

Trust deficit persists in spite of IAF overseeing NEET-UG re-test papers

CHANDIGARH

WITH the Indian Air Force (IAF) tasked with the transportation of NEET-UG re-test question papers, students on Wednesday said that the government appears to have taken foolproof measures this time, but some added that the authorities had failed them once before, making it difficult to place complete trust in the system again.

Talking to IANS, a student said: "The government appears to have taken foolproof measures this time. Paper setters were quar-

antined, the transportation of papers is being handled by the Air Force, and the papers are being stored securely, reducing the chances of any leak. However, the damage caused by the earlier paper leak cannot be undone. Students suffered because of it, and many feel accountability is still lacking. While the authorities have improved the process, students have already faced stress, uncertainty, and the burden of preparing again. These measures are welcome, but they should have been in place from the beginning."

Another student said: "I have been preparing for NEET for around two-and-a-half years.

Our syllabus was completed nearly nine months ago, and since then, we have been revising the same topics repeatedly. It becomes frustrating after a point, and we often wonder whether all this effort will be worth it. There is still uncertainty about the exam — whether the paper will be difficult or easy. We do not know what to expect. The authorities failed us once, so it is difficult to place complete trust in the



system again."

Professor Manish Goyal said: "Students are still under stress. One student told me that he still cannot

believe he has to appear for the examination again. Imagine a student who scored 697 marks in the previous test — such a student

would never want to go through the examination process again. Now there is pressure on whether they will be able to achieve the

same score in the re-test."

"At the same time, the authorities appear to have closed almost every possible avenue for a paper leak. Earlier, the leak was allegedly linked to individuals involved in the translation process, but this time those involved have been quarantined. That means even the potential sources have been addressed," he added.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has transported question papers for the NEET-UG 2026 re-test to 18 locations across the country as part of extensive security arrangements ahead of the

examination scheduled for June 21.

The move comes amid heightened efforts by authorities to ensure that the re-test is conducted smoothly and without any irregularities. Officials said the use of Air Force aircraft is aimed at ensuring the secure and timely delivery of question papers to designated hubs across the country.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) and other government agencies have put in place a multi-layered security system for the re-examination.

'NEET leak betrayed 22 lakh students, Pradhan must quit'

JAIPUR

CONGRESS leader Sachin Pilot on Wednesday accused the Centre of failing to fix accountability in the NEET paper leak case, saying that despite 22 lakh students being affected, neither has Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned nor has any meaningful action been taken against those responsible.

Speaking ahead of Rahul Gandhi's interaction with students in Kota, Pilot said the examination system has failed millions of aspirants and their families, who invest years of hard work and sacrifice in the hope of securing a better future. "The NEET paper leak betrayed 22 lakh students



and shattered their trust. Even after a CBI probe was ordered, neither has the Education Minister resigned nor has any meaningful accountability been fixed. The government continues to evade responsibility," Pilot said. He said the crisis had

exposed deep flaws in the country's education and examination systems and had pushed many students into despair. "Young people spend years preparing for these examinations. Their families make enormous sacrifices, often foregoing

basic comforts to educate their children. When that trust is broken, it becomes a matter of national concern," he said. Pilot also linked examination irregularities to the growing mental health crisis among students, noting that several young

people, including aspirants in Rajasthan, had been driven to suicide. Backing Rahul Gandhi's programme in Kota, Pilot described it as the beginning of a nationwide campaign to seek accountability and reforms in the examination system. "Rahul Gandhi's campaign reflects the voice of the country's youth. He is coming to Kota to listen to students, understand their concerns and demand accountability from a government that has remained asleep despite the futures of lakhs of students being jeopardised," he said. Pilot alleged that local authorities were attempting to obstruct the event by removing banners and posters and discouraging participation.

CBI arrests IFoS officer in Rs 75 cr fund case



CHANDIGARH

THE Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested Navneet Srivastava, a senior Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officer and former CEO of the Chandigarh Renewable Energy and Science and Technology Promotion Society (CREST), in connection with the major misappropriation of funds from IDFC Bank accounts.

The arrest was made after the investigation revealed Srivastava's alleged role in the fraudulent diversion of public funds while he was heading the organisation. The accused was produced before the Special Judge, CBI, Chandigarh, and has been remanded to police custody for three days.

Investigation has shown that funds parked in three bank accounts of CREST

maintained with IDFC Bank at Chandigarh were fraudulently misappropriated and routed into various shell companies. These proceeds were allegedly converted for personal use by the beneficiaries, resulting in a loss of approximately Rs 75 crore to CREST.

Further probe revealed that part of the crime proceeds was diverted into the account of a private company in which Srivastava's wife and a close relative serve as directors.

This development comes after the CBI earlier arrested the then Project Director, Sukhwinder Singh Abrol, and the Accountant, Sahil Kukkar, of CREST. Both have already been charge-sheeted and are currently in judicial custody.

It may be recalled that the CBI took over the investigation from the Economic Of-

fences Police Station, Chandigarh. Recently, the agency filed its first charge sheet in the case against 13 accused persons, including five officials of the private bank, two public servants from CREST under J&K Administration, two shell entities, along with three of their partners, directors, and one private individual. All the accused persons named in the charge sheet are presently in judicial custody.

The case pertains to a systematic financial fraud involving multiple layers of shell companies and diversion of government funds meant for renewable energy and science & technology promotion initiatives.

The CBI has reiterated its commitment to conducting a thorough, impartial, and expeditious investigation to bring all those responsible to justice.

Restaurant ordered to pay Rs 15k compensation

DELHI/JALANDHAR

THE District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Jalandhar, has held that a restaurant's levy of service charges without obtaining the consumer's consent amounts to an unfair trade practice and directed it to refund the amount collected along with compensation of Rs 15,000.

The complaint was filed by Sanjeev Duggal, a practicing advocate from Phagwara, against Maya Inns Pvt. Ltd. and its directors, following a buffet dinner he had with his family at the restaurant on November 8, 2023. According to the complaint, Duggal visited the restaurant with three adults and one minor child and was allegedly charged buffet charges for four adults. He further claimed that the restaurant levied service charges of Rs 128.13 and Rs 23.40 in two separate bills, totalling Rs 151.53, at the rate of 3 per cent. The complainant alleged that when he objected to the service charge and to billing the minor child as an adult, the restaurant staff misbehaved toward him.

He also raised concerns regarding the quality of certain food items and sought a refund of the service charges along with compensation of Rs 5 lakh



for mental agony, harassment and humiliation.

Contesting the complaint, the restaurant denied allegations of service deficiencies, misbehaviour, and unfair trade practices. It argued that the amount was collected as "staff contribution", which was prominently displayed on the menu card, and claimed that such charges would have been waived had any objection been raised by the customer. The restaurant also relied upon interim orders passed by the Delhi High Court in proceedings relating to service charges levied by hotels and restaurants. While denying liability, it expressed willingness to refund the disputed amount of Rs 151.53.

After examining the evidence and hearing both sides, the consumer forum found that the restaurant had admitted collecting the amount and agreed to refund it.

"It is proved that the OP charged service charges and not the staff contribution, without obtaining consent from the consumer, which constitutes an unfair trade practice and the complainant is entitled to a refund of the said amount," the commission said in its order.

The commission observed that even if the restaurant intended to collect the amount as a staff contribution, it was under a duty to clearly inform customers about such charges in advance.

"The entire pleadings and even the documents, nowhere show that the complainant was ever informed beforehand in a clear and unambiguous manner regarding the compulsory levy of such service charges/staff contribution," it said. The consumer forum directed the opposite parties to comply with the order within 45 days from receipt of its copy.



Punjab: 2 modules busted; 3 held with 5.7 kg heroin

CHANDIGARH

IN a major crackdown against drug trafficking and illegal narcotics networks, Punjab Police have busted two modules by arresting three accused in two separate operations, said Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav here on Wednesday.

The police have also recovered 5.775 kg of heroin, 1.33 lakh restricted capsules and tablets, 39 cartridges of KF 7.65 calibre, and Rs 36,600 in cash from their possession.

Those arrested have been identified as Manjinder Singh (24), a resident of Lakha Bhedian; Jagjit Singh (22), a resident of Mallanwala; and Gurdev Singh (55), a resident of Mamdot Uttar in Ferozepur.

Apart from recovering contraband, police teams have also impounded their car bearing registration number PB 46 AP 3255. The DGP said that further investigation is underway to establish forward and backward linkages in these cases to uncover the complete network,

trace the financial trail, and identify all people involved in the crime. Sharing operational details on the first operation, Senior Superintendent of Police (Ferozepur) Bhubinder Singh Sidhu said that police had received a reliable input that Manjinder Singh and Jagjit Singh are indulging in drug smuggling. Acting swiftly, police teams intercepted them near Daana Mandi Basti Vakeela Wali, when they were travelling in their car, and during the search, 5.775 kg of heroin was recovered, he said.

In another operation, the SSP said that the police team had received a reliable input that Gurdev Singh runs a Medical Store in Mamdot village, where he sells restricted capsules and tablets. Acting swiftly, police teams in the presence of a drug inspector raided the medical store and recovered 1,33,640 restricted tablets and capsules, Rs 36,600 cash and 39 cartridges of KF 7.65 calibre from the shop, he said, while adding that the accused Gurdev has been arrested.

Clinic operator beaten to death, 30 booked

VICTIM'S FAMILY, VILLAGERS BLOCK HIGHWAY

SHIVPURI: A 40-year-old clinic operator was allegedly beaten to death by a mob in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district, prompting angry family members and villagers to block a highway and demand immediate arrests, police said on Wednesday.

The incident occurred in Bhayavan village under Bhauti police station limits on Tuesday evening. The deceased, identified as Prabhan Singh Lodhi, succumbed to injuries at Pichhore Civil Hospital after being allegedly assaulted by a group of people over a dispute linked to a woman. According to the complaint lodged by his wife, Meena Lodhi, a mob barged into their house while Prabhan Singh was having dinner, dragged him outside and attacked him with sticks, iron rods and stones. She alleged that when family members attempted to



intervene, they were also assaulted. Police have registered a case against 30 persons, including 15 named accused and 15 unidentified individuals. The named accused include Ramniwas Pal, Devendra Pal, Raju Pal, Balveer Pal, Sudama Pal, Parmeshwardas Pal, Mijaji Pal, Keshpal, Pradeep Pal, Dinesh Pal, Angad Lodhi, Anil Lodhi, Pushpendra Pal, Shaitan Pal and Mohar Singh Pal. Pichhore SDOP Prashant Sharma said preliminary investigation indicated that the violence stemmed from a dispute involving a woman. The woman, who was married earlier this year, had reportedly approached police after

alleging assault by members of her family. She later expressed her wish to go with Prabhan Lodhi, a move opposed by her relatives. Police said both sides had reached the Bhauti police station earlier on Tuesday and levelled allegations against each other.

After counselling, they were sent back to the village. A few hours later, the attack on Prabhan Lodhi took place.

The victim's death sparked outrage among relatives and villagers, who gathered outside the police station and staged a blockade on the Shivpuri-Pichhore highway, causing traffic disruption for several hours.

The protesters demanded swift action against all those involved. Senior police officials reached the spot and assured the family that strict action would be taken, following which the blockade was lifted.

Raj CM approves rare earth exploration and special NIA court

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma has approved a series of key decisions aimed at strengthening the state's mining sector, judicial infrastructure and disaster preparedness, while directing officials to ensure their time-bound implementation.

According to an official statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office, the decisions are expected to boost

economic activity, improve governance and enhance civil protection mechanisms across the state. In a major push to mineral exploration, the Chief Minister approved the grant of an exploration licence for Rare Earth Element (REE) minerals over an area of 207.63 square kilometres in Navatala and Devigarh villages of Balotra district. The licence has been granted to the Central Mine Planning and

Design Institute (CMPDI).

The mineral block falls in the Pachpadra and Shergarh regions and is expected to contribute to mineral resource development and generate employment opportunities in the area. Rare Earth Elements are strategically important minerals used in sectors such as electronics, renewable energy, electric vehicles and defence manufacturing. The Chief

Minister has also approved the establishment of a special court for cases investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The move is aimed at strengthening the judicial system and ensuring faster disposal of cases related to national security and other matters investigated by the agency. The government said the dedicated court would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the legal pro-

cess in such cases.

As part of the 2025-26 Budget announcements, CM Sharma has approved the formation of Civil Defence Corps units in eight newly created districts.

The districts include Balotra, Didwana-Kuchaman, Phalodi, Salumber, Khairthal-Tijara, Deeg, Kotputli-Behror and Beawar.

According to the government, the initiative will

strengthen disaster management, civil defence and emergency response systems in these districts by encouraging citizen participation and improving preparedness during natural disasters and other emergencies.

The Chief Minister has directed officials to ensure the effective and timely execution of all approved decisions so that their benefits reach the public at the earliest.

