



Death toll in flyover collapse rises to 24; officials detained

A day after an official of IVRCL dubbed the flyover collapse as an "act of God", another official of the company today described it as an "accident".

"An act of God was just an expression only to describe that it is under no one's control", she told reporters in Hyderabad.

"We are surprised and extremely shocked. We are there to cooperate with the investigation, but investigation takes time", she said.

Showing a photograph of the mishap site published in a newspaper, she said that it looked like a site of bomb blast.

There were various aspects which should be looked into.

Stating that same construction materials were used in building the ongoing flyover, she asked, "why did this happen? We are anxious to know the reasons".

Asked how long it would take to clear the debris from the area, a senior police officer said, that the main road crossing near Ganesh Talkies would hopefully be cleared during the day. But the rest like the iron piers, iron pillars, broken concrete parts will be cleared in a step-by-step process.

The other end of the Vivekananda flyover towards the KK Tagore Street, where the metal pier, holding the bridge, was completely damaged would be cut but "a planned engineering plan is necessary for that", he said.

"It's a very very congested area with buildings so close to the flyover. And most of the buildings are very old. So we must keep in mind that in order to remove the damaged portions of the flyover another mishap does not take place," he said.

The army rescue teams have been operating throughout the night along with the teams from civil defence, police and NRDF, trying to remove the debris from the affected area. General Officer in Command of Army's Bengal area Lt Gen Rajeev Tewary is monitoring the progress of the Army teams closely.

Jat group files caveat in SC on quota issue

New Delhi : A Jat group today moved the Supreme Court seeking a hearing if any petition is filed and entertained against the recent decision of according quota benefits to the community members in Haryana.

"In case of filing of petition for stay (of decision to grant reservation) on behalf of the respondent (Raj Kumar Saini), the caveator wants to appear and wants to bring to the notice of the honourable court the true and material facts of the case," All India Jat Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti (AIJASS) said in its caveat plea filed this afternoon in the Registry of the apex court.



Hawa Singh Sangwan, AIJASS President, has referred to the recent purported statement of Saini, a BJP MP from Kurukshetra, in which the lawmaker had said that he

would move the Supreme Court against the grant of quota benefits to the Jat community. A Bill to provide reservation to Jats and five other communities in government jobs and

educational institutions was unanimously passed by the Haryana Assembly on March 29, ahead of the April 3 deadline set by the community which had launched a violent quota agitation in February. Meeting a key demand of the community, the measure envisages reservation to Jats and five other castes -- Jat Sikhs, Rors, Bishnois, Tyagis and Mulla Jat/Muslim Jat -- by constituting a new classification Block 'C' in the Backward Classes category.

It proposes to give 10 per cent reservation to Jats and five other castes in government and government-aided educational

institutions and Class III and IV government jobs.

It also envisaged 6 per cent reservation to Jats and five other castes in BC 'C' category in class I and II jobs.

Jats had threatened to relaunch their agitation on March 18 but put it off till April 3 after the BJP government in Haryana assured them it would bring the Bill.

They had launched a stir in February demanding reservation in BC category. The agitation, which had taken a violent turn, left 30 people dead and 320 persons injured and resulted in huge damage to property.

Eyewitness in double murder case shot dead

Meerut : A 30-year-old man, an eyewitness in a double murder case, was shot dead by three persons in Ghat village area here, police said today. The deceased, Sachin, was taken to a nearby tubewell by three persons where he was shot at several times, they said, adding the victim died on the spot.

On October 9 last year, Sachin's brother Nitin had an argument with a fast-food joint operator over a difference of Rs 40 in their bill following which he reached the spot with his friends.

Two of his friends Monu (25) and Rahul (22) were killed by the fast-food joint's employees, while Sachin and Nitin were injured, they said. His family members told police that the brothers along with nine other persons, who turned eyewitnesses in the respective case, were to record their statement before the court, they said.

The family claimed that Sachin was being pressurised to change his statement.

A case has been registered against five persons and efforts are on to nab the accused, they said.

Aviation policy likely to be cleared by Cabinet this month

New Delhi : A degree of "consensus" among various stakeholders on issues in draft civil aviation policy including norms for international flying by domestic airlines has "emerged" and it is likely to be approved by the Cabinet this month, a top official said today. "(As far as) 5/20 and other issues raised in the draft civil aviation policy (are concerned), a degree of consensus has already emerged," Civil Aviation Secretary R N Choubey told reporters on the sidelines of the 29th anniversary of Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS). Under the '5/20 rule' only those airlines having at least five years of domestic flying experience and a minimum of 20 aircraft are allowed to fly overseas.

BCAS is country's nodal aviation security agency. Choubey said that his ministry will be taking the matter to the Cabinet this



month itself, adding, "the (new aviation) policy, which will also clear the position on 5/20, will be approved this month."

The draft policy was unveiled in October last year and since then Government has held extensive consultations with

various stakeholders including ministries, airlines, airport operators, ground handling agencies, among others during this period.

"We have already done a couple of rounds of inter ministerial consultations. We will now be in a position to take the matter to the Cabinet this month," he said.

The policy was expected to be finalised in the previous financial year as certain proposals were to be implemented from April 1, 2016. While startup carriers Vistara and Air Asia India, where Tatas is a stakeholder, are demanding that the 5/20 rule be done away with, the grouping of four private Indian carriers comprising IndiGo, SpiceJet, Jet Airways and GoAir wants the rule to continue.

Rajiv Gauba takes charge as Urban Development Secy

New Delhi : Former Jharkhand Chief Secretary Rajiv Gauba today took charge as the Secretary of Urban Development Ministry.

A Jharkhand-cadre IAS officer of 1982 batch, Gauba joins the Ministry on superannuation of Madhusudhan Prasad yesterday, an official release said. Gauba, who is a Physics graduate from Patna University, has wide-ranging experience in senior positions in policy-making and programme implementation in central and state governments and in international organisations, it added.

Prior to his current assignment, he was the Chief Secretary of Jharkhand for 15 months.

Gauba has also served in International Monetary Fund Board for four representing the country, besides serving as Collector and District Magistrate for seven years in districts of Gaya, Nalanda and Muzaffarpur in Bihar. After assuming charge, he said, "With the launch of urban development initiatives like Smart City Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, Heritage City Development Mission and Swachh Bharat Mission, the focus of the Ministry now shifts to effective and timely implementation of the schemes by the states and urban local bodies through effective coordination with them."

Stage set for Goa Tourism Events: Shigmo and Goa Food and Cultural festival 2016



Panjim : Goa Tourism is all set to celebrate the annual festivals of colour, culture and cuisine, namely Shigmo and the Goa Food and Cultural Festival 2016.

Shigmo is celebrated in Goa as spring's biggest festival which honored the homecoming of the warriors who had left their homes and families at the end of Dussehra to fight the invaders. During Shigmo, traditional folk dances and depiction of mythological scenes through parades all across the state is the major highlight. People dress in colorful outfits, hold colourful flags and play musical instruments like the Dhol Tasha, Flutes and go in procession. This year the Shigmo Utsav festivities are scheduled to begin from March 24 and will culminate on April 7, 2016 and the Goa Food and Cultural Festival 2016 is scheduled to begin from April 6-10.

The two events are expected to draw lakhs of tourists to Goa as it coincides with the commencement of the summer vacations.

The first Shigmo parade will commence on Thursday, March 24 (Holi) at Ponda. No parades will be held on March 25 (Good Friday). Shigmo parades in the other centers are as follows: Panjim (March 26), Margao (March 27), Bicholim (March 28), Vasco (March 29), Quepem (March 30), Curchorem (March 31), Sanguem (April 1),

Cuncolim (April 2), Mapusa (April 3), Pernem (April 4), Sanquelim (April 5), Valpoi (April 6) and Canacona (April 7). Shigmo Parades in the other sub-centers is as follows: Tivim (April 2), Shiroda (April 3) and Dharbandora (April 6).

The annual Goa Food and Cultural Festival 2016 will commence on April 6-10 at the D B Bandodkar Ground, Campal, Panjim. This year the five day event has an exciting line up of an activity which includes cooking competitions, cooking demos and a live distillation unit.

Music and Dance performances by various groups namely Goenchim Noketram, Indian Ocean, Dance to the Beats, Rhythm and Blues, Kepemchim Kirnam, Lagori, the Big T Band, Bollywood Hip Hop and Dance Fusion, Thermal and Quarter, Taaq, Bad Blood and One Night Stand have been lined up during the five day event.

Hon'ble Minister for Tourism, Shri. Dilip Parulekar said "Festivals in Goa are celebrated with much enthusiasm both by the locals and tourists. Goa celebrates a large number of festivals all through the year. However, Shigmo is one event that shows how vibrant Goa's culture is. So also, the Goa Food and Cultural Festival is much loved and enjoyed by everyone who attends it. This year too Goa promises a festive mood and food that will set summer vacations a buzz."



Jewellers keep up pressure, strike spills into 31st day

New Delhi : Jewellers and bullion traders showed no signs of backing down in their protest against imposition of excise levy as the strike entered the 31st day today, with many keeping their shops shut demanding withdrawal of the budgetary proposal.

Many jewellery houses in cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata have been closed since March 2 after Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced 1 per cent excise duty on non-silver jewellery in the Budget on February 29.

In Mumbai, barring a few branded showrooms, nearly 90 per cent jewellery shops remained shut.

"Customers are certain to face difficulties in coming days in view of the approaching Gudi Padwa festival and the wedding season as there is negligible ready stock of jewellery due to the strike," said Surinder Kumar Jain, Vice-President of the All India Sarafa Association.

Tamil Nadu, however, struck a contrarian note, where most jewellery showrooms were open for regular trading. The government, in the meantime, has constituted a panel under former chief economic advisor Ashok Lahiri to look into the set of demand of jewellers.

The sub-committee, which has been asked to submit its report in 60 days, will look into issues related to the compliance procedure for the excise duty, including records to be maintained, forms to be filled, operating procedures and other relevant aspects.

The government, in the Budget for 2016-17, had proposed 1 per cent excise duty on jewellery without input credit or 12.5 per cent with input tax credit on jewellery excluding silver other than those studded with diamonds and precious stones.

