

Uttar Pradesh authorities to take stringent measures

Strict action required against people involved in illegal sand mining: NGT

- The green body was hearing a plea regarding illegal sand mining in Kanpur and Unnao causing pollution in River Ganga
- The applicant has submitted that sand mining activities have been carried out without having environmental clearance

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NEW DELHI

UNDERLINING that strict action is required to be taken against people involved in illegal sand mining, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh authorities to

take stringent measures for preventing such unauthorised mining and transportation of minor minerals.

The green body was hearing a plea regarding illegal sand mining in the Kanpur and Unnao areas in Uttar Pradesh causing pollution in River Ganga. In an order



dated January 16 and made available recently, a bench of NGT's judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member Afroz

Ahmad said, "The applicant has submitted that sand mining activities have been carried out without having environmental clearance

(EC) and even if ECs have been granted, then those norms of clearances have not been complied with by the mining lessees which has caused severe damage to river belt."

The tribunal noted that the applicant had named a private person or project proponent who was carrying out illegal sand mining in Bilhaur near Kanpur and built an unauthorised bridge in the Ganga river, dividing it into two streams which had become hazardous to the nearby villages and could be catastrophic

for the entire region.

Noting a report by a panel, the tribunal, however, said it revealed a "graver misconduct" of illegal construction of a temporary road in the Ganga, dividing the stream and obstructing its flow, which had a far more serious adverse environmental impact than any temporary bridge.

Rapping the state's director of the geology and mining department for remaining "completely insensitive to the issue" and "culpably ignoring" it, the tribunal said, "Natural river

channels can be destroyed and dried up by spending small amounts of money, but cannot be created even with huge amounts of money and other infrastructural resources."

It said, "The facts and circumstances of the present case reveal serious violations of environmental laws/norms by the Respondent 2 (project proponent) and serious derelictions of duties by concerned officers of the (state's) mining department and Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board

(UPPCB)."

The tribunal directed the state chief secretary to issue appropriate instructions to all district magistrates to ensure that a copy of the executed mining lease is immediately sent to the UPPCB's member secretary and the board's regional office. This, the tribunal said, was necessary to ensure compliance with the EC conditions and for obtaining the mandatory consent to establish (CTE) and consent to operate (CTO) before commencement of mining.

PDA a ploy to mislead masses, protect 'parivar,' says CM Yogi

Those who make such claims must be asked that while the double engine government has ensured that 25 crore people across the country, including six crore in Uttar Pradesh, move ahead with pride and dignity, why could the same not be achieved during their tenure?

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LUCKNOW

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday slammed Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav 'PDA' pitch saying the opposition party cared more about 'parivar' (family) than marginalised communities. The SP chief had earlier claimed the Union Budget 2026-27 had largely ignored the 'PDA', Yadav's coinage denoting 'pichde' (backward classes), Dalit and 'alpshanyak' (minorities).

Responding to a query on Yadav's comment while speaking to mediapersons here, Adityanath said, "Those who make such claims must be asked that while the double engine



government has ensured that 25 crore people across the country, including six crore in Uttar Pradesh, move ahead with pride and dignity, why could the same

not be achieved during their tenure? The PDA must have been there then too."

The chief minister questioned why the PDA was not discussed during the

previous government, alleging that the past dispensation had only cared about 'parivar,' he said.

He claimed safeguarding the PDA was merely a

ruse to mislead the masses for the sake of dynasty. "For the prime minister, the nation is family. Our vision is to help the poor, youth, and farmers. Our goal is to ensure top-class infrastructure, one aimed at realising the goal of an 'atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) and 'viksit' Bharat.

This vision is amply reflected in the Union budget, but those without vision, those who lack any plan for the future, can only make such meaningless claims," Adityanath said.

He also dismissed Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the Union budget and pointed out various budgetary allocations which he claimed would facilitate the country's growth.

2 toll plaza staff arrested for assaulting female advocate

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SONBHADRA

POLICE have arrested two toll plaza staff for allegedly assaulting a female advocate and her relatives after a dispute in Sonbhadra district, officials said on Monday. Circle Officer (City) Randhir Mishra said Ramji Tiwari, a resident of Hamirpur district, and Sarvesh Yadav from Ambedkar Nagar district have been arrested in connection with the incident that took place at the Lodhi village toll plaza in the Robertsganj police station area on Sunday.

Police said a search is underway to trace and arrest seven-eight other toll plaza staff named in the FIR, whose details are not known yet. The case was registered based on a complaint filed by Aarti Pandey, an advocate by profession. According to Robertsganj SHO Swaroop Verma, in her complaint,



Aarti said that she was going to Obra with her relatives and friends in a car, and on reaching the toll plaza at around 3 pm, they noticed some vehicles standing ahead of their car, causing a traffic jam.

When the vehicles did not move for a long time, her brother-in-law, Naveen Singh, stepped out of the car and asked the toll plaza employees the reason for the jam. However, the staff abused Singh and even threatened to kill him, Aarti said in her complaint.

As the matter escalated, the toll plaza staff thrashed Singh, causing serious head injuries, the complaint said. When Avnish Dubey, a relative of Aarti, tried to intervene, he too was beaten with sticks, it said. Aarti alleged that the toll plaza staff then grabbed her and Garima Singh, another relative, by their hair and dragged them, and even threatened to kill them.

The complainant said they felt humiliated as the toll plaza staff pushed them around, causing them to fall.

Renaming MGNREGA scheme anti-poor: Kang writes to Modi



HANS NEWS SERVICE
MOHALI

SENIOR Congress leader Jagmohan Singh Kang said on Monday that he has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking reconsideration of the Centre's decision to "re-name the MGNREGA scheme and impose new conditions on its implementation". In a statement issued here, Kang described the move as "anti-poor and unfortunate", alleging that the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the scheme was a regressive attempt at diluting the legacy of the Father of the Nation.

He also opposed the decision to shift 40 per cent of the financial burden onto states, saying it would severely impact debt-ridden states like Punjab. Kang said the scheme framed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) symbolises dignity and a constitutional right to work for millions of rural labourers. He pointed out that the scheme, launched during the UPA government under former prime minister Manmohan Singh, was a legal guarantee and not a welfare charity.

The former Punjab minister criticised the Centre's proposal to increase working days while transferring additional financial responsibility to states, calling it unjust at a time when many states were facing serious financial stress. He claimed Punjab was already struggling with a severe fiscal crisis. Kang also expressed concern over the "removal" of the unemployment allowance and the "curtailment of powers of Gram Panchayats", saying these steps have weakened the democratic framework of rural development.

2 held in crackdown on cyber criminals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE CBI has arrested two alleged cybercriminals after conducting a massive countrywide search operation across 35 locations as part of a sweeping multinational crackdown on cyber-enabled financial crimes, officials said on Monday. Operation CyStrike was launched on January 30 in coordination with the FBI in the United States and agencies of the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Ireland, and Singapore.

The CBI officers searched 35 locations across 10 states, including Delhi, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Telangana and West Bengal. The raids disrupted multiple cybercrime networks based in India that targeted victims in the United States, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Ireland, Singapore, and India, officials said.

Two individuals were arrested for being part of separate rackets busted by the agency during the operation. "During search operations, CBI busted and dismantled a transnational cyber-enabled financial crime network being operated by the accused persons from New Delhi, targeting US victims online.

Budget a roadmap for developed India: Raj CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

RAJASTHAN Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Monday described the Union Budget 2026-27 as a roadmap for a developed India. "The budget reflects a strong commitment to fulfill the aspirations of a new India while ensuring inclusive growth by reaching the last person. It is a roadmap for a developed India," he said at a media briefing at the chief minister's office.

He said the budget was youth-centric, focused on employment generation, skill development, promotion of startups and strengthening the service sector, which will expand both job opportunities and self-employment. Sharma said the establishment of content creator labs in secondary schools and colleges would provide benefits to the youth of the state.

"The budget also includes significant provisions to strengthen women's empowerment, security and eco-



nomic participation, as well as to improve agricultural infrastructure, market access for farmers and risk mitigation," he said. Sharma said the Union budget has opened new avenues for small and large industries, manufacturers, artisans and workers to gain access to global markets.

"Several initiatives have been introduced to boost manufacturing in sectors such as bio-pharma, chemicals, textiles, handloom and handicrafts," he said, calling upon industry leaders to take advantage of special schemes announced in the budget for the manufacturing of heavy construction and infrastructure machinery.

Man kills woman in Uttarakhand

HANS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN

A man accused of killing his female friend by shooting her in Uttarakhand's Rishikesh was arrested in Uttar Pradesh on Monday, police said. Police said the accused, Suresh Gupta, 40, was arrested from the Chhutmalpur area of the Saharanpur district. According to the police, Preeti Rawat, 32, who lived alone in a rented room in the Shivaji Nagar area of Rishikesh, was shot dead on the night of January 31. Police said Preeti was divorced and worked as an assistant at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh.

Preeti's father, Bachan Singh Rawat, had filed

a complaint with the police accusing Gupta of the murder, based on which the police registered a case under Section 103(1) of the Indian Penal Code. Police said that the preliminary investigation into the incident and questioning of people in the vicinity revealed that Gupta had divorced his wife four months ago to marry Preeti and, at her behest, had sold his ancestral property in Laksar, Haridwar. Gupta was looking for a house in Rishikesh. However, due to not finding a suitable property, differences began to grow between Gupta and Preeti, police said. According to the police, prima facie, this was the reason behind the murder. The police have arrested the accused and are interrogating him, they said.

ANTI-TERROR OPS ACROSS JAMMU: TWO SUSPECTED DETAINED

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JAMMU

TWO persons moving in a suspicious manner were detained on Monday as security forces intensified their anti-terror operations across the Jammu region, officials said. The search operation also resumed in snow-bound Chatroo belt in Kishtwar district to track down and neutralise terrorists who

were engaged in at least four encounters over the past fortnight, the officials said. They said two suspicious persons were caught by the Quick Reaction Team (QRT) of the army near their camp in Bari Brahmana area of Samba district around 10.30 am and later handed over to local police for questioning. Security forces also observed suspicious movement in

Joffer area of Ramnagar sector late Sunday night and immediately launched a search operation covering Joffer, Marta, Kulthian, Sohan, Kheal, and Chour Mottu along Ujh river, the officials said, adding no suspicious persons were found during the operation.

The officials said movement of suspected terrorists was also reported in Ramgarh forests in Udhampur district and Kalas top in Rajouri district and accordingly an operation is underway at both the places.

CM Sukhu directs forest department to increase cover to 31% by 2030

- Global warming has emerged as a major challenge worldwide and its adverse effects are clearly visible. Keeping this in view, the state government is according high priority to environmental conservation
- 16,376 square kilometers of land in HP is snow-covered, barren or mountainous where plantation is not feasible. CM instructed the department to identify potential areas in each district suitable for plantation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA

CHIEF Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Monday directed Forest Department officials to prepare a comprehensive roadmap to increase Himachal Pradesh's forest cover to 31

per cent by 2030.

Presiding over a review meeting of the department here, the chief minister said the current forest cover in the state stands at 29.5 per cent and needs to be enhanced in a planned and sustainable manner. "Global warming has emerged as



a major challenge worldwide and its adverse effects are clearly visible. Keeping this in view, the state gov-

ernment is according high priority to environmental conservation," Sukhu said.

The chief minister added

that about 16,376 square kilometers of land in Himachal Pradesh is snow-covered, barren or moun-

tainous where plantation is not feasible. He instructed the department to identify potential areas in each district suitable for plantation and prepare a phased plan accordingly. He said the drive should focus on native species, fruit-bearing plants and those with medicinal value.

Sukhu stressed that the drive must focus on protecting existing forests alongside creating new ones, while ensuring the active participation of local communities. "The state government has launched the 'Rajiv Gandhi Van Sam-

vardhan Yojana' to promote community participation in forest plantation and conservation. Under the scheme, plantation was carried out over 924.9 hectares during the previous year.

A total of 285 Mahila Mandals, 70 Yuva Mandals, 59 Self Help Groups and 13 community-based organisations actively contributed to this initiative" he said.

Under this scheme, the state government provides financial assistance of Rs 2.40 lakh for plantation over two hectares to these groups, along with annual

incentives linked to survival rates. Sukhu said the scheme has received an encouraging response from the targeted groups.

The chief minister added that a target has been set to undertake plantation over 5,000 hectares in the next financial year under the scheme.

Of this, 3,376 hectares have already been identified, while the process for the remaining 1,624 hectares is underway. He also reviewed the progress of other schemes being implemented by the Forest Department.