

# Delhi CM Rekha Gupta gives Rs 1 Cr each to families of Covid warriors

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday provided financial assistance to the families of six government employees who lost their lives while on duty during the COVID-19 pandemic, calling it an expression of gratitude, empathy and respect towards them, and not just a government formality.

She personally handed over Rs 1 crore cheques each to the families of the six government employees on Wednesday at the secretariat.

Gupta said, "At a time when the world was gripped by fear and uncertainty, these brave individuals put duty above everything else and continued to serve people without worrying about their own lives."

Interacting with the families, CM Gupta listened to their concerns and experiences with sensitivity, and said the sacrifice made by the employees could never be forgotten, while she described them as heroes not just for their families, but for society as a whole.

She assured them that the Delhi government would continue to stand by them like an extended family and offer all possible support.

The CM also took note of the hardships faced by these families during the past, particularly the

delays they had to face regarding support during the previous government's tenure.

She said that many had to wait for long periods due to procedural delays and late disbursement of compensation, assuring that such cases are now being treated as a top priority, and steps are being taken to ensure that no eligible family has to face unnecessary delays in receiving assistance.

According to officials, the six beneficiaries were associated with various government bodies, including the MCD, DTC, Delhi Jal Board, Indian

Spinal Injuries Centre, NDMC and Maulana Azad Medical College.

Paramedical staff risked their lives working in hospitals and testing centres, while personnel from other departments ensured uninterrupted delivery of essential services such as water supply, sanitation and transport during the lockdown.

Expressing regret over the delay in disbursing assistance, Gupta said no amount of compensation could make up for the loss suffered by the families, and described the financial aid as a support mechanism to help ease their day-to-day struggles.

Recalling the difficult days of the pandemic, she said many people



fulfilled their duties with extraordinary courage and dedication.

She also paid tribute to those who lost their lives and extended her condolences to their families, praying for strength to help them cope with their loss.

In addition, the family of late ASI Radhey Shyam from the Delhi Police traffic unit was also given Rs 1 crore. He had lost his life in the line of duty.

The Chief Minister also extend-

ed financial assistance to the family of a deceased child in Dwarka, reiterating that the government stands firmly with every affected family and will provide all necessary support.

In a bid to strengthen social welfare efforts, Gupta also handed over a cheque of Rs 1 crore to 'Apna Ghar Ashram' in Budhpur under the CSR initiative of the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC).

# Private schools can't designate vendors for purchasing books, uniforms: Delhi govt

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi government on Wednesday instructed the private unaided recognised schools not to compel students or parents to purchase books, writing materials or uniforms from specific vendors, reiterating that families must have the freedom to choose where to buy these items.

The Directorate of Education on Wednesday said that, under the provisions of the Delhi School Education Act and Rules (DSEAR), 1973, and the Delhi Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2011, the directive comes in the wake of complaints that some schools were forcing parents to buy educational materials from designated shops.

According to the order, schools are required to provide parents with clear, class-wise lists of books, writing materials and uniform specifications in a transparent manner, while ensuring that multiple purchasing options are available in the open market.

The directorate noted that private unaided recognised schools operate as charitable institutions on a "no profit, no loss" basis and, therefore, any activity



leading to commercialisation or financial burden on parents is not permissible.

Termining such practices as a cause of financial strain on families, the directorate directed schools to refrain from enforcing such purchases and ensure that parents are free to procure required materials from any vendor at competitive market prices.

It said complaints were received from parents and organisations indicated that in some schools, students were being allegedly compelled to purchase items such as books, notebooks, uniforms, bags and accessories like belts and ties from particular vendors, often at higher costs.

Schools must allow students to use books and

study materials that are prescribed according to the official curriculum and examination guidelines, it stated.

The directorate added that the procurement of books should follow the guidelines issued by the boards of education (CBSE/ICSE/State Boards/Primary Education Authorities).

It further said that schools are required to upload the list of books and writing material introduced this year and a conspicuous place so as to inform the parents in this regard on their website.

The order added that the move is aimed at preventing commercial exploitation and promoting fair competition while safeguarding the interests of students and their families.

# TMC, other parties used Muslims for votes in Bengal but did nothing for them, says Owaisi

**KOLKATA:** AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday alleged that the ruling TMC and other parties used Muslims of West Bengal for votes but did nothing for the community's development.

Owaisi, while addressing a poll rally at Naoda in Murshidabad district in support of candidates of Humayun Kabir-led Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP), also claimed that in the past 50 years, members of the Muslim community had voted for the Congress, Left Front and the TMC, but their condition did not improve.

"For the sake of Muslims in West Bengal getting greater representation in political decision-making, and for their true development, we have joined hands with Kabir. Together, we will give a jolt to Mamata Banerjee and her party," he

asserted.

"The time has come to elect leaders from the Muslim community, who can ensure our economic development," Owaisi said.

"Muslims form about 30 per cent of the population here. But how many Muslims are in state government jobs? Around seven per cent. The time has come to stop the exploitation of Muslims. To ensure that, elect leaders from yourselves who can only ensure our economic development while following the secular, inclusive spirit of India which is being violated by both BJP and TMC," he told a large gathering.

Accusing West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee of practising hypocrisy regarding discrimination and atrocities against Muslims, he alleged that she has a tacit understanding with

BJP and "her game plan stands exposed now before everyone."

He quashed the charges of the Trinamool Congress that AIMIM and AJUP are in the electoral fray to cut down the vote share of the TMC and help the BJP win.

"Both the BJP and the TMC are the same to us. They are two sides of the same coin. As I repeatedly said, our alliance wishes Muslims to have a voice and fight for their rights," he said.

"When hundreds were killed in the Gujarat riots in the early 2000s, Mamata Didi, who was then a BJP ally, did not utter a single word. The same Mamata Banerjee hurled papers at the Lok Sabha Speaker in 2005 while making allegations of large-scale infiltration in West Bengal during the Left Front rule," Owaisi said.

# T'gana to launch Integrated Bhu Bharati land portal on pilot basis in five mandals

**HYDERABAD:** In a move to overhaul land administration, the Telangana government will launch its Integrated Bhu Bharati portal on a pilot basis in five mandals on Thursday.

Designed to resolve land disputes and streamline governance, the pilot project would be implemented in Kusumanchi (Khammam district), Aswaraopta (Bhadradri Kothagudem district), Amangal (Ranga Reddy district), Vatpally (Sangareddy district) and Kogsi (Narayanpet district) mandals. Based on outcomes, necessary improvements would be made to the portal before its implementation across the state. State Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, who held a teleconference with officials, said in a release on Wednesday that the portal has been designed with a farmer-centric approach.

He directed officials to ensure that the system functions smoothly without

causing inconvenience to the public, especially farmers. He stated that, unlike in the past, farmers would no longer need to visit 'Mee Seva' citizen-service centers for land-related services.

Through the Bhu Bharati portal, all services can now be accessed from home using a smartphone. Once a farmer logs in, land details will be displayed, and requests for surveys can be made online along with fee payment.

After payment, the request would be forwarded to a licenced surveyor, who will issue notices to adjacent landowners within two days. The survey date would be finalised within a week, and the survey would be completed using modern rover technology. The data would then be verified by the Mandal Surveyor and approved by the Tahsildar, after which the applicant would be issued LPM (land parcel map) and Bhoothar (a unique identification number for land parcels).

# Delhi Crime Branch arrests 'Mukhiya Gang' kingpin after years on the run

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Police has arrested a 38-year-old man, the kingpin of an interstate burglary racket who had been evading trial proceedings for years, an officer said on Wednesday. According to the police, the accused, Rahul alias Dahur alias Raju Mukhiya (38), a native of Madhubani, was apprehended from the Nangli area of Dwarka. Mukhiya, the alleged kingpin of the Mukhiya gang, is said to be involved in at least four criminal cases across Delhi and Haryana. "He had been declared a proclaimed offender in three cases after repeatedly skipping court appearances despite securing bail," said Harsh Indora, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch). As per the statement of the DCP, the gang operated through a well-organised network of domestic workers. "Members would infiltrate affluent households by securing jobs as maids or servants, gather intelligence about valuables and routines, and later facilitate thefts when the premises were most vulnerable," DCP Indora said in his statement. The arrest followed sustained surveillance by the Anti-Gangster Squad (AGS) of the Crime Branch. Acting on specific intelligence, a team laid a trap on Monday and got their hand on the accused. Police said Mukhiya's involvement dates back over a decade. In one case in Rajouri Garden in 2016, valuables worth Rs 25-30 lakh were stolen after insiders tipped off accomplices. In another 2014 case in Gurugram, a victim was allegedly drugged before jewellery and cash worth nearly Rs 1 crore were looted. While probing into this case, it was revealed that Mukhiya built a widespread network across states, recruiting domestic workers to aid in crimes. "Despite multiple arrests in the past, he managed to evade conviction by absconding during trial," the officer said.

# BJP leader Suvendu faces TMC protests

**KOLKATA:** BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday faced protests from TMC supporters while campaigning in his Nandigram constituency in West Bengal's Purba Medinipur district and later in Bhabanipur in south Kolkata.

Adhikari, who is also the leader of the opposition in the state Assembly, is contesting both Nandigram and Bhabanipur, the home turf of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

At both locations, TMC supporters shouted slogans such as 'Joy Bangla' and 'Sisirbabur Chheleta' (failed son of veteran politician Sisir Adhikari).

Adhikari got down from his vehicle to confront the protesters. "You (TMC) may try to disturb me in whatever way you want. But you are aware that people of Nandigram are not with you. They will reply on May 4," he said, as BJP supporters accompanying him chanted 'Joy Shree Ram' and 'Chor TMC Sarkar, Paltano Darkar' (we need to change this thief regime).

# BJP leader meets Rahul Gandhi, enquires about Sonia's health

**NEW DELHI:** Senior BJP leader and former Union minister Vijay Goel on Wednesday met Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and enquired about the health of his mother Sonia Gandhi, amid the frozen relations between the two parties.

Goel, a former Delhi BJP president, posted a photo of his handshake with Rahul Gandhi at the Parliament premises on microblogging site X, saying

the meeting was "cordial". "Today, I had a cordial meeting with the Leader of the Opposition, Shri @RahulGandhi ji, outside the Parliament House (Constitution House). On this occasion, I inquired about the health of his mother and senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi ji, and wished her good health," the BJP leader posted.

Goel is currently holding the post of vice-chairman of Gandhi Smriti and Dar-

shan Samiti, which takes care of Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at Rajghat and Gandhi Smriti at Tees January Marg.

Sonia Gandhi was discharged from Sir Ganga Ram Hospital on Tuesday morning after recovering from a "systemic infection".

She was admitted to the hospital with a fever on the night of March 24, and spent seven days in the hospital.

# As BJP and Oppn spar, debate on FCRA amendment bill in LS deferred

**NEW DELHI/ALAPPUZHA:** A discussion in the Lok Sabha on a bill to amend the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) scheduled for Wednesday was deferred amid a political slugfest, with the opposition alleging that the new measures could curb minority rights and tighten government control over NGOs.

The BJP, on its part, defended the bill as necessary for national security and transparency, and asserted it does not target any religious organisation.

As the rival parties traded charges over the FCRA (Amendment) Bill, 2026, just ahead of the Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry, sources said it is unlikely to come up in the ongoing Budget session. The session is likely to end on Thursday amid indications that two or three more sittings could be held later this month.

At present, approximately 16,000 associations are registered under the FCRA and re-



ceive around Rs 22,000 crore annually, according to the statement of objects and reasons of

the bill.

In the Lok Sabha, the bill was listed for consideration and pas-

sage. But as soon as the Question Hour began at 11 am, opposition members, mainly from Kerala, started raising slogans against the provisions of the bill.

The bill to amend the FCRA was introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25, with the government making it clear that individuals engaging in forced religious conversion through foreign funding will not be spared.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the bill seeks to protect national security and interest and asserted it was not aimed against any religion or organisation.

The move was aimed at preventing misuse of foreign contributions, Rijiju said in a bid to assuage the concerns of the opposition, as he accused the Congress and Left parties of misleading people of Kerala, which goes to polls on April 9.

He said though the bill had been listed in Wednesday's official agenda for the Lok Sabha, it was not being taken up for dis-

cussion on the day.

"I had told the Congress party yesterday that since the bill has been introduced, it has been listed for consideration and passage for Wednesday. But, today the FCRA (Amendment) Bill is not being taken up for discussion," Rijiju said.

He later told reporters that the decision was based on legislative priorities and not politics.

"This is not a political issue. Several bills have been introduced, and we take them up depending on the situation and timing. The Andhra Pradesh bill (to declare Amaravati as its capital) was urgent, which is why it was taken up today."

Kerala BJP chief Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the Centre will not proceed with the proposed amendments without addressing concerns raised by various sections, including Christians.

Defending the amendments, BJP MP Dinesh Sharma rejected the opposition's charge that the bill targets minorities.

# TVK chief Vijay to file nomination from Tiruchirappalli East on Apr 2

**CHENNAI:** Actor-turned-politician and TVK chief Vijay is set to file his nomination papers for the Tiruchirappalli (East) assembly constituency on April 2, setting the stage for a high-profile electoral contest in central Tamil Nadu. Vijay, who is contesting from two seats in the upcoming April 23 Assembly elections -- the other being Perambur in Chennai -- will submit his papers to Returning Officer Muthu Murugesu Pandiyan at the Ariyamangalam Zonal Office of the Trichy Corporation

around 12.30 pm on April 2, said TVK officials. Post-nomination, the TVK chief is scheduled to kick off his campaign in the city, Aadhar Arjuna General Secretary of Election Campaign Management, TVK, told reporters here on Wednesday, following a meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer. According to him, his team has sought police permission for public addresses at the historic Marakkadai Junction, near the MGR statue, and in the KK Nagar-Wireless Road area near the city airport.