

Kejriwal appears in HC seeking recusal of judge; SG slams 'theatrics', 'contemptuous' allegations

NEW DELHI: Former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday appeared in person in the Delhi High Court seeking recusal of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma from hearing the CBI petition challenging the discharge of the AAP convenor and all other accused in the liquor policy case.

Justice Sharma took Kejriwal's application for her recusal on record and listed it for hearing on April 13, after she was informed that a plea for transfer of the case to another HC bench filed before the apex court has been withdrawn.

The court recorded that besides Kejriwal, the applications for recusal of the judge were also filed by AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak.

In its order, the court also granted time till April 10 to Kejriwal and others to file their response on the main CBI plea as a "last and final opportunity".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, argued that the court was not a forum for theatrics and Kejriwal should discharge his lawyer if he wanted to appear in person in the case.

This is not the first instance of the AAP leader himself making submissions in a court proceeding.

On March 28, 2024, when the trial court extended his custody with the Enforcement Directorate in the related case, Kejriwal directly addressed the trial judge, questioning whether there was enough material to arrest a sitting chief minister. He was permitted by the trial judge to make verbal submissions despite being represented by a senior counsel.

On Monday, Mehta strongly objected to the recusal application and said Kejriwal's allegations against the "institution" were frivolous and contemptuous.

"Some people in this country make a career out of making baseless allegations against everyone. That will have to be taken seriously. It is an allegation against the institution, and we will have to support that institution," Mehta said.



He also informed that a total of seven discharged accused have filed applications seeking the judge's recusal as part of a "well thought out design".

Union Minister Kirti Vardhan Singh to represent India at inauguration of Myanmar's new president

NEW DELHI: Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh will represent India at the inauguration of Myanmar's new president Min Aung Hlaing at a ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw on April 10.

Singh will undertake a four-day visit to Myanmar beginning Wednesday to join the event as well as to attend bilateral engagements, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Myanmar's parliament paved the way last week for Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to assume the presidency, following a general election that excluded major opposition parties.

The elections were held in December and January after years of protests against the ruling military-junta that seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021 overthrowing the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.



Min Aung Hlaing was effectively running Myanmar for last five months helming the military rule.

"During his visit, Singh is also expected to meet with concerned GoM dignitaries in Nay Pyi Taw, attend bilateral engagements related to ongoing trade, economic and developmental assistance initiatives, and interact with members of the Indian diaspora and Friends of India in Yangon," it said.

Sathankulam custodial deaths: Nine police personnel sentenced to death by court

MADURAI: In a landmark judgment, a court here on Monday handed the death penalty to nine police personnel in the sensational 2020 Sathankulam custodial death case.

Father-son duo P Jayaraj and J Bennix were allegedly assaulted by the convicted policemen in Sathankulam, Thoothukudi district, for allegedly keeping their mobile shop open in violation of COVID-19 norms.

First Additional District and Sessions Judge G Muthukumarann classified the case as the rarest of rare, observing that those entrusted with protecting the public had committed a crime that shook the collective conscience of society.

The court sentenced all nine convicted police personnel to death for the murders of Jayaraj and Bennix. The convicts include former inspector S Sridhar, former sub-inspectors Balakrishnan and Raghu Ganesh, and head constables Murugan and Saamidurai.

In addition to the capital punishment, the court imposed a combined fine of Rs 1.40 crore on the convicts to be paid as compensation to the victims' family.

While pronouncing the quantum of sentence, the judge said the police are meant to protect the common man, and when they become the perpetrators of such brutality, the law must act as a deterrent.

It also noted that by killing both the father and the son at once, the police had uprooted the very foundation of a family.

The judge stressed that the punishment must be severe enough to ensure such horrors never recur.

The tragedy dates back to June 2020, when Jayaraj and Bennix were picked up for allegedly keeping their mobile phone shop open beyond permitted hours. They were subjected to extreme physical assault while in custody, leading to their deaths at a hospital days later.

Rekha Gupta, BJP leaders celebrate party's 47th Foundation Day in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with senior leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on Monday celebrated the party's 47th Foundation Day in Delhi with a flag-hoisting ceremony and speeches highlighting its organisational growth and ideological roots.

The event, held at the state party office, was attended by National General Secretary Arun Singh, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, along with party workers and office-bearers. Similar programmes were organised across district offices in the capital.

Speaking at the occasion, Gupta said that the BJP functioned as a "medium of national service" and that its cadre continued to work towards making India a global leader.

She also took a swipe at opposition parties, contrasting what she described as the BJP's focus on governance with "power politics" elsewhere.

Addressing party workers, Singh described the BJP as the "world's largest democratic organisation" and said its growth was rooted in the "sacrifice, dedication and struggle" of its cadre. He urged workers

to renew their commitment to public service and nation-building.

Sachdeva said the party's journey from the Bharatiya Jana Sangh to its current position reflected continuity in ideology. He credited leaders such as Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Deendayra Upadhyaya, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee for shaping the party's foundations, and said it was now being carried forward under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He added that party workers were strengthening their resolve towards governance and public service.

SC orders CBI inquiry into award of contracts to firms linked to Arunachal CM's kin

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday directed the CBI to register within two weeks a preliminary enquiry into allegations of preferential allotment of contracts for public works in Arunachal Pradesh to firms allegedly owned or related to the family members of Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

Observing that the State and its instrumentalities cannot confer benefits according to the "whims of any political or administrative functionary", the apex court said it was a fit case where an "independent investigation" was necessary.

A bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath said where a case concerns the integrity of public procurement and involves allegations of conflict of interest at the highest levels, an investigation must not only be fair but also must appear fair.

"Accordingly, we deem it appropriate that CBI shall register a preliminary enquiry forthwith and shall conduct a time-bound investigation into the award and execution of the public works contracts and work orders which form the subject matter of this writ petition and the affidavits filed in these proceedings," the bench, also comprising Justices Sandeep Mehta and N V Anjaria, said.

During the hearing in the matter, the apex court was told that government contracts and work orders worth around Rs 1,270 crore were awarded in the last 10 years in Arunachal Pradesh to four firms related to the family members of Khandu.

In its verdict, the bench said the preliminary enquiry and consequential investigation, if any, shall cover the award and execution of public works contracts and work orders in Arunachal Pradesh from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2025, including the works and compilations placed on record in the proceedings before it.

The bench delivered its verdict on a plea filed by NGOs Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena seeking a CBI or SIT probe into the matter.

"The record discloses repeated resort to non-tender methods in relation to public works, repeated absence of recorded reasons explaining why competition was dispensed with, and repeated non-production of vouchers and tender-related documentation in relation to projects of substantial value," the bench said.

It said such circumstances raise legitimate concerns not merely of administrative irregularity but of "possible abuse of public office", manipulation of procurement processes, and concealment or destruction of official records, matters which require probe by an independent agency vested with statutory powers of criminal investigation. The bench noted that the petitioners have alleged that a significant cluster of such awards has accrued to respondent numbers four to six (Pema Khandu, Rinchin Drema and Tsering Tashi) or to firms and individuals related to them, raising a serious question of conflict of interest and abuse of public office.

It said these are not matters that can be left to be answered by broad affidavits or by statistical summaries.

"They require a structured investigation into the decision-making process, the manner of selection of contractors, the justification for deviations from tender-based procurement and the integrity and custody of public records," the bench said.

From Apsara Border to Hanman Setu, Delhi's flyover spaces set for makeover

NEW DELHI: In a move that seeks to address long-standing concerns around neglected urban spaces, the Delhi government on Monday signed an MoU with private firms to redevelop stretches beneath several flyovers across the city. The agreement, signed at the Delhi Secretariat in the presence of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, brings together the Public Works Department (PWD) and three private entities, Dalmia Bharat Limited, Godrej Industries Group, and EaseMyTrip Foundation, under corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

The plan is to convert underutilised flyover spaces into landscaped zones with seating, murals, and basic civic amenities, noted the official statement from the CMO. The project spans multiple locations, including the Apsara Border and Mayur Vihar Phase-1 flyovers in east Delhi, Netaji Subhash Place in the northwest.

30 Maoists surrender before police in Telangana

HYDERABAD: Nearly 30 members of the outlawed CPI (Maoists), including a senior commander, have surrendered before the Telangana police, officials said on Monday.

Sodi Keshalu alias Sodi Keshu, the deputy commander of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) Battalion, is among those who turned themselves in.

"The surrender will be officially shown in the next few days," official sources told PTI.

Keshalu's surrender comes after the PLGA's Battalion Commander Badse Sukka alias Deva, along with 19 underground cadre, had surrendered before the Telangana Police on January 3.

Badse Sukka's surrender sounded the death knell for the PLGA and the Telangana State committee of the CPI (Maoist), police had then said.

On March 30, Telangana DGP B Shivadhar Reddy appealed to the underground leaders and cadres of the CPI (Maoist) party to renounce violence, lay down their arms, and join the democratic mainstream to lead safe and dignified lives.

The DGP made a special appeal to Telangana natives currently active in Maoist groups in other states—Muppalla Lakshmana Rao alias Ganapathi (72), Pusunuri Narahari alias Santoshi (57), Vartaha Shekhar alias Mangthu (51), Jode Ratnabai alias Sujatha (68), Nakka Susheela alias Rela (51), and Rangaboyina Bhagya alias Ruppi (43)—to return and avail the benefits of the rehabilitation scheme.

Owing to sustained efforts by the Telangana Police over the past two years, as many as 721 Maoists of various ranks from Telangana and Chhattisgarh have surrendered and rejoined the mainstream, he added.

Govt scales up digital outreach for pensioners, generates record 1.91 crore certificates

NEW DELHI: In a major push to digitise pension services and expand last-mile delivery, the government's Digital Life Certificate (DLC) Campaign 4.0 has generated a record 1.91 crore certificates in 2025-26, driven by large-scale adoption of face authentication and doorstep services.

The campaign, led by the Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW), is being seen as the biggest nationwide outreach for pensioners, covering 2,000 cities and districts and organising around 75,000 camps during November 2025.

A key highlight was the surge in use of face authentication technology, which accounted for over 1.16 crore DLCs nearly 60 per cent of total submissions marking a 220-fold jump from the previous edition.

The feature enabled elderly and infirm pensioners to complete verification without biometric hurdles.

To strengthen last-mile access, about 1.8 lakh postmen and Dak Sevaks were deployed to provide doorstep services, particularly benefiting super senior citizens, the sick and differently-abled. Over 14 lakh certificates were submitted by pensioners aged 80 and above.

Launched in November 2025 by Minister of State Dr Jitendra Singh, DLC Campaign 4.0 adopted a "whole-of-government" approach, bringing together 19 banks, India Post Payments Bank, UIDAI, MeitY, EPFO, Railways, Defence, Telecom and 57 pensioners' welfare associations.

More than 1,400 nodal officers monitored operations on the ground, while a national DLC portal enabled real-time tracking and targeted outreach in underserved areas.

Banks emerged as key drivers of the campaign, with the State Bank of India alone generating nearly 26 lakh certificates. Pension disbursing banks collectively achieved over 63 per cent of their targets, supported by camps across 300 cities.

Maharashtra led the tally with 25.86 lakh DLCs, followed by Uttar Pradesh (15.93 lakh), Tamil Nadu (15.31 lakh), and Karnataka (13.08 lakh), reflecting strong coordination and awareness drives.

Among departments, Defence topped with 32.92 lakh certificates, followed by Central Civil (9.57 lakh), Railways (6.91 lakh) and Telecom (4.67 lakh).

The campaign also bundled services such as health check-ups, Aadhaar updation and grievance redressal at camp sites, turning DLC centres into integrated welfare hubs.

Man gatecrashes his SUV into Delhi Assembly high-security zone, Arrested, Probe on

NEW DELHI: Sarvjeet Singh (40), a resident of Pilibhit in UP has gate-crashed into the high-security zone of the Delhi Assembly, on Monday afternoon, creating panic and raising questions on the security arrangements in the administrative nerve-centre of the national capital. Singh drove his vehicle straight, crashing the tall iron gate and the boom barriers and drove himself back in the same vehicle after placing a bouquet near the Speaker's official vehicle.

Singh, who believed to have come to the capital to meet a cousin, is reported to be mentally unstable and under treatment.

Later, a total of four persons, including the driver, were detained from North Delhi by the Delhi Police, and the car was also recovered by security officials.

The situation inside and outside the Delhi Assembly was chaotic when Singh, wearing a mask, entered the

premises driving his Tata Sierra SUV, breaking the main gate.

The incident took place around 2 PM on Monday, following which a high alert was issued in the entire capital.

Sources said that the SUV was registered in Pilibhit district (Uttar Pradesh) in the name of 40-year-old Sarvjeet Singh. The police is also in touch with the Puranpur police in Pilibhit, from where the car belonged.

According to the information received, Sarvjeet Singh himself was driving the car. He had travelled from Pilibhit to Delhi to meet one of his cousins.

A senior police official, wishing anonymity, said that the car entered the high-security premises through Gate No. 2, which is meant only for VVIP entry. He exited his vehicle, placed a bouquet on the porch near Speaker Vijender Gupta's car, and then drove off the premises.

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Mumbai to get two new partial metro corridors with first phase launch today

MUMBAI: The Mumbai metro network will expand further from Tuesday with the launch of two new corridors- Metro Lines 2B and 9, boosting suburban connectivity and moving towards the vision of a fully integrated metro network in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Metro Line 9 marks the first metro corridor in the Thane district, while Line 2B extends metro connectivity to key Harbour Line areas, including Chembur and adjoining localities.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) on Monday said Metro Line 9 (Dahisar East to Kashigaon in Mira-Bhayandar) and Metro Line 2B (Mandale to Diamond Garden, Phase 1) will commence commercial operations on April 8.

Both metro corridors will be inaugurated in the presence of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and his two deputies, Eknath Shinde and Sunetra Pawar, at separate functions at Dahisar metro station and Diamond Garden metro



station in Chembur in the western and eastern suburbs, respectively.

The two new metro corridors are being opened in phases, and the full routes will become operational at a later stage.

With the expansion, Metro Line 2A (Dahisar East to Andheri West) and Metro Line 7 (Andheri East to Dahisar East) will operate

as independent corridors. However, Line 7 will run in integration with Line 9, enabling direct connectivity from Andheri East to Mira-Bhayandar via Kashigaon, the release said.

MMRDA added that the revised timetable for metro services on Lines 2A and 7, aimed at making travel simpler and more predict-

able with improved frequency, streamlined operations and better network integration, will come into effect from April 8.

Metro Line 2A (Andheri West-Dahisar East) will function as a standalone corridor with services starting at 5:50 AM and running till around 11 PM, with a peak-hour frequency of about six minutes. A total of 289 services will be operated on weekdays, 231 on Saturdays and 213 on Sundays.

The integrated Metro Line 7 and Line 9 corridor (Gundavali-Kashigaon), spanning 19.79 km, will also operate from 5:50 AM to 11 pm, with a peak frequency of under six minutes, offering direct connectivity across key suburban stretches. A total of 276 services will run on weekdays, 223 on Saturdays and 205 on Sundays, the release said.

An interchange facility at Dahisar station between Lines 2A and 7 will continue to allow seamless transfers without exiting the paid area, MMRDA said.