



A day-long training-cum-exposure visit was organized by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, South Sikkim, Namthang, to farmers of an adopted village for doubling of income of farmers. About 26 farmers from Perhing Khop were escorted to Integrated Mushroom Unit, Mazitar, in East Sikkim, where the farmers were briefed about oyster mushroom cultivation. The farmers were also exposed to practical demonstrations on mushroom production. --- SANJAY AGARWAL

MP CM urges CJI to set up 'fast track higher courts' for rape cases

BHOPAL, JULY 3 /--/ Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has urged the Chief Justice of India (CJI) to set up 'fast track higher courts' or evolve any other mechanism to expedite hearings in rape cases. The move comes after several incidents of rape of minors in the central state were reported. Chouhan, in his letter written on Monday, said: "As a representative of a large population of this country, I request the Chief Justice of India to look into the issues to expedite the hearing of appeals of rape cases by setting up Fast Track Higher Courts or an arrangement in the current hearing system to accord high priority to such cases." The chief minister said he was writing the letter as some incidents of rape in the country had created uproar among people in general and a "feeling of distress" in his mind.

The menace of rape has shaken the conscience of the common man, Chouhan said. "I personally believe that a girl child is a form of Goddess Durga and therefore, I start my development projects by offering obeisance to the girl child and have utmost respect for women," the chief minister wrote. He said Madhya Pradesh was the first state in country to pass a bill providing death penalty to rape convicts, who committed the offence on girls below the age of 12 years. "However, stringent penal provisions in law seem to un-deter a few hardcore criminal-minded people, who do not seem to be afraid of getting punished by the system." In support of his plea, the MP chief minister said: "...In the Indore case, the investigation was completed in seven days and trial in another 22 days. But unless and until appeals are decided by high courts and the apex court expeditiously, justice cannot be said to be done." The Indore district court had on May 12 awarded death penalty to a 26-year-old man for rape and murder of a three-month-old girl, while linking

him to "gangrene". The accused had abducted the girl while her parents were asleep in the early hours of April 20, the police had earlier said. After raping the girl, the accused had banged her head on the ground and killed her. Chouhan said he does not imply that an accused does not have a right to fair trial. But, a speedy trial reduces the psychological sufferings of a rape victim and also sets an example for others. On June 26, an eight-year-old girl was lured away by two men while she was waiting for her father outside her school in Mandisar district. The two men allegedly raped the girl, slit her throat with a knife and left her to die, the police had earlier said. She is currently undergoing treatment at Indore's Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital. There was huge public uproar and several protests after the incident. On July 1, a four-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 23-year-old man known to her family at a village in the state's Satna district.

Nine prisons in Maharashtra to get sanitary pad vending machines

MUMBAI, JULY 3 /--/ The Maharashtra State Commission for Women (SCW) has decided to install sanitary pad vending machines in nine jails across the state in a bid to ensure better health and hygiene standards for women inmates. The panel has already installed the facility in the Kolhapur women's prison. The process was underway on Monday. Rahatkar said the Yerwada, Thane, Aurangabad, Nagpur, Amravati, Kalyan, Byculla and Chandrapur prisons

and it will be completed within a month, the commission's chairperson, Vijaya Rahatkar said here on Monday. Rahatkar said incinerators would also be installed in these prisons for the disposal of sanitary napkins. After the custodial death of a woman inmate of the Byculla jail in Mumbai last year, the Supreme Court had passed guidelines to all the state women's panels to upgrade the infrastructure of prisons and provide basic amenities to inmates. "Following the

guidelines, we visited all the women's prisons in the state and found that inmates required sanitary pads, among other essential things. Therefore, we have taken this initiative," she said. When the machines are installed, the commission will facilitate its filling with 50 sanitary pads for the first time and later the jail administration will have to refill it. SCW chairperson said. "Each sanitary pad will be sold at a price of Rs 2 or 5 or it could even be provided free of cost. We have left it on the jail administration to fix the price of the sanitary pads," an official from the commission said. Rahatkar claimed Maharashtra women's commission was the first such panel in the country to take this initiative. Currently, there are 1,023 women prisoners lodged in these nine jails, she said. There were previously 11 women prisoners in the state. Later, inmates of the jail in Ahmednagar were shifted to the Yerwada prison, she added. (PTI)

Sikkim Press Club awards announced

ROI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, JULY 3 /--/ Senior journalist and writer Khangendra Mani Padoy was nominated for the prestigious Kanchenjunga Kalam Puraskar by the Press Club of Sikkim. This

was decided at a meeting of the club in Gangtok on Monday. Young and energetic journalist Nirmal Mangar was nominated for the prestigious award by the Press Club of Sikkim. This

Joseph Lepcha, the programmes for the foundation of the club on July 17 was also discussed at the meeting. On the occasion of the foundation day of the club senior woman journalist Hema Sharma would be felicitated for her

contribution towards the development of journalism in the State, it was decided. A Token of Appreciation of this year to an office executive, Dila Chettri for working hard behind the scene for the development of the journalism in the State.

Burari deaths Bhatia family had 'shared psychosis'

NEW DELHI, JULY 3 /--/ The police suspect that the Bhatia family, whose 11 members were found dead on July 1 in their house at Burari in North Delhi under mysterious circumstances, might have been suffering from 'shared psychosis'.

TN announces Haj subsidy, months after Centre scrapped grant

CHENNAI, JULY 3 /--/ The Tamil Nadu government today announced an annual subsidy of Rs 6 crore for Haj pilgrims from this year, months after it had opposed the Centre's decision to do away with the monetary aid to the pilgrims.

Girl raped by 3 friends of her brother in MP

JABALPUR, JULY 3 /--/ A 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped by three friends of her elder brother, including two minors, in her house in the Bada Patthar area here, police said today.

Chief minister K Palaniswami made the announcement in the state Assembly. Noting that the Union government had scrapped the Haj subsidy, Palaniswami said the state government has been extending grant for the Hindus and the Christians for their overseas pilgrimage. Now Muslims too would be given a similar support, he added. "Amma's (late chief minister Jayalalitha's) government which follows her footsteps will from this year provide Rs 6 crore subsidy every year for followers of Islam to undertake the sacred Haj yatra," he said.

The chief minister said this year a total of 3,729 people would undertake Haj pilgrimage under the new subsidy scheme, modalities of which are yet to be announced. Fulfilling her 2011 Assembly poll promise, Jayalalitha had in 2012 announced subsidy to the Hindus undertaking pilgrimage to Mansarovar in China and Muktiath in Nepal from Tamil Nadu.

In 2011, ahead of Christmas, she had announced state subsidy for the Christians visiting Jerusalem for pilgrimage.

Reacting to the BJP-led NDA government's decision in January this year to stop Haj subsidy, Palaniswami had then said the state government would request the Centre to reconsider the move. The Centre had said the funds saved will be used for providing education to mid-merit. The move was an effort by the government to "empower minorities" without appeasement, it had said. The decision was in line with a 2012 Supreme Court order, asking the government to do away with the subsidy, a long standing demand of the BJP.

In the afternoon of June 28, the victim was alone in her home when the three visited her, the superintendent of police (Ranjhi area) Akhil Verma said. Since they were her elder brother's friends, the girl did not suspect anything and allowed them inside her house, he said. After entering the house, the trio bolted the door from inside and allegedly raped the girl. They also threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident to her family members, the police officer said. The girl kept mum for a couple of days but finally told her family members about the ordeal on Monday.



A cleanliness drive at Mirik Municipality on Sunday in the presence of Commissioner Banita Rai -- DEEP MILAN PRADHAN



Hill Trinamool Congress president L. B. Rai with his supporters in the Nirpani Jabra area of Mirik on Monday. A number of supporters of other political parties have lately joined Trinamool in the hills. --- DEEP MILAN PRADHAN

Road overbridge collapses on railway tracks in Mumbai; affects train services, 2 hurt

MUMBAI, JULY 3 /--/ A road overbridge (ROB) collapsed on rail tracks in suburban Andheri amid heavy rains in the city this morning bringing local train services of the Western Railway to a halt, an official said. Two passers-by were reportedly injured in the incident, civic sources said.



Rescue workers seen working at the site of an overbridge that collapsed over the railway tracks after heavy rains in Mumbai -- REUTERS

It is suspected that some people are trapped under the debris of the collapsed overbridge, a senior fire brigade official said, adding that a search and rescue operation is underway. Office-goers, for whom local trains are the lifeline for daily commuting, bore the maximum brunt of the incident as many of them could not reach their work places. Mumbai's famous tiffin carriers the dabbawalas expressed their inability to operate as the train services on the Western Line were stopped. Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnis has asked the Mumbai Police Commissioner to ensure smooth traffic movement and asked the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to increase its bus service for the convenience of commuters.

The ROB collapsed near the eastern side of the Andheri Railway Station around 7.30 am, an official of the BMC's engineering management cell said. The Overhead Equipment (OHE) was damaged and a team of engineers are working to restore services. Western Railway (WR) chief public relations officer Ravinder Bhakar told news agency PTI.

"A part of the ROB collapsed, bringing the Up and Down local train services of the WR to a halt. Our officers are at the spot and making efforts to restore the services," he said. Local trains are running between Churchgate (in south Mumbai) and Bandra (in the western suburbs), and between Virar (located in neighbouring Palghar district) and Goregaon (western suburb), another WR official said. Personnel of the fire brigade, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the Mumbai Police, the railway police and local ward of the BMC are at

the spot and working to clear the debris and repair the damaged OHE, the civic official said. "Incessant rains apparently caused cracks in the ROB, resulting in its collapse. Thankfully, no train was passing on the track under the bridge at that time," he said. Some people are suspected to be trapped under the debris and a search is underway, chief fire officer P S Rahangdale said. An ambulance, a rescue van, and four fire engines are at the spot, he said. Several commuters faced a narrow window as they were unable to reach their offices after the train services were



The Positive Vibe Club Rorathang under Rhenock constituency in East Sikkim is not only encouraging the youth to stay away from drugs and stay healthy but also contributing to social activities in their area. Youth members of the club have made it possible to widen the size of the school playground. They have removed all the stones with the stone breaker and removed all the unwanted materials by JCB and have levelled the ground so that they could organise a huge Independence Day celebration. --- SANJAY AGARWAL