

Interstate bus services expanded with 50 new AC buses

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi government is planning to strengthen interstate transport connectivity by deploying 50 environment-friendly air-conditioned buses on 17 interstate routes. The initiative, announced by Transport Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh, aims to improve travel options for commuters and enhance connectivity between the national

• Delhi gov't approves free bus travel for transgender passengers, says CM Rekha Gupta

• 'Pink tickets in DTC buses to continue for 3 months; no need to rush for smart cards'

capital and neighbouring regions.

According to the plan, the Delhi Transport Corporation will operate 12-meter



AC buses on these routes based on benchmark rates prescribed by the Association of State Road Transport Undertakings. The move is part of the government's

broader effort to expand regional mobility and provide more comfortable and reliable transport services for passengers travelling between Delhi and nearby states.

As part of the ongoing expansion of interstate services, the Delhi Transport Corporation has already introduced electric bus operations on several key routes. These include Delhi-Baraut in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi-Sonapat, Delhi-Dharuhera

and Delhi-Panipat in Haryana. The services are expected to improve connectivity for daily commuters as well as passengers travelling between the capital and surrounding cities.

Officials said additional interstate routes are also being planned to further expand the network. Proposed routes include Nanakar Delhi-Ghaziabad Bus Terminal, Delhi-Rewari, Delhi-Karnal, Delhi-Rohtak, Delhi-Alwar and

Delhi-Jewar. These routes are expected to ease travel for thousands of passengers who regularly commute between Delhi and neighbouring towns and districts.

The Delhi government has approved the proposal to include transgender passengers in its free bus travel scheme, a statement from the chief minister's office said on Monday. The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting headed by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, of-

icials said. "This important initiative reflects the Rekha Gupta government's commitment to social inclusion, dignity, and equal access to public services for all sections of society," the statement said.

Rekha Gupta on Monday said free travel for women in public transport buses through the pink ticket will continue for three months and urged them not to worry or rush for having 'Pink Saheli' cards.

Police bust illegal LPG refilling racket

More than 600 gas cylinders were seized during a raid; the raid was conducted at a warehouse linked to Guruji Indane Gas Service in Mundka

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NEW DELHI

DELHI Police have uncovered a major illegal LPG storage operation in outer Delhi's Mundka area, seizing more than 600 gas cylinders during a raid conducted by the Crime Branch. The action was carried out by the Anti-Extortion and Kidnapping Cell following a tip-off about large-scale illegal stockpiling of LPG cylinders at a warehouse.

Police officials said the raid was conducted at a warehouse linked to Guruji Indane Gas Service in Mundka. The agency is authorised to distribute only Indane cylinders, but investigators found cylinders belonging to multiple companies stored at the premises.



During the operation, the team recovered a total of 610 cylinders, including 423 Indane cylinders, 92 Bharat Gas cylinders and 95 HP Gas cylinders. Among them were 197 filled cylinders and 392 empty ones, along with 21 smaller cylinders.

Preliminary investigation indicated irregularities in stock records. Officials found 133 filled commercial

Indane cylinders stored at the warehouse, even though records from Indian Oil Corporation showed that the distributor should have had no such stock as of March 10. Authorities believe this points to possible illegal hoarding and manipulation of LPG supplies.

Officials from the Department of Food Supply and Consumer Affairs also

participated in the raid and confirmed that keeping cylinders from other companies within the premises of an authorised Indane distributor violates LPG control regulations. Following the operation, police registered a case under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, and relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said illegal hoarding of LPG cylinders is often done to create artificial shortages in the market so that the cylinders can later be sold at inflated prices.

He added that such practices not only exploit consumers but also pose serious safety hazards due to improper storage of highly flammable materials.

HC grants time to Kejriwal to respond to CBI's plea

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NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Monday granted time to former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others to respond to the CBI's petition challenging their discharge in the liquor policy case.

Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma listed the CBI's petition assailing the trial court's decision for hearing on April 6. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the agency, said the trial court's "perverse" order "cannot remain on record even for a second more than necessary" and that Kejriwal and others should not be given more than a week's time to file their response.

Reply is not necessary when the entire record of the trial court was available, he said. Senior counsel ap-



pearing for the AAP leader informed that they have already approached the Supreme Court challenging the matter.

"I have not received any stay yet.. till the court gets an order staying the proceedings, the case has to proceed," the court observed. The senior lawyers appearing for the accused

persons said there was no urgency and they should be given a reasonable time to file their replies.

On February 27, the trial court discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others, pulling up the CBI by saying its case was wholly unable to survive judicial scrutiny and stood discredited in its entirety.

Speaker slams ill-conceived attempt to remove Birla

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NEW DELHI

THE opposition's move in the Lok Sabha to remove Speaker Om Birla from the post undermined the parliamentary traditions, Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta said on Monday. In a letter written to Birla, he asserted that the neutrality of the Chair of the House is central to the parliamentary democracy of the country, and urged that the members respect constitutional institutions. The resolution brought by the opposition parties, seeking the removal of Om Birla as the Lok Sabha Speaker, was defeated by a voice vote last Wednesday. Gupta, in his letter to Birla, said, "It is deeply saddening that certain opposition parties, driven by narrow political considerations, chose to bring a motion against the incumbent Speaker - an office that stands above partisan politics and is entrusted with safeguarding the rules, traditions and dignity of Parliament."

INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

Youth Congress stages 'Sansad Gherao' protest

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NEW DELHI

THE Indian Youth Congress (IYC) on Monday staged a 'Sansad Gherao' protest at the Jantar Mantar here against the India-US trade deal, alleging the agreement would be detrimental to farmers, workers and small businesses.

Led by IYC national president Uday Bhanu Chib, hundreds of Youth Congress workers from several states gathered at the protest site, raising slogans against the government and demanding that the government



scrap the trade arrangement. Protesters carried placards reading "Cancel the Indo-US Deal" and accused the

government of compromising the country's economic interests. IYC leaders claimed the proposed deal

could adversely affect farmers, the textile sector and micro, small and medium enterprises, while also raising concerns about data security.

An IYC member said the protesters planned to march towards Parliament and would walk up to the point where barricades had been put up by police near the Parliament complex. Several police personnel were deployed in the area to maintain law and order during the protest. Barricades were put up at multiple points around the protest site, restricting movement.



HC lists J Akbar's plea against Priya Ramani

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NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Monday listed former Union minister M J Akbar's plea challenging the acquittal of journalist Priya Ramani in his criminal defamation case over the allegations of sexual misconduct for final hearing on September 24. "Trial court record has been received. Written submissions have been filed by both the parties. List for final hearing on the next date," Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said. Akbar has challenged the trial court's February 17, 2021 order acquitting Ramani in the case on grounds that a woman has the right to put grievances before any platform of her choice even after decades. The high court on January 13, 2022, agreed to examine Akbar's appeal against the trial court's order

and admitted it, on which the notice was issued to Ramani in August 2021. In his appeal, Akbar has contended that the trial court decided his criminal defamation case on the basis of surmises and conjecture. His plea contended that the trial court failed to appreciate the arguments and evidence on record. Akbar has also claimed the trial court "gravely erred" in observing that he did not have a stellar reputation and has ignored the well-established principles of criminal jurisprudence. The trial court had dismissed the defamation complaint filed by Akbar and acquitted Ramani, saying no charges were proved against her. The trial court had said it was shameful that crimes against women were taking place in a country where mega epics like the 'Mahabharata' and 'Ramayana' were written about respecting them.

Youth, juvenile held for attacking man who intervened in assault



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NEW DELHI

DELHI Police has arrested an 18-year-old and apprehended a juvenile for allegedly attacking a man with a knife after he intervened when the duo were assaulting a boy in northwest Delhi's Jahangir Puri area, an officer said on Monday. The arrestee has been identified as Piyush, a resident of Jahangir Puri. Police said the weapon used in the attack -- a knife -- was recovered from the possession of the minor. "The incident came to light on March 13 after a PCR call was received regarding a quarrel in the area.

When police reached the spot, the complainant, Harjeet Singh Sachdeva (23), told them that Piyush, along with a minor and another associate

identified as Raghu, were assaulting a boy in the locality," a senior officer said.

Sachdeva said when he intervened to rescue the boy, the accused were angered. During the ensuing altercation, the minor allegedly took out a knife and attacked him, while Piyush also joined in the assault and thrashed him, police said.

Their associate Raghu allegedly even pulled out a firearm, described to be a country-made pistol, and threatened to kill the complainant, the officer said. On hearing Sachdeva's cries for help, his younger brother Deep and some local youths rushed to the spot, prompting the accused to flee while threatening the complainant with dire consequences, he added.

'Phool Walon Ki Sair' reflects city's shared cultural heritage

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NEW DELHI

THE 'Phool Walon Ki Sair' festival reflects Delhi's shared heritage and helps connect younger generations with their cultural roots, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Monday. The Delhi Secretariat came alive with Shehnai music as the members of Anjuman Sair-e-Gul Forashan presented customary 'Pankha' (floral banners) to the chief minister, a long-standing tradition associated with the festival. Under the festival dedicated

to Hindu-Muslim unity, people offer floral Pankha at the Dargah of Sufi Saint Bakhtiyar Kaki and the Yogmaya temple in Mehrauli.

Last year, the festival was delayed as the necessary approval was not received from the authorities. Finally, it was held after the intervention of the then L-G V K Saxena. Gupta said 'Phool Walon Ki Sair' is much more than a festival and represents a remarkable example of Delhi's shared cultural heritage and spirit of harmony that defines the city. The Delhi government is committed to

preserving and promoting the capital's historical traditions and cultural events. Such celebrations, she noted, help connect younger generations with their cultural roots while strengthening mutual respect and social harmony.

Art, Culture, Language and Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra said the festival plays an important role in reinforcing the city's shared cultural legacy.

He described 'Phool Walon Ki Sair' as a historic tradition that conveys a message of harmony, unity and brotherhood, while also allowing the younger generation to experience Delhi's rich cultural heritage. The festival, which is usually held in September-November, will be celebrated on March 15-21 this year. A series of cultural and religious programmes will be part of the festival.

Kharge criticises Centre over LPG supply crisis, calls for debate

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

CONGRESS president and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday criticised the central government over the reported LPG supply issues in the country, saying the situation highlights weaknesses in the government's management as well as its foreign and energy policies. He urged the

'Kharge says the government is aware of the rising tensions in West Asia and has even issued advisories for Indian citizens in Iran. Such developments should have prompted the government to anticipate possible disruptions to key shipping routes and energy supplies'

government to ensure that LPG remains easily available and affordable for citizens and called for a discussion in Parliament on the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Speaking in Parliament, Kharge said the govern-

ment was aware of the rising tensions in West Asia and had even issued advisories for Indian citizens in Iran. According to him, such developments should have prompted the government to anticipate possible



disruptions to key shipping routes and energy supplies. He questioned why advance

planning and alternative arrangements were not made despite the possibility of

supply disruptions.

Kharge also asked why the government had not taken the opposition and the public into confidence on the issue to reduce anxiety and ensure a coordinated response. He said transparency and discussion in Parliament would help address public concerns about the impact of global developments on India's energy supply.

The Congress leader said

the situation is affecting a wide range of people, including poor and middle-class households as well as small businesses that depend heavily on LPG for daily operations. He said small eateries, restaurants, hostels, community kitchens and several small and medium enterprises have been facing difficulties due to limited availability of cylinders. According to him, some establishments have

been forced to scale down operations or temporarily close.

Kharge also pointed to reports of black marketing, claiming that in certain areas LPG cylinders were being sold at prices exceeding Rs 5,000. He questioned government statements claiming that there was no shortage of LPG in the country, arguing that the ground situation appears different in several places.

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