

NCW chief calls for coordinated action to strengthen women's safety in Arunachal

ITANAGAR: NCW chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar on Friday urged greater awareness, sensitivity, and coordinated action among stakeholders to strengthen women's safety and access to justice in Arunachal Pradesh. Addressing a two-day awareness and training programme for protection officers, one-stop centre (OSC) personnel, counsellors, and other officials here, Rahatkar said many women continue to suffer in silence due to social pressure, financial dependency and lack of awareness about their rights. "Incidents of domestic violence often remain hidden within homes, making the role of protection officers and support systems even more critical," she said, stressing that front-line institutions must be equipped to provide timely support and relief. The National Commission for Women (NCW) chief underlined the importance



of legal literacy for officials engaged in women-centric services, and urged comprehensive knowledge of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, the POCSO Act and other related laws. "Without adequate understanding of these laws, it will be difficult to provide effective relief and justice to women in distress," she said. Pointing to the geographical challenges of the state, the NCW chief said Arunachal Pradesh's remote and hilly terrain requires stronger institu-

tional mechanisms and better-trained personnel so that women in every corner of the state can access justice and support services. Describing the training as more than a formal event, she said it aimed to strengthen the capacity, knowledge and effectiveness of OSCs, protection officers and associated departments. She called for stronger coordination among the women and child development department, state commission for women, police, legal services authorities, district administrations and all

related institutions to ensure a comprehensive and timely response to women in crisis. Rahatkar stressed the need for an improved crisis response mechanism, warning that delays in handling cases can lead to severe consequences. She encouraged the sharing of practical experiences and best practices among officials and suggested forming dedicated communication groups for counsellors, case workers, medical support staff and protection officers to facilitate better coordination and learning. Reaffirming the commitment of the state women's commission towards safety, protection, rehabilitation and empowerment of women, she urged institutions to become more sensitive, responsive and accountable so that survivors can approach the justice system with confidence. The programme, organised by the Arunachal Pradesh

State Commission for Women in collaboration with the NCW, covered legal provisions, protection mechanisms, mental health and inter-departmental coordination. Technical sessions included a presentation by Yakang Nani, State Mission Coordinator, SHEW, WCD department, on OSC objectives, functions and responsibilities. APSCW counsellor Dr Leeyir Ete spoke on mental health and the importance of counselling support, while additional SP and SDPO Naharlagun Rishi Longdo highlighted the role of police in supporting survivors and coordinating with OSCs. Tech Neech, panel advocate of Arunachal Pradesh State Legal Services Authority, elaborated on legal aspects, including domestic violence and the POCSO Act. Dr Pallavi Boro, associate professor, conducted a session on reproductive health and menstrual hygiene.

Public will force even non-BJP state govts to implement UCC: Law Minister Meghwal

NEW DELHI: Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has said Opposition-ruled states would be pressured by the public to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), asserting that the idea has long enjoyed constitutional backing. Speaking on the passage of UCC legislations in BJP-ruled Assam, Gujarat and Uttarakhand, Meghwal, in an interview to PTI Thursday, said it was a "good thing" that three states had already moved ahead and several others had formed committees to examine the issue. "Three states have already done it, that is a good thing. Now other states have also formed committees. This issue has been discussed for a very long time," he said. "When the Constitution was being framed, this demand existed and Babasaheb Ambedkar had also said the country should move in this direction. But the leaders of that time decided to leave it for later, and it was placed under the Directive Principles," the minister said. The UCC refers to the idea of a common set of civil laws governing matters such as marriage, divorce, adoption, succession and inheritance for all citizens, irrespective of religion. Article 44 of the Constitution, part of the Directive Principles of State Policy, states that "the State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India". While



Directive Principles are non-justiciable, they are regarded as fundamental in governance and policy-making. Asked whether a central law should eventually be enacted if some states fail to take the lead, Meghwal said public opinion would act as a catalyst. "I believe the people there will also ask their governments why they are not doing it," he said. Meghwal said his position should not be construed as the Union government leaving the issue entirely to the people rather than taking the lead. "Why will the people not ask for it? They will. You are trying to ask about states where the BJP is not in power. Even in states where the BJP is not in power, people are saying the country should move in this direction," he said. The minister accused the Opposition of spreading misconceptions about the UCC, particularly among tribal communities. "People are spreading confusion that the law will also apply to tribal communities. It has been clarified that tribal traditions and customs are a

separate matter," he said. Meghwal said that the broader principle behind the UCC was the equal application of civil law. "If I violate a law, action should not depend on my religion. Civil laws should apply equally to everyone. That is the main issue here," he added. He alleged that critics were attempting to distort the debate by claiming marriages, customs and cultural practices would be disrupted. "They are saying your traditions will break, your culture will break. That is not the issue at all," he said. The remarks come amid renewed debate over the implementation of the UCC after BJP-ruled Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Assam moved ahead with UCC legislation in recent months. Uttarakhand operationalised a UCC earlier this year after the legislation was passed by the state assembly in 2024. The law provides for uniform rules governing marriage, divorce, inheritance and live-in relationships across communities, while excluding Scheduled Tribes from its ambit.

Kerala school principal suspended over social media posts against CM

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A government higher secondary school principal in Kerala was on Friday suspended from service after allegations that he posted objectionable content on social media against Chief Minister V D Sathesaran and circulated an edited photograph. The suspended official has been identified as Javad S, Principal of the Government

Model Boys' Higher Secondary School at Attingal in this district. The suspension came three days before his retirement, which was due on May 31. The suspension order alleged that Javad's social media posts were insulting and mocking in nature, and that they created a false impression in society. It said that such content could mislead the public and create

political polarisation among students and teachers. "As a government employee, the use of social media in a way that defames individuals or the government is considered a serious violation of service rules. Based on this, the Additional Director General of Police (Intelligence) recommended strict disciplinary action against the principal," it said.



Child health improves as severe diarrhoea prevalence falls: NFHS-6

NEW DELHI: India has recorded a slight decline in severe diarrhoea cases among children under five years of age, with improved vaccination coverage and better access to safe drinking water contributing to gains in child health, according to the National Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6). The prevalence of severe diarrhoea among children under five declined from 0.7 per cent in NFHS-5 to 0.5 per cent in NFHS-6, while coverage of all three doses of the Rotavirus vaccine among children aged 12-23 months increased sharply from 36.4 per cent to 85.4 per cent, the Health Ministry said on Friday. Rotavirus is one of the leading causes of severe diarrhoea and dehydration among infants and young children. The ministry attributed



the improvement to coordinated interventions under the National Health Mission (NHM), including the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) and the STOP Diarrhoea Campaign. Under the campaign, front-line health workers such as Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) and Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) have been promoting the use of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS),

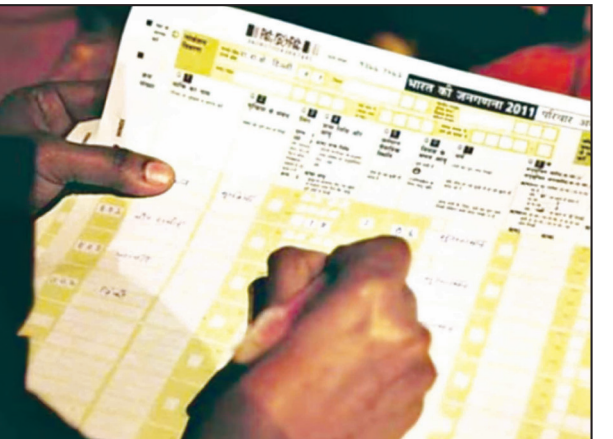
Zinc supplementation, breastfeeding, handwashing with soap, nutrition awareness and early treatment-seeking behaviour. "These sustained awareness and outreach activities have strengthened community-level management of diarrhoea, particularly in rural and underserved regions," the ministry said. The ministry also highlighted the role of the Jal Jeevan Mission in improving access to safe drinking water in rural India.

According to official data, access to functional household tap connections in rural areas increased from 17 per cent in 2019 to 81 per cent, covering 15.85 crore households and more than 5.91 lakh villages. The NFHS-6 findings reaffirm that India's integrated strategy combining vaccination, diarrhoea management, hygiene promotion, nutrition, sanitation, and safe drinking water is yielding measurable gains in child health, the ministry said. These collective efforts under the National Health Mission (NHM) and Jal Jeevan Mission are accelerating progress towards reducing under-five mortality by 38 per cent from 45 per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 28 per 1,000 live births in 2024 and achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, it added.

No OTP will be asked in Census 2027 in Himachal, officials say

SHIMLA: No One Time (OTP) password will be asked for in the upcoming Census 2027, which will be conducted in two phases in Himachal Pradesh, officials said on Friday. The first phase, scheduled from June 16 to July 15, will involve house listing and the housing census, during which detailed information about every housing unit and household in the state will be collected. A total of 33 questions have been outlined for this phase. Addressing the media here, Director Census Operations cum Citizen Registration, Himachal Pradesh, Deep Shikha Sharma said that a new facility of self-enumeration has also been introduced, which could be availed through the self-enumeration portal se.census.gov.in from June 1 to 15. Through self-enumeration, citizens can provide

their data at a time convenient for them, thereby also facilitating the enumerators' work, she added. Phase 1 of Census 2027 will utilise digital methods for data collection. This time, a specially developed mobile app called the House Listing Operation (HLO) will be used, and approximately 20,630 enumerators and supervisors will be deployed to ensure the successful conduct of this phase in the state. This digital innovation marks a significant step toward making census operations in Himachal Pradesh more transparent, accurate, and time-bound, she said and appealed to all residents to extend their full cooperation. The population census will take place in the second phase in snow-bound areas of Himachal Pradesh from September 11 to 30,



2027, while it will be conducted in the remaining areas from February 9 to 28, 2027. The census is generally carried out every ten years, collecting multidimensional data about the country's population. It provides essential information regarding population size, number of households, housing conditions, availability of ba-

sic amenities, socio-economic characteristics, and resource distribution. The data obtained from Census 2027 will serve as a crucial foundation for planning and resource allocation regarding education, healthcare, drinking water, roads, electricity, housing, digital connectivity, and other developmental schemes in the state.

3 minors held for fatally stabbing man on Eid in Delhi's Jahangirpuri

NEW DELHI: A 26-year-old man was stabbed to death allegedly following a dispute over a cigarette in northwest Delhi's Jahangirpuri on Eid night, with police apprehending three juveniles in the matter on Friday, officials said. The deceased, Arbaaz, was a resident of C Block in Jahangirpuri and worked at a jewellery shop in the locality, police said, adding that the accused and the victim were known to each other. According to the police, the incident took place around 11 pm on Thursday when Arbaaz was near his house and his family was celebrating Eid. "A minor altercation reportedly broke out between him and a group allegedly over a trivial issue related to a cigarette. The argument soon escalated, following which the accused allegedly attacked Arbaaz with knives, inflicting multiple injuries," the officer said. Arbaaz was rushed to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital in a critical condition and died during treatment. Soon after the incident, heavy police force deployment was made in the area to avoid any law and order situation. Family members described Arbaaz as a responsible man and the main support for the household. Following the incident, police launched an investigation and, based on eyewitness accounts and local inputs, apprehended three juveniles. Md Rizwan, brother of the deceased, told PTI, "They had been planning to kill my brother for the past week. The dispute had started over a cigarette. When they found him alone in the lane, they pushed him and, when he resisted, they stabbed him with a knife."

Zubeen Garg death: Gauhati HC denies bail to key accused Shyamkanu Mahanta

GUWAHATI: The Gauhati High Court on Friday rejected bail to Shyamkanu Mahanta, the prime accused in the Zubeen Garg death case, noting that there is a "risk of fleeing and tampering evidence". After hearing arguments from both sides, a single-judge bench of Justice Mitali Thakuria denied bail to the accused. On April 30, a special fast-track court had rejected bail to Mahanta considering him as a 'flight risk'. "The accused had challenged the trial court order of bail denial. The high court today rejected bail to Shyamkanu Mahanta after considering some crucial points," Assam Advocate General Devajit Saikia said at a press conference here. The high court noted that Mahanta is a 'flight risk' and there is a possibility of him absconding from the ongoing trial, he said. "He had earlier erased all his mobile data. The prosecution worked hard to retrieve those. So, the high court viewed that there is a chance of tampering the evidence by

him," Saikia said. Besides, Mahanta is accused of also influencing his co-accused in the case, and the high court thought there is a chance of influencing the witness, too, Saikia said. Shyamkanu is the younger brother of former DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, who was also the Chief Information Commissioner of the Assam State Information Commission. Gauhati University VC Nani Gopal Mahanta, who was the Education Advisor to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, is another elder brother of him. On May 26, Special Fast-track Court Judge Sharmila Bhuyan framed charges against seven arrested accused in connection with the untimely demise of Assamese musician Zubeen Garg. The celebrated singer died under mysterious circumstances in Singapore on September 19 last year while swimming in the sea. He had gone to Singapore to attend the 4th edition of the North East India Festival (NEIF). NEIF chief organiser Shyam-

kanu Mahanta, the singer's manager Siddharth Sharma, his two band members Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amrit Prabha Mahanta, his cousin and Assam Police DSP Sandipan Garg, and his PSOs Nandeswar Bora and Prabin Baishya are in jail as accused in the case. Prime accused Shyamkanu Mahanta has been charged with eight different sections of the BNS, while seven charges were framed against Sharma. Goswami and Amrit Prabha will face six charges each, Bora and Baishya will face two charges each, and Garg will defend himself against one charge. They were booked under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for murder, culpable homicide not amounting to murder, criminal conspiracy and causing death by negligence. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Assam Police probed Garg's death case after more than 60 FIRs were lodged across the state.

SC frames guidelines for High Courts on reserved judgments, fixes 3-month time limit

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday issued a set of guidelines, to operate as "binding directions", for High Courts to prevent delays in pronouncing judgments in reserved matters. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi fixed a three-month time limit for delivering judgments in cases where orders have been reserved. The court further directed that bail orders should ordinarily be pronounced on the same day. In cases where the order is reserved, it must be pronounced and uploaded by the following day. The apex court also said that if a bench fails to deliver a reserved judgment within four months, a party may move an application before the Chief Justice seeking transfer of the matter to another bench. It added that where only the operative portion of a judgment is pronounced initially, the detailed reasoned judgment must be uploaded within 15 days.

Among the directions issued, the court said that High Courts should endeavour to pronounce reasoned judgments within three months from the date on which the judgment is reserved. The court also said High Courts must display extra promptitude in pronouncing matters concerning personal liberty, regular bail, and anticipatory bail. Bail applications should be heard, and the order should preferably be pronounced and uploaded the same day, it said. "If it is reserved, it should be pronounced on the next day and uploaded to the website," the court said. The directions also stated "orders granting bail or sentence suspension should be communicated to the jail authorities as soon as it is pronounced, and the undertrial/convict should be released, preferably the same day or at most the next day, unless they are required in any other case or there is delay in complying with bail

conditions". The compliance report in this regard is to be reported by the trial court to the High Court, they added. "If a judgment in a criminal appeal or a death reference is reserved and the appellant is in custody, clarification can be sought by the bench from the parties within 7 days of the date of reserving the judgment. In other cases, the clarification should not be sought beyond one month of the date of reserving. "If the bench is of the opinion that any delay in pronouncing a reasoned judgment can cause hardship to the parties, and urgent orders are required, the operative part may be pronounced in court, and the reasoned judgment should be uploaded within 7 days or a maximum of 15 days, if practical difficulties are faced. Such cases may include habeas corpus matters, criminal appeals resulting in acquittal and matters relating to demolition," the guidelines specified.