

Alert after 'intrusion' of 4 terror suspects in T.N.
A high-level of security alert has been issued across Tamil Nadu following the alleged intrusion of at least four terror suspects. The SUV-borne suspects on an "unknown mission" were sighted near Salem three days ago.

Pact to open door for U.S. defence firms

They can cooperate with Indian private sector for future agreements, including the one on fighter jets

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI
The Industrial Security Annex (ISA), signed between India and the U.S. at the second 2+2 dialogue in Washington, will open the door for U.S. defence companies to partner with the Indian private sector for several multi-billion dollar deals in the pipeline, including the one for 114 fighter jets.



Boosting ties: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Mark Esper and Mike Pompeo in Washington during the 2+2 dialogue.
Information Agreement (GSOMIA), which India signed with the U.S. long back. It became critical as India opened up the defence sector to the private sector and the Strategic Partnership policy, which has few big military platforms and is reserved for the Indian private sector.

"The IAF and Navy fighter competitions are a once in a generation opportunity. We are offering some of the best technology widely employed by the U.S. Navy and Air Force, including the F/A-18 Super Hornet and the bespoke F-21," said Joel Starr, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, US State Department, at a conference in Hyderabad on Wednesday.
Defence officials said the account of \$5 mn, from which any deductions would be done for services or information sought from the U.S. under the COMCASA had been created and work was on to develop a tactical data link.

NITI Aayog seeks ideas on population policy

Think tank to hold consultation today

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI
Government think tank NITI Aayog will hold a national consultation on population stabilisation on Friday to explore ways to strengthen the country's population policy and family planning programmes.
The event, being held in partnership with the Population Foundation of India, will include officials from the Centre as well as seven States - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Kerala and Ta-

mil Nadu - and experts on the subject. "The conference will contribute to a NITI Aayog working paper to help India in its vision for attaining population stabilisation as voiced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15, 2019," said a press statement from NITI Aayog.
The officials will brainstorm over recommendations like treating population stabilisation and family planning as a national priority and ensuring inter-governmental convergence.

Portugal sets up Gandhi prize

The first edition will be dedicated to animal welfare

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa on Thursday announced the setting up of a Gandhi Citizenship Education Prize while attending the second meeting of the National Committee for the Commemoration Mahatma Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary, chaired by President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan.



Antonio Costa
Gandhi's ideals, a Union Culture Ministry statement said. Every year, the prize would be inspired by Gandhi's thoughts and quotes, he said, adding that the first

edition of the prize would be dedicated to animal welfare. Gandhi had said "the greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated".
The committee includes Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his Cabinet colleagues and Chief Ministers, apart from Gandhians.
Mr. Modi told the gathering that the world was keen to learn about Mahatma Gandhi, and it had become India's responsibility to remind everyone of his relevance today.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



Forecast for Friday: Cold day conditions likely in some pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh. Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal.

Table with 3 columns: CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN. Lists weather data for various Indian cities like Agartala, Ahmedabad, Aizawl, Allahabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dehradun, Gangtok, Goa, Guwahati, Hubballi, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jaipur, Kochi, Kohima, Kolkata, Kozhikode, Kurnool, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Madurai, Mumbai, Mysuru, New Delhi, Patna, Port Blair, Puducherry, Pune, Raipur, Ranchi, Shillong, Shimla, Srinagar, Thiruvananthapuram, Tiruchi, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam.

Table with 3 columns: CITIES, SO2, NO2, CO, PM2.5, PM10, CODE. Includes a section for 'Pollutants in the air you are breathing' and 'Yesterday' with a color-coded scale from Poor to Good.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

Onion imports yet to bring price relief to customers

Bulbs likely to reach Delhi, A.P. retail markets over weekend

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The first onions imported by the Central government in a bid to counter domestic shortages and tame soaring prices are set to enter the retail market - mostly in Delhi and Andhra Pradesh - by Saturday, according to officials from the Consumer Affairs Ministry.

Table with 3 columns: City, Onion price, ₹ PER/KG. Lists onion prices for Chennai, Pune, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru, Dehradun, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Patna.

day, but due to procedures to fumigate and clean the onions, their arrival in the retail market has been delayed. The initial buyers are state-run National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED), which has been supplying subsidised onions in the National Capital Region, and the Andhra Pradesh State government, said a Ministry official.

Retail prices in Delhi have not dropped below the ₹100 per kg mark for the last two weeks (since December 5). In fact, they peaked at ₹145 per kg on Wednesday, according to data from the National Horticulture Board.
The situation is particularly severe in southern India, with onions selling for ₹160 per kg in Chennai on Thursday, and ₹120 per kg in Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

Ration cards to look similar across country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
The Centre has designed a standard format for ration cards as it moves ahead with 'one nation, one ration card' initiative and has asked State governments to follow the pattern while issuing fresh ration cards.

Currently, the central government's ambitious initiative is being implemented on a pilot basis in a cluster of six States. It wants to implement this facility across the country from June 1, 2020.
Under the initiative, eligible beneficiaries would be able to avail their entitled foodgrains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) from any Fair Price Shop in the country using the same ration card.
"In order to achieve the aim of national portability, it is necessary that ration cards issued by different States and Union Territories conform to a standard format," a senior Food Ministry official said.

Speedy trials shouldn't bury the cause of justice: SC

Bench sets aside death penalty of a rape accused convicted after a 12-day trial

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
Speedy disposal of a case should not be at the cost of justice, the Supreme Court had said in a judgment setting aside the death penalty of a man in a rape and murder case.
The court found the man

was convicted after a 12-day trial and without proper legal representation. In fact, a legal aid lawyer appointed for him was given no time to even prepare his defence.
Expeditious trials should not bury the cause of justice, said the three-judge Bench led by Justice U.U. Lalit.

"Expeditious disposal is undoubtedly required... However, the attempts to expedite the process should not be at the expense of the basic elements of fairness and the opportunity to the accused, on which postulates the entire criminal administration of justice is founded,"

the judgment said. The Bench said "what is paramount is the cause of justice and keeping the basic ingredients which secure that as a core idea and ideal, the process may be expedited, but fast tracking of process must never ever result in burying the cause of justice."

Raped and set ablaze, U.P. girl dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KANPUR
An 18-year-old girl, whose family had alleged that she was raped and set ablaze in Fatehpur, succumbed to her burns at a hospital here, officials said.
The police, who had registered an FIR last week, are investigating the claim that she set herself afire after a village panchayat put an end to her relationship with a relative. "She had suffered from organ failure following serious injuries and we tried to resuscitate her, but she could not survive," Head of the department (surgery) at the hospital, Sanjay Kala, said.