

## Varanasi flyover collapse poses question mark on UP bridge firm

**LUCKNOW, MAY 16** /- The tragic flyover collapse in Varanasi, the high-profile Lok Sabha constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has posed a big question mark on the standard of works carried out by the UP Bridge Corporation in the recent past.

At least 18 people were killed on Tuesday after a portion of the flyover being built by the state-run corporation collapsed on a busy road in Varanasi as it crushed a mini bus, cars and two-wheelers. Officials feared that the toll may rise. The state-run corporation, which had once earned kudos

bagging projects not only in other states but also in Iraq, Yemen and Nepal, has been at the receiving end recently, a senior official of the PWD department said. In 2010, the 1086.62 meter Chillaahat bridge connecting Fatehpur with Bundelkhand region, but at the cost of Rs 650 crore, developed cracks within 13 days of inauguration, he recalled.

In 2016, a cavity developed on the Lohia bridge in Lucknow, providing an arterial link between posh and VIP areas on either side of the Gomti river. Another flyover near Polytechnic

crossing had developed cracks and was closed for traffic for about a year, the official said. In both these cases, as well as in most of the similar cases, inquiries were set up but no concrete action was taken and the matter was put on the backburner. The corporation has been facing problems especially because of overstaffing and unprofessional handling of affairs as well as unprecedented political and bureaucratic interference, he said.

All the appointments on the top positions, especially on the all-important post of the managing director, are made politically and if things are wrong in the corporation it is also the responsibility of the political leadership, he said. He pointed out that the present MD Rajan Mittal had held the same position during the previous government led by Akhlesh Yadav, but was removed following complaints. Mittal was, however, again given the responsibility once the BJP government came to power last year, he said. Not only this, after the minister concerned Keshav Prasad Maurya removed the MD of another construction agency UP Rakhyo Nirman Nigam recently, that charge was also given to Mittal.

The general secretary of the UP Engineers Association, SS Nirman, when contacted, said that unlike the other cases in Varanasi an important factor was also of traffic management which cannot be undermined. "All the flaws in the construction work, be it structural or design related will come out there and in the technical inquiry ordered by the government but can the fact that traffic management was totally overlooked by the district administration be ignored," Nirmanjan posed.

## Man held for charging money from families of victims, says minister

**NEW DELHI, MAY 16** /- Uttar Pradesh health minister Sidharth Nath Singh today said a man was arrested for allegedly charging money from families at the BHU mortuary for handling the bodies of those killed in the Varanasi flyover collapse.

An official in Varanasi said the employee, who worked as a sweeper at mortuary, had allegedly demanded Rs 200 bribe from the families of two victims. The official said an FIR was filed against Banarsi at the Lanka police station on district magistrate Yogeshwar Ram Mishra's instructions.

The Class IV employee was suspended by the DM following a complaint against him. Terming the flyover collapse as "unfortunate", Singh said a report was expected within 48 hours and strict action would be taken against those found guilty as it was a case of negligence. He said the man was arrested for demanding money for handling over the bodies. Singh said that his government had already initiated the process for the implementation of the National Health Protection Mission which aimed to provide a coverage of Rs 5 lakh per family annually.

## Nearly 1.70 lakh pilgrims register for Amarnath yatra

**JAMMU, MAY 16** /- Nearly 1.70 lakh pilgrims have so far registered for the pilgrimage to cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir Himalayas, set to begin for 60-day long period from Jammu on June 28.

Over 1.69 lakh pilgrims have been registered at various counters across the country and the registration is going on in full swing, officials associated with registration of the yatra said today. Of these, 1.39 lakh pilgrims have been registered at the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government for not fulfilling their promises of providing relief to sugarcane farmers.

Despite assurances from the Centre, sugarcane farmers were yet to get their dues from sugar mill, Singh said at an event to mark the seventh



Kerala Pularay Maha Sabha (KPMBS) activists staging march to state secretariat to press their various issues in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday

## RLD chief Ajit Singh slams Centre, UP govt for 'neglecting' farmers

**MUZAFFARNAGAR, MAY 16** /- Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) chief Ajit Singh has lambasted the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government for not fulfilling their promises of providing relief to sugarcane farmers.

Despite assurances from the Centre, sugarcane farmers were yet to get their dues from sugar mill, Singh said at an event to mark the seventh

death anniversary of farmer leader Mahendra Singh Tikait at the Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) headquarters in Sisoli on Tuesday. The BJP government had promised to clear payments every 14 days, he said.

The RLD leader also criticised the Centre for its sugarcane import policy, which has directly affected farmers and said ripe sugarcane crop was not being purchased from farmers.

Their fields are full of sugarcane but the government is not buying them so the farmers need the land to sow other crops as well, Singh said.

Calling upon the farming community to stand united, Singh credited Tikait for protecting the interests of Indian farmers.

## Maharashtra CM approves filling up of 36,000 vacant posts

**MUMBAI, MAY 16** /- Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnis gave his approval today to fill 36,000 vacant posts in different departments of the state government, especially in the culture and rural development departments.

During the budget session of the state legislature held earlier this year, Fadnis had announced that total 72,000 vacant posts will be filled in two phases over the next two years. As part of that, 36,000 vacancies will be filled in the first phase, a statement from the

chief minister's office (CMO) said.

The move is aimed at strengthening the government machinery in rural areas, it said. According to the statement, priority will be given to agriculture and rural development departments for the development of agriculture sector, improving the farmers' lives and providing essential infrastructure in rural areas.

The decision to fill the vacancies was taken to ensure that the government schemes for the welfare of farmers and strengthening

## Kamal Haasan launches 3 day tour of south TN

**KANYAKUMARI, MAY 16** /- Makkal Neethi Maiani (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan today launched a three-day tour of south Tamil Nadu, saying it was an attempt at understanding the people and their issues.

The actor-politician launched his tour from here and said it would be a "learning experience" for him. "I have come here to meet you and know about your problems. This will be a learning experience for me to know my people," he said while addressing a crowd during a brief stopover at

Thenthamaikulam in the district. The veteran actor stressed the need for honesty on politics.

Meanwhile, the MNM founder-president helped two women who had met with accident near Colachel, sparing them a vehicle from his convoy. In each hospital, sources close to him said. During his three-day tour, Haasan will cover many parts of southern Tamil Nadu in the districts of Kanyakumari, Tuticorin, Tirunelveli and Virudhunagar, the party said. (PTI)

## Traffic police personnel in Beed to use 'body worn' cameras

**BEED, MAY 16** /- The police in Maharashtra's Beed district today introduced the hi-tech 'body worn' cameras for the traffic personnel to record their interactions with motorists and keep an extra eye on the vehicular movement.

The recordings made in these cameras, to be worn below the top button on the uniform shirt, would ensure

transparency in the working of the traffic policemen, a senior police official said.

The gadget would help in dealing better with motorists and also act as an evidence in case of violations of traffic rules and also in probing complaints made against the traffic policemen, official said.

These sophisticated cameras were wearable video or photographic recording

devices, designed to address specific requirements related to law enforcement. "The body worn cameras will make the police force technologically advanced and also ensure transparency in the working of the traffic cops," Beed superintendent of police (SP) G Shreehar said. At the same time, the police will also have strong evidence in the form of footage, against the erring motorists, he said.

It is expected that motorists would not try to exert and get caught on the camera. Further, the instances of erring motorists against the police are also likely to come down, the SP said. In the first phase, he said, 10 such equipments have been given on an experimental basis to the traffic policemen in the central Maharashtra city (PTI)

## Mumbai development plan: Sena against opening of salt pans for housing

**MUMBAI, MAY 16** /- Shiv Sena ministers today opposed at the Maharashtra cabinet meeting the state government's decision to open salt pans in Mumbai for affordable housing, according to a party source.

The decision on the salt pan land is a part of the just-released Mumbai's development Plan (DP) 2034. Environment minister Ramdas Kadam of Shiv Sena raised the issue of opening the salt pans for development in the cabinet meeting held here and the other Sena ministers also voiced their concern over it. The source told the agency PTI. "The Sena ministers strongly voiced their opposition and conveyed to chief minister Devendra Fadnis that under no circumstances will their party allow the salt pans to be used for construction purposes," the source said.

Kadam told Fadnis that the government is using a "shield" to unduly favour

builders, said the source who claimed to be privy to the discussions at the meeting.

"The opening of salt pans (for the housing sector) will further put pressure on the ecology of Mumbai, which is already facing problems of excessive population, traffic and climate change," the source said. Last week, Mumbai Congress president Sanjay Nirupam had also said that the city cannot afford to have salt pans and no-

development zones, which are the last remaining open spaces in the city, fall prey to the builder lobby. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Nirupam had urged him to intervene in the Fadnis government's decision on the issue.

According to the DP 2034 for Mumbai, 300 hectares of salt pans lands, which serve as natural buffers during heavy rains and high tides, will be utilised for affordable housing.

## Karnataka poll result: NCP surprised, wants EC to revert to paper ballots

**THANE, MAY 16** /- Maharashtra NCP president Jayant Patil has expressed surprise over the Karnataka poll results where the BJP emerged as the single largest party and demanded the use of paper ballots in future elections instead of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). Patil claimed the wave of BJP's popularity was now receding and it is before, NCP and the Congress were working towards forging alliance in future polls. He said what surprised him was that prior to elections in Karnataka, he had visited the state and people there appeared "satisfied" with the Congress government.

The BJP on Tuesday emerged as the single largest party but fell a few seats short of a majority in Karnataka, where the Congress dramatically backed third-placed rival JD-S for a post-poll alliance to keep the saffron party out of power. Elections were held for 222 seats on May 12 while polling for the remaining two will be held later.



President Ram Nath Kovind presenting the National Science Award 2017, at a function, in New Delhi on Wednesday

Plugged 104 seats, again 64, while the Congress notched 78, a loss of 44 seats though its share was nearly two percentage points more than the saffron party. The JD-S secured 37 seats, down by three from its previous tally. Reacting to the poll results, Patil said he had visited Karnataka during the election period and "all was well with the Congress government." "Even the common people were satisfied with the government. The Congress was doing well there," he claimed while talking to reporters here last night. "But it is really a surprise to see such an outcome," he said.

Justifying his demand for the use of paper ballots in polls, Patil said the Election Commission (EC) revert to the old practice when such a system was prevalent even in some developed countries. The EC should not insist on EVMs for conducting polls, he asserted. "If the BJP is insisting for the same, then it is better not to hold elections at all," Patil stated. (PTI)

## StateNotes

**Gujarat Guv gets additional charge of MP in Anandiben's absence**

**BHOPAL, MAY 16** /- Gujarat Governor OP Kohli today took the additional charge of Madhya Pradesh in absence of incumbent state governor Anandiben Patel who has gone abroad on leave for more than ten days. As per convention, when Governor of any state goes out of the country on leave exceeding ten days, another governor has to take the charge temporarily, according to Raj Bhavansources. Madhya Pradesh High Court Chief Justice Hemant Gupta administered the oath of office to Kohli in a ceremony held at Raj Bhavan. Kohli had served as the governor of Madhya Pradesh from September 8, 2016 to January 22, 2018. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, state Assembly Speaker Sitasaran Sharma and cabinet ministers.

## Cabinet approves metro line extension in Noida

**NEW DELHI, MAY 16** /- The Union Cabinet today approved extension of metro rail network from Noida City Centre to Sector 62, which borders Ghaziabad in UP, with an investment of Rs 1,967 crore, Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said today.

The new line will be extension of the Dwarka-Noida City Centre line of Delhi Metro and is proposed to have six stations. Briefing newsmen on the Cabinet decisions, Prasad said the total stretch for the extension is 6.675 kms long and it will provide transportation to a large number of people in Noida. Besides catering to residents of close-by areas of Ghaziabad, the minister said Noida is expanding in terms of commerce and educational facilities and the extended line will help in greater mobility of people.

## Woman's body found in bag

**MUZAFFARNAGAR, MAY 16** /- The body of woman was found in a bag near a canal in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaaffarnagar, police said today. The victim, who is yet to be identified but believed to be in her late 20s, was murdered and stuffed inside a bag before being disposed off, police said. Her body was discovered last evening from the outskirts of Phulat village, they said. The dead body has been sent for post-mortem and further investigations are on.

## Girls outshine boys in Class XII exams in TN

**CHENNAI, MAY 16** /- Tamil Nadu government today declared the results for the Class XII exams held in March, with 91 per cent of the students emerging successful. Girls continued to outshine boys, with 94.1 per cent of them clearing the exams, which was 6.4 per cent more than that of the number of boys, according to statistics released by the state government. Around 9.07 lakh students had registered for the exams that were held from March 1 to April 6 this year. Among the districts thatared well, Virudhunagar topped the list, followed by Erode and Tirupur. Subject-wise, more number of students (96.4 per cent) cleared Physics, followed by Chemistry, Biology and Maths.

## BSF foils infiltration bid along IB in Samba

**JAMMU, MAY 16** /- BSF troops thwarted an infiltration bid today along the international Border (IB) in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir, where a high alert has been sounded ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, officials said. Modi will be visiting the state on May 19.

There was an (infiltration) attempt today and it was foiled by the Central Border Security Force, Jammu Frontier, Ram Awatar, told news agency PTI. A group of infiltrators tried to cross the international territory in Bobjayan area earlier today, taking advantage of the heavy foliage in the region. A few infiltrators were exchanged between the two sides before the infiltrators fled. Awatar said this is the first infiltration bid to be foiled by the BSF along the IB in the past four days. Jammu region was put on high alert after information of suspected militants was detected along the IB in Kathua district on Monday. A 28-year-old BSF jawan was killed as Pakistani troops

## BETWEEN NEW JALPAIGURI & HOWRAH SUMMER SPECIAL

It has been decided to run the following Special Train No. 03060/03059 New Jalpaiguri - Howrah to clear extra rush of passengers during Summer, 2018 as per details given below :

Train No. 03060 from NEW JALPAIGURI on 23-05-2018 to 27-06-2018	Train No. 03059 from HOWRAH on 22-05-2018 to 26-06-2018	
06 trips (Wednesday)	06 trips (Tuesday)	
ARR. DEP.	STATIONS	ARR. DEP.
--- 22.15	New Jalpaiguri	13.05 ---
22.54 22.56	Bagdogra	11.55 11.57
23.10 23.12	Naksalbari	11.35 11.37
23.55 23.57	Thakurganj	10.25 10.27
00.28 00.30	Aluabari Road	09.55 09.57
00.58 01.00	Kishanganj	09.13 09.15
04.00 04.15	Malda Town	06.10 06.25
06.34 06.36	Rampurhat	03.20 03.22
09.03 09.05	Bardhaman	01.20 01.22
10.43 10.45	Bandel	23.53 23.55
11.45 ---	Howrah	--- 22.50

Composition : AC-3 Tier : (Three), Sleeper Class : (Eleven), GSRLR/D : (Two) = 16 Coaches.

General Manager (Operations), Maligaon  
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
Serving Customers With A Smile

Read.....  
**THE ECHO OF INDIA**  
Your hometown newspaper  
.....keeps you ahead