

Internet suspended, 72 held in Badlapur post violence during protest over sexual abuse case

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

THANE: Internet services at Badlapur in Maharashtra's Thane district were suspended on Wednesday a day after a massive protest over alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls, and 72 persons have been arrested in connection with the violence during the stir, officials said.

At least 17 city police personnel and around eight railway cops were injured in the incidents of stone-pelting at the railway station and other parts of Badlapur during the protest on Tuesday, they said.

Police have been deployed in large numbers across Badlapur to maintain law and order, and the situation in the town is back to normal.

Entire Badlapur town virtually came to a standstill on Tuesday after thousands of protesters blocked railway tracks at the station and stormed the school building, where sexual abuse of two girls by the school sweeper took place last week.

The protesters hurled stones at police personnel and vandalised the school building during the protest. The police charged the protesters to dis-



perse them and clear the tracks for train movement.

Talking to PTL, DCP Sudhakar Pathare said on Wednesday that internet services in the town have been suspended in the wake of the protest and subsequent violence.

"The internet services will be restored after taking a review of the situation in the town," he said.

Most schools in the town remained shut on Wednesday, local people said.

"At least 17 city police personnel, including two officers, were injured as an angry mob attacked them with stones during the protest in Badlapur on Tuesday over the sexual abuse of two girls. We have registered three FIRs on charges of violation of prohibitory orders,

armed unlawful assembly, assault, damage to public property, among others against the miscreants," a senior police official in Badlapur said.

The injured police personnel are being treated at different local hospitals, he said.

"A total of 40 persons have been arrested so far in connection with stone-pelting and other crimes. Attempts to identify other offenders are on. CCTVs footages and video news clippings are being examined," he added.

Commissioner of Government Railway Police (GRP) Ravindra Shive said one FIR has been registered in connection with the violence at Badlapur railway station and 32 persons have been arrested.

"Seven to eight railway police personnel, including officials,

were injured in the stone-pelting," he said.

"The situation is normal and under control today," he said.

Police on August 17 arrested an attendant at the school for sexually abusing the two girl students of the kindergarten. As per the complaint, he abused the girls in the toilet of the school. In the wake of the incident, the school management has suspended the principal, a class teacher and a female attendant. The state government on Tuesday ordered the suspension of three police officials, including a senior police inspector, for alleged dereliction of duty in probing the sexual abuse of the two girls.

Angry parents of the school children and local citizens, including several women, gathered outside the school on Tuesday morning and also resorted to a 'rail roko' protest at the railway station, blocking the path of local trains from around 8.30 am.

Some of the protesters, including women, later damaged the school property by breaking its gate, window panes, benches and doors.

The school where the incident

happened belongs to a close relative of a BJP leader from Badlapur, sources said.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on Tuesday said he has ordered the formation of a special investigation team headed by senior IPS officer Arti Singh, while Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said action will be taken against the school. He said the case will be fast-tracked and the guilty won't be spared.

Talking to a news channel, senior lawyer Ujjwal Nikam, who has been appointed as the special public prosecutor in the sexual abuse case, condemned the inordinate delay by the police in lodging an FIR in the case. "This is a sensitive case. It is shameful why the police officers did not take up the matter seriously. Why the senior police officials ignored the complaint will definitely be probed and those found guilty will be punished. The most important thing is that during such cases, if the police delay in taking cognisance, then crucial evidence is lost," he said.

A local court on Wednesday extended till August 26 the police remand of the accused.

India ready to face challenges, take advantage of fourth industrial revolution: Murmu

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

FARIDABAD: President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said India is ready to face the challenges posed by the fourth industrial revolution and take advantage of opportunities arising from it. Speaking at the 5th convocation of the J C Bose University of Science and Technology here, Murmu said technology should be used for proper and sustainable development and public interest. 'Today the world is in the era of the fourth industrial revolution.

India is also ready to face the challenges of this revolution and take advantage of opportunities arising from it, she said.

In achieving this national goal, the role of institutions like J C Bose University of Science and Technology will be very important, she noted.

The president noted that the university has entered into agreements with many industrial and academic institutions over the past few years.

Many multinational companies have also estab-

lished Centres of Excellence on the university campus to train students. Today, several avenues of progress have opened up due to the development of technology, she stated. For example, access to the internet in remote areas has created online employment opportunities. But we should remember that technology should be used for proper and sustainable development and public interest. Its wrong use can be disastrous, she said. The president appreciated the university for playing an important role in making the youth skilled and self-reliant. The President said the university is named after great scientist and pioneer of modern science Jagadish Chandra Bose who was probably the first scientist in the world to prove scientifically that even trees and plants have feelings. His revolutionary discovery changed the way we look at the botanical world, the president said, while urging students to take inspiration from his life and bring positive change in society through technology.

NCB busts drug syndicate; arrests 2 men and seizes charas worth Rs 9 lakh

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PANAJI: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has busted a drug syndicate with the arrest of two men in Goa following the seizure of charas worth Rs 9 lakh, officials said on Wednesday. Both the accused are natives of Kerala and they had sourced the drugs from Himachal Pradesh, they said. One of the accused was nabbed on August

19 at Thivim railway station in North Goa, the NCB and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) said in a release. 'The man was identified as TKT'. During his search, 883.64 grams of charas worth Rs 9 lakh was seized. During his interrogation, the accused told the investigators that he worked for a charas trafficking network being operated by a few Keralites in North Goa who used to procure the drugs from Kullu, Himachal Pradesh regularly, it said. On the basis of information shared by him, the NCB arrested the main handler, identified as I B, from Keri beach in North Goa on the same day, the anti-drug agency said. Efforts were on to identify and apprehend other members of this drug syndicate, it added.

WHO calls for providing lifesaving vaccines to all kids, protecting adolescent girls from cervical cancer

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The World Health Organisation on Wednesday called on the countries in its South-East Asia Region to accelerate action to protect all children with lifesaving vaccines being offered under the childhood immunisation programme, focusing on those who have missed all or some doses, and protect all adolescent girls from cervical cancer.

"We should aim for a big catch-up to vaccinate all zero-dose and partially-vaccinated children, and restore the immunisation progress lost during the (COVID-19) pandemic, protect all adolescent girls from cervical cancer and accelerate efforts to eliminate measles and rubella from WHO South-East Asia by 2026," said Saima Wazed, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia, in her inaugural address to the 15th meeting of the WHO South-East Asia Regional Immunisation Technical Advisory Group (SEAR-ITAG).

Wazed acknowledged and thanked all experts, national programme managers, immunisation champions and partners, including the vaccinators and community workers and the communities themselves, on the expanded immunisation programme completing 50 years this year.

"We can proudly say, in the last 50 years, together, immunisation programmes have helped hundreds of millions of people in our region live healthier, longer, more productive and prosperous lives," she said.

"Today, the South-East Asia region continues to be free of wild polio virus transmission and has maintained elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus as a public-health problem. Five countries have eliminated measles and rubella, and six have controlled hepatitis B through immunisation.

"Seven countries consistently reach over 90 per cent of children with three doses of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DTP3) vaccines," Wazed said.

However, the region missed the target to eliminate measles and rubella by 2023. The WHO-UNICEF Estimates of National Immunisation Coverage data released last month shows slow progress and no meaningful change in childhood-immunisation coverage last year compared to 2022, and the coverage is yet to be restored to the pre-pandemic 2019 levels.

"Nearly 2.7 million (27 lakh) children in our region did not get any vaccine and another 0.6 million (six lakh) children were partially vaccinated in 2023. We need to understand where and why these children were missed and prioritise

reaching them as soon as possible. No child should ever fall sick or die of any vaccine-preventable disease, when safe and effective vaccines exist to protect them," Wazed said.

The stagnation in post-pandemic recovery highlights the need to innovate, she added. "We need to find locally-impactful approaches and most critically, enhance the political and social leadership that are the basis for intensified actions needed to meet our regional targets, Wazed said.

One of the priorities in the regional director's Regional Roadmap for Results and Resilience is "reaffirming investment in women, girls, adolescents and vulnerable populations".

"Against this, we must ensure that all adolescent girls in our region are protected and get at least one dose of HPV vaccine to protect them from cervical cancer," Wazed said.

Revitalising immunisation programmes, strengthening community-centred health systems, ensuring vaccine supply and boosting demand through community engagement are critical components for success. Policy and resources should urgently prioritise routine immunisation, particularly for measles, and focus on reducing zero-dose and partially-vaccinated children, she said.

Amazon's investment in India to make up for its losses; not to support Indian eco: Goyal

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday questioned Amazon's announcement of USD 1 billion investment in India, saying the US retailer was not doing any great service to the Indian economy but filling up for the losses it had suffered in the country.

He said that their huge losses in India "smells of predatory pricing", which is not good for the country as it impacts crores of small retailers.

Launching a report on 'Net Impact of e-commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' here, the minister lambasted the e-commerce companies, questioning their business model that has been impacting small retailers in the country.

"When Amazon says that we are going to invest a billion dollars in the country, we celebrate, and we forget that the billion dollars are not coming in for great service or investment to support the Indian economy. They made a billion-dollar loss in their balance sheet that year; they had to fill in that loss.

"And how did that loss get caused, they paid Rs 1,000 crores to professionals. I do not know who these professionals are...I would love to know, which chartered accountants, professionals or lawyers get Rs 1,000 crores



unless you are paying all the top lawyers to block them so that nobody can fight a case against you," the minister said.

He wondered whether the Rs 6,000 crore loss in one year does not smell of predatory pricing, as they are just an e-commerce platform and those companies are not allowed to do B2C (business to consumer) business.

As per the policy, the e-commerce platform legally can not do B2C in the country.

The minister alleged that these companies only re-route all the businesses through an entity to show that it is B2B.

"How are they doing it? Should this not be a matter of concern for us," he said.

He added that the e-commerce sector has a role, but one has to think "very" carefully and cautiously about what that role is.

"How that role can be in an organised fashion. Is predatory pricing policies good for the country?" Goyal asked.

He also said that e-com-

merce companies are eating into the small retailer's high-value, high-margin products that are the only items through which the mom-and-pop stores survive.

The minister also said that with the fast-growing online retailing in the country, "Are we going to cause huge social disruption with this massive growth of e-commerce".

Citing examples of Western countries, Goyal said Europe and America have seen the consequences of this.

"What has happened to the mom-and-pop stores there? How many do you see surviving, why did Switzerland allow e-commerce until recently (so late)," he said, adding "...I am not wishing away e-commerce, it is there to stay".

Further, he said one has to see the impact of cloud kitchens on restaurants and people buying food items online.

"We will land up becoming a country of couch potatoes, watching OTT and having

food at home every day," he said.

Commenting on online pharmacies, the minister said, "We have to assess what is happening to 5 lakh pharmacies of the country".

He expressed concern over these firms selling medicines online.

"Online, you can order whatever you want...it is a matter of concern," Goyal said, adding "How many mobile stores do you see in the corner, and how many were there 10 years ago".

He pointed out that India is not a developed nation like the US and Switzerland with high per capita income, and a large section of people need affirmative action and help here.

"Of course, I do not deny that technology will play its part, technology is a means to empower, to innovate, to meet consumer requirements, probably sometimes more efficiently, but we will have to see that it grows in an orderly fashion," he said. People have to see that this connectivity and convenience is citizen-centric, he said, adding that in the race for market share of online retailers at 27 per cent a year, "we do not land up causing huge disruption for the 100 million small retailers across the country". Amazon India is facing rising competitive intensity in India from players like Flipkart and SoftBank-backed Meesho, as well as the

onslaught of firms like Blinkit, Swiggy's Instamart and Zepto that are making aggressive inroads into the market as busy consumers opt for the convenience of instant delivery of grocery and many other household items. Last year, Amazon had talked of plans to invest USD 15 billion more in India, taking its total investment in the country to USD 26 billion. After meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the US in 2023, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said: "I had a very good and productive conversation with Prime Minister Modi. I think we share a number of goals. Amazon is one of the biggest investors in India. We have invested USD 11 billion to date and intend to invest another USD 15 billion, which will bring the total to USD 26 billion. So, we are very much looking forward to the future of partnering". Goyal also criticised the report, saying he does not agree with the findings of the study 'Net Impact of e-commerce on employment and consumer welfare in India'. "I would like to completely disassociate myself from this report...I do not agree with any of these findings...I think, in the urge to show that this has not had an impact on employment in India, the researchers have lost sight of even the statistics, which EY has put out," the minister said.

AIIMS Delhi constitutes two committees to assess safety measures at campus

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The AIIMS Delhi administration on Wednesday appealed to striking resident doctors to resume duties in the interest of patient care, saying a collaborative internal security audit will be conducted to assess safety and security measures within the campus.

Two committees have also been constituted by the administration to look into safety issues at the institute and other concerns of the doctors.

Resident doctors of AIIMS have been on strike demanding a central legislation for the protection of healthcare workers following the alleged rape and murder of a woman trainee doctor at a state-run medical college and hospital in Kolkata.

Besides the security audit, the AIIMS administration has also decided to install AI-enabled CCTV cameras at key entry and exit points of the Mother and Child Block on a pilot basis.

Such cameras shall be able to recognise all visitors with facial recognition technology and shall help security staff to identify persons entering and exiting frequently thereby helping them in access control of unauthorised personnel.

AIIMS Director Dr V Srinivas said the entire AIIMS family stands behind the cause of safety of all healthcare pro-



fessionals at the premier hospital and across the country.

"However, as doctors, our supreme duty is also to ensure that patients visiting our portals do not go unattended," he said in an appeal document.

Srinivas said the administration has decided to undertake a collaborative internal security audit at AIIMS, New Delhi with regard to the safety and security of healthcare professionals, staff, patients and visitors and to facilitate the same, a 15-member committee has been constituted.

The committee will be headed by Dr Puneet Kaur, Head, Department of Biophysics. There will be representatives of FAIIMS, Resident Doctors Association, Students Union, Nurses Union and Society of Young Scientists among others in the panel.

The committee will visit AIIMS campuses, including outreach campuses like NCI Jhajjar, Haryana, NDDTC

Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, CRHSP Ballabgarh, Haryana, etc during the day and at night and survey security measures, it said.

The committee will also deliberate on any additional safety and security measures required in the AIIMS campus and submit its recommendations at the earliest for speedy implementation.

"The government of India is committed to the cause of healthcare professionals' safety unequivocally and the Supreme Court, while assuring affirmative action for ensuring safety of healthcare professionals, has requested all doctors to resume duties in the interest of patient care," he said.

"Requesting the resident doctors of AIIMS New Delhi to resume their duties immediately so that patient care services are normalised," he added.

To address immediate concerns of healthcare professionals of the institute another four-

member committee, comprising Dean (Academic), Dean (Research), Medical Superintendent and Chief Security Officer has been constituted.

Besides, an office order said the Director AIIMS has taken multiple rounds of the hospital campus and has noted that many times same external persons are found entering and exiting various buildings under the garb of patient attendants, delivery agents, etc. thereby arousing suspicion of such persons being touts or impersonators visiting the campus frequently.

The security staff has also expressed difficulty in identifying such frequent visitors as they are on shift duty and it is not possible for them to raise suspicion as many times it leads to inconvenience to genuine visitors and patients attendants.

There have been news reports of other important hospitals wherein such unauthorized personnel have even caused gross harm to patients and there have been reports of patients being sometimes misguided and fleeced in AIIMS as well.

"It has been decided to install AI-enabled CCTV cameras at key entry and exit points of Mother and Child Block on a pilot basis. Such cameras shall be able to recognize all visitors with facial recognition technology and shall help security staff

to identify which all persons are entering and exiting frequently thereby helping them in access control of unauthorised personnel," the order said.

Resident doctors will stage a protest at Jantar Mantar here on Wednesday, the 10th day of their indefinite strike over the alleged rape and murder of a medic in a Kolkata hospital.

Elective services in several government hospitals across the city have remained suspended due to the protests.

AIIMS, GTB, Lady Hardinge Medical College and Associated Hospitals, Maulana Azad Medical College and its associated hospitals have released individual statements urging participation in the silent protest.

Members of Resident Doctors' Association from major hospitals in Delhi, along with the Federation of Resident Doctors' Associations (FORDA) and the Federation of All India Medical Associations (FAIMA), have been on an indefinite strike.

The body of the postgraduate trainee doctor was found in the seminar hall of state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata on August 9. A civic volunteer was arrested in connection with the crime the next day.

The Calcutta High Court later handed over the case to the CBI.



■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Wednesday stressed the need to have strong communication skills, especially in his ministry as he cited mistakes in the draft women's reservation bill which resulted in officials sitting past midnight to rectify the flaws.

He said communication skills have a major role in the legislative department which helps ministries draft bills, ordinances and key policy documents.

Small mistakes in the application of commas and full stops can create problems, he said.

"We saw this in Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's reservation bill). There were so many mistakes. We had to make officials sit late in the night... perhaps till 2 am... this is not what was said, how did you reach such a conclusion (such issues were pointed

out)... you have to understand and learn the communication part more," he told a gathering of legislative department officials.

He was addressing officials after a motivational speech delivered by an expert.

Responding to certain suggestions, Meghwal defended the installation of attendance punching machines in all central ministries and departments, asserting that some people did not come to the office on time.

He said sometime back when the treasury benches in the Rajya Sabha had a thin attendance on a particular day, the BJP whip had suggested an attendance register for MPs to ensure their presence.

The minister also said that tension leads to stress in the workplace and results in poor productivity.

Tension and sorrow need to be shared to ensure a happy life, he said.