

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

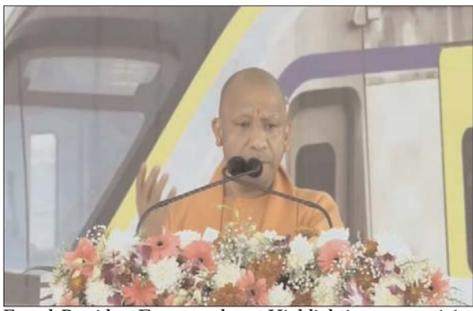
Rapid rail services to reduce travel time between Meerut, Delhi to around 40-45 mnts: UP CM

MEERUT (UP), FEB 22: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday lauded the Centre's push for digital and physical infrastructure, saying India's transformation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has drawn global recognition and improved ease of living for citizens.

Addressing a gathering at the inauguration of the Namo Bharat Rapid Rail and Meerut Metro services, Adityanath said India has built a robust digital public infrastructure covering 1.4 billion people, processing nearly 20 billion digital transactions every month.

He said more than 500 million digital health IDs have been issued under the "One Health" initiative, enabling beneficiaries to avail treatment under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

Referring to praise from



French President Emmanuel Macron, the chief minister said the world has acknowledged India's success in leveraging technology to deliver welfare benefits to the poor, farmers and youth without discrimination.

Adityanath said the prime minister's regular review of infrastructure projects has helped fast-track projects worth Rs 85 lakh crore that had remained pending for decades.

Highlighting connectivity improvements, he said the travel time between Delhi and Meerut has reduced from four to five hours to around 45-50 minutes due to expressway expansion and the launch of rapid rail services.

The Namo Bharat and metro projects would further strengthen regional connectivity, he added.

The chief minister also referred to the upcoming

sports university in Meerut, semiconductor projects in Gautam Buddha Nagar, and the near-completion of the Noida International Airport, saying these initiatives reflect the vision of a "Viksit Bharat".

He expressed hope that the proposed Noida Metro expansion would also be inaugurated by the prime minister after completion in the coming years.

Adityanath welcomed Modi to Meerut and said the new infrastructure projects would further accelerate development in western Uttar Pradesh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday flagged off the Meerut Metro and Namo Bharat train from the Shatabdi Nagar station here, giving a fillip to high-speed intercity travel and swift intra-city movement. (Agencies)

AI tools can help eliminate subjectivity in medical diagnosis: Dr Jitendra

NEW DELHI, FEB 22: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh today said that AI-developed tools are set to eliminate subjectivity in medical diagnosis, ensuring more precise and specific treatment for patients.

Delivering the inaugural address at the "Medllumina 2026: International Multi Speciality Medical Conference", the Minister explained that, for example, while a pathologist examining a cancer patient's biopsy slide with naked eye may inadvertently miss a minute but crucial cluster of affected cells, an AI-enabled system can guide him directly to the precise location, minimising human error. Similarly, in clinical examination, AI tools analysing comprehensive patient data can flag findings that may otherwise be overlooked, thereby strengthening diagnostic accuracy and improving treatment outcomes.

Highlighting the importance of integrated medical dialogue, Dr Jitendra Singh said that with increasing super-specialisation, opportunities for cross-disciplinary deliberation often get limited. A multi-speciality academic platform organised by a diagnostics institution represents a forward-looking



approach, especially at a time when medicine is becoming deeply interdisciplinary, integrating MedTech, engineering and advanced data sciences.

Tracing the evolution of medical science over the past few decades, Dr Jitendra Singh referred to the transition from an era dominated by classical clinical learning to one driven by imaging and molecular tools, ultrasound, CT scan, MRI and now genomics. He said that the dictum of the day has shifted: where earlier medical mastery depended solely on extensive reading, today AI-enabled systems complement and enhance clinical judgement. He also shared that AI-powered language tools are breaking communication barriers in healthcare delivery, enabling wider outreach, including through mobile clinics and digital platforms.

The Minister spoke at length about the changing spectrum of diseases in India. Conditions once region-specific, such as diabetes in southern India or thyroid disorders in Himalayan regions, are now prevalent across the country, reflecting lifestyle changes and the breakdown of rural-urban divides. Increased life expectancy has brought age-related diseases to the forefront, while lifestyle disorders are appearing at younger ages. In this context, early and precise diagnostics have become indispensable to distinguish between closely overlapping clinical entities and to prevent inappropriate treatment protocols. Dr Jitendra Singh emphasised that India is entering a new era of genomics and gene therapy. Under the Department of Biotechnology, large-scale genome sequencing initia-

tives are underway, with an initial target of sequencing one million individuals. He referred to successful clinical research in gene therapy for haemophilia conducted in collaboration with premier medical institutions, describing it as a major scientific achievement. He also mentioned the development of India's first indigenous antibiotic, Nafithromycin, as evidence of the country's growing life sciences capabilities.

Looking ahead, the Minister said that personalised prescriptions based on genetic profiling, environmental factors and lifestyle determinants will become the norm in the coming decades. AI-driven diagnostic analytics, combined with genomic insights, will allow physicians to tailor treatments to individual patients rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

Cong unveils initiatives to provide legal aid to party members at grassroots level, engage with youths

NEW DELHI, FEB 22: The Congress on Sunday announced new initiatives including setting up rapid legal response teams at state and district levels and raising its voice for reclaiming the original RTI Act as part of efforts to encourage the involvement of youths with the party.

Unveiling four such programmes, Congress treasurer Ajay Maken and senior spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said that young minds, through such initiatives, would help provide legal aid at the grassroots level whenever required and strengthen the party's voice to save democracy in the country.

Singhvi said the AICC Law, Human Rights and RTI Department's new initiatives will further engagement with young lawyers to revitalise formerly existing legal networks and to platform the voices speaking out against the dilution of the landmark Right to Information Act which, he alleged, is being "chipped away, piece by piece, by this regime".

The first such initiative is a Congress legal fellows programme for helping bring into the party mainstream young lawyers by giving them a key role in the law-making process, he said.

This three-month fellowship, Singhvi said, the details of which shall follow on the AICC social media pages, shall select 10 young lawyers to assist parliamentarians in their day-to-day work. He



said the idea is to allow an opportunity to the next generation of Congress members to get a chance to understand the opposition's role in Parliament.

He said the Department will start a podcast series: 'Nyaya Neta aur Nagrik', designed to provide a platform to not just legal luminaries and senior advocates but also to young and budding advocates to sit down and put across their views on various societal and legal issues that surround us.

"In an era where dissent is often dismissed, 'Nyaya Neta aur Nagrik' seeks to restore reasoned constitutional dialogue — placing law and citizens at the centre of governance, something which can be seen to be diminishing at the hands of the ruling regime.

"The podcast series shall be launched for a minimum of 10 episodes, and I have had the privilege of being featured in the inaugural episode as the Chairman of the AICC Law Department,

which will be released very soon in the near future," Singhvi said.

Besides, the party would start a rapid response force which would provide legal aid to the party and its leaders at the grassroots level.

Noting that this is a project close to his heart, Singhvi said, "We are preparing a database of lawyers with one sole guiding mantra: 5 lawyers in every district should be available to provide legal support to any leader of the party who needs." By way of deliberate design, he said, this programme seeks to particularly lend active legal support to local leaders present at the ground level who are susceptible to threats and intimidation.

"To this end, we are now preparing a digital directory of the names already received from various states, and shall be entrusting responsibilities to members of the Rapid Response Force accordingly," he noted.

To "reclaim" the Right to

Information Act (RTI), which has been "weakened" by the present dispensation, the party would engage with young minds through a national conclave to help strengthen its voice in this regard, the Congress leader said.

The RTI Act, 2005, once regarded as a transformative instrument empowering citizens to hold public authorities accountable, has faced sustained dilution and administrative weakening over the years, he alleged.

"At a time when transparency in governance is more critical than ever, the party believes it is imperative to initiate a structured national conversation on restoring the Act's original spirit and strength," he said.

It will bring together leading voices from across the country, including former Information Commissioners, jurists, civil society leaders, RTI activists, journalists and policy experts.

The objective is to undertake a rigorous assessment of the present state of the RTI framework, identify institutional and legislative gaps and develop actionable recommendations to strengthen the law, the Congress leader said.

Singhvi said the conclave will culminate in the preparation of a comprehensive report outlining findings and recommendations. This report will be released to the public and shared widely with stakeholders, legislators, and citizens. (Agencies)

FIR against Swami Avimukteshwaranand under POCSO Act

LUCKNOW (UP), FEB 22: An FIR was lodged in Prayagraj against Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati and his disciple Mukundanand Brahmachari over allegations of sexual abuse of two persons, including a minor over the past year, including during the Magh Mela.

The action was taken on Saturday after an order passed earlier in the day by the Special Judge (POCSO Act), Prayagraj, directed that a case be registered on an application moved by Ashutosh Brahmachari Maharaj and others.

According to officials, the FIR has been registered under relevant sections of the

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and relevant sections of the BNS.

Besides Avimukteshwaranand and Mukundanand Brahmachari, two to three unidentified persons have also been named in the complaint.

As per the FIR, the complainants include Ashutosh Brahmachari Maharaj, a disciple of Swami Rambhadracharya, and two persons — one of them a minor — who alleged sexual abuse at a gurukul and during religious congregations, including the Magh Mela.

The complaint alleges that the accused, posing as religious preceptors, subjected

the minor and another youth to repeated sexual assault on multiple occasions over the past year.

It further alleges that the acts were carried out under the guise of "guru seva" and by misusing religious authority. The complainants claimed that written representations were earlier submitted to Jhansi police and senior officials but no FIR was registered, prompting them to approach the court.

Following the court's direction, Jhansi Police Station registered the FIR late Saturday night and initiated further investigation. There was no immediate police statement on arrests.

Avimukteshwarananda re-

cently hit the headlines for his confrontation with the organisers of the Magh Mela in Prayagraj. He accused the administration of preventing him from taking a bath on Mauni Amavasya.

Responding to the court order on Saturday, Avimukteshwaranand said the case against him was false and that those responsible for the acts alleged must be punished. He added, however, that facts of the matter would only come to light after a case is filed. "Therefore, it is necessary. We would like to ask that the court not delay this process for a long time and act at a faster pace, because many people are watching this," he told reporters.

Was critical of Modi after Godhra, changed views after spending time in Gujarat: Arif Mohammed Khan



NEW DELHI, FEB 22: Bihar Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Saturday said that after the "disturbances caused by the Godhra tragedy" in 2002, he was critical of Narendra Modi, then chief minister of Gujarat, but his opinion changed after interacting with people.

Khan was speaking at the launch of the book, "Revolutionary Raj: Narendra Modi's 25 Years", written by journalist-author Alok Mehta, at the Constitution Club of India here.

He noted that his view towards Modi wouldn't have changed if he had not spent four months in Gujarat post-Godhra.

"In 2002, after the distur-

bances caused by the Godhra tragedy, I was a critic of Shri Modi. And I have said it in the past, that if I had not spent more than four months in Gujarat, after those disturbances, if I had not interacted with people belonging to various communities, possibly the same mindset would have continued," Khan said.

He said he realised that Modi was "being maligned very unfairly".

"He is the most misunderstood person who is being maligned very unfairly. And then after four months, my view totally changed about this situation. And I started sharing my views with others. He is undoubtedly a man of determination, a man of resolve, and he is the man who never shows that he is in a hurry. It appears that he never rests. And he is always engaged in pursuing whatever course he has set before himself," Khan said.

The book, which carries a foreword by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, details Modi's journey over the past 25 years, from a chief minister to the Prime Minister of India.

Khan also credited the prime minister for the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, that criminalises the practice of "triple talaq" in India.

"I hope, and I feel confident that after 50 years, people not only in this country, but everywhere else also will recognise what a wonderful and great job Shri Narendra Modi has done. Because everywhere else in the world, triple talaq is not considered lawful. In India, it was done for the first time in 2019," Khan said.

The launch was attended by Union Minister of Oil and Natural Gas of India Hardeep Singh Puri, Deputy Speaker of Rajya Sabha

Harivansh Narayan Singh, Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission, N K Singh, and former minister K J Alphons.

Talking about the recently-concluded AI Impact Summit, Puri said that India is going through "something very remarkable."

"In May 2014, we were a USD 2 trillion economy. Today, we are a USD 4.3 trillion economy. We were referred to then as being one of fragile five economies. That was roughly the kind of tag that we were subjected to. And lo and behold, today we are the fourth-largest economy in the world," Puri said.

He added, "On our way, if you believe the monetary fund, in the next year or two, we will be the third largest economy. And those of you who watched the substance of the AI Impact Summit, you know that what India is going through is something very remarkable." (PTI)

'Shirtless' protest: Not legitimate dissent, blatant assault on public order, says Delhi court

NEW DELHI, FEB 22: The conduct of the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) workers arrested for protesting at the AI Impact Summit venue was not legitimate dissent, rather a "blatant assault on public order" that also hurt the country's "diplomatic image", a Delhi court said.

Judicial Magistrate Ravi made the observation on Saturday when the four IYC workers who were held for the "shirtless" protest at the Bharat Mandapam here were produced before his court. The court allowed five days of custody to the police to question them.

Summarising the reasons for allowing the Delhi Police's plea seeking custodial interrogation, the magistrate said that the accused hailed from remote parts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana, posing a high risk of their absconding.

This was "further heightened by early investigation findings suggesting external conspiracy links, the court said.

A portion of the order passed by judicial magistrate Ravi, accessed by PTI, said that the protest imperilled or jeopardised not only the event's sanctity, but also the



country's diplomatic image. "...the accused persons are alleged to have orchestrated a premeditated intrusion into the high-security precincts of Bharat Mandapam during the AI Summit 2026, a premier international conclave hosting global delegates and dignitaries," the court's order said.

It said the protestors allegedly "donned provocative T-shirts bearing offensive slogans such as 'India US Trade Deal Compromised', vociferously raised incendiary chants, obstructed public servants in the execution of their duties, and perpetrated physical assaults causing grievous injuries to police personnel, as substantiated by the medico-legal cases (MLCs) on record." The magistrate said, "Such conduct palpably transcends the ambit of legitimate dissent, metamorphosing into a blatant assault

on public order. It imperils not merely the event's sanctity but also the Republic's diplomatic image before foreign stakeholders, rendering it wholly unprotected by constitutional safeguards." The magistrate said the probe reveals that multiple associates could be absconding, which could tamper digital footprints, financial trails, and co-accused disclosures.

Citing a 1980 Supreme Court verdict, the magistrate said, "Bail discretion must safeguard investigation integrity, particularly pre-chargesheet." He also underlined that the alleged offences "warranted stringent scrutiny" as they posed a grave threat to public order and state security at an international forum and attracted punishment exceeding three years of imprisonment under BNS Sections 121 (voluntarily causing hurt to deter a

public servant from his duty) and 61 (2) (criminal conspiracy).

"In view of the above, the application, for police custody remand of all four accused persons is allowed for five days with effect from today, i.e., till February 25," the magistrate court said.

India hosted the world's largest artificial intelligence conclave, the AI Impact Summit-2026. The summit that began February 16 has seen packed halls and long queues, as tech moguls, industry leaders, policymakers, founders, and technologists thronged the Bharat Mandapam here.

On Friday, police arrested Krishna Hari, national secretary of Youth Congress from Bihar; Kundan Yadav, state secretary of Bihar; Ajay Kumar, state president of Uttar Pradesh; and Narasimha Yadav from Telangana for holding a 'shirtless protest' inside an exhibition hall at the Summit.

The accused and others were holding T-shirts bearing images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump, along with slogans against the government and the India-US trade deal.