

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Murmu Flies Sortie In LCH 'Prachand' Near India-Pak Border In Jaisalmer

JAIPUR, FEB 27: Clad in an olive-green flying suit and helmet, President Droupadi Murmu on Friday took a 25-minute sortie as co-pilot in Light Combat Helicopter 'Prachand' near the India-Pakistan border in Jaisalmer district.

According to the Indian Air Force (IAF), the helicopter took off from the Jaisalmer Air Force Station after the president was briefed by the captain. She waved from the cockpit before departure.

During the flight, Murmu — the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces — delivered a message to the nation from the cockpit.

"Prachand helicopter is a powerful symbol of self-reliance. At this moment, I am flying over the Jaisalmer district. I extend my heartfelt greetings and deepest gratitude to our brave soldiers. A warm salute to you, Jai Hind, Jai Bharat," she said.

The helicopter flew over the Pokharan firing range, where the IAF is scheduled to conduct its firepower demonstration. 'Vayu Shakti', on Friday evening, Murmu will witness the day-dusk-night demonstration.



Earlier, IAF Chief Air Marshal A P Singh welcomed the president at the IAF station.

With today's sortie, Murmu became the first Indian president to fly in an attack helicopter, adding another milestone to her engagements with frontline military platforms.

She undertook a sortie in a Rafale fighter aircraft at the Air Force Station in Ambala in October last year, becoming the first Indian president to have flown in two different

fighter aircraft of the IAF.

In April 2023, she undertook a sortie in a Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter aircraft at the Tezpur Air Force Station in Assam, flying for about 30 minutes over the Brahmaputra and Tezpur valley with a view of the Himalayas.

LCH Prachand is India's first indigenously designed and developed combat helicopter, built by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

Equipped with advanced avionics, stealth features,

night-attack capability and a formidable array of weapons including air-to-ground and air-to-air missiles, rockets and a 20 mm gun, the LCH significantly enhances the combat capability of the Indian Air Force.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had undertaken a sortie in the Prachand, which translates to fierce, during the formal induction of the first LCH into the IAF at the Jodhpur Air Force Station in October 2022. (Agencies)

Various delegations call on LG Ladakh

LEH, FEB 27: Various delegations called on the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Shri Kavinder Gupta, at the LG Secretariat, to apprise him of issues concerning development and public welfare in different parts of the Union Territory.

A delegation from Turtuk, Tyakshi and Thang led by former Executive Councillor, LAHDC Leh, Shri Ghulam Mehdi, highlighted concerns related to infrastructure, healthcare, education and employment in the border villages.

A separate delegation of candidates aspiring for the post of Draftsmen in the PHE and PWD Departments requested the conduct of a recruitment drive for the said post.

Another delegation from Phastan village in Nubra sub-division raised issues pertaining to healthcare facilities, infrastructure development and connectivity.



Meanwhile, employees from various departments who benefited from the recent notional increment granted to SRO-202 employees expressed their gratitude to the Lieutenant Governor, stating that the decision would benefit hun-

dreds of employees. A delegation of BJP Yuva Morcha also met with the Lt Governor and submitted their demands with regard to the upcoming graduation-level exams.

The Lieutenant Governor gave a patient hearing to all

delegations and assured that their concerns would be examined on priority. He reiterated the UT Administration's commitment to inclusive and balanced development across all regions of Ladakh, ensuring that no area remains neglected.

'Biggest Political Conspiracy': A Teary Kejriwal After Court Discharge In Liquor Policy Case

NEW DELHI, FEB 27: An emotional Arvind Kejriwal on Friday asserted that the corruption case against him was the "biggest political conspiracy" in the history of Independent India, as a court here discharged him in the politically sensational liquor policy case.

Just as the verdict came, the three-time ex-Delhi chief minister broke down before reporters.

Kejriwal alleged that the "conspiracy" of the excise case was hatched to finish off AAP.

It was entirely a fake case with the roles of Prime Minis-



ter Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah behind its fabrication, the fresh-off-the-hook leader alleged. A Delhi court on Friday

discharged Kejriwal and Sisodia, a former deputy chief minister, in the excise police-related corruption case, refusing to take cognisance of the CBI chargesheet.

Special Judge Jitendra Singh said that the chargesheet had several lacunae not supported by evidence, as he discharged 21 more besides the two Aam Aadmi Party leaders in the matter.

The CBI has been probing alleged corruption in the formulation and execution of the erstwhile-AAP government's now-scrapped excise policy. (Agencies)

World looking towards India for solutions to challenges: Om Birla

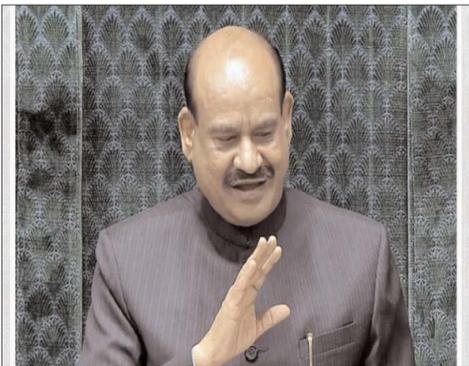
INDORE (MP), FEB 27: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday described India's youth as its biggest strength, and said the world is looking towards the country for solutions to its challenges.

Addressing the eighth convocation ceremony of Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya here as the chief guest, he also said that the ability of Indian youth to address global challenges is going up through innovation and research.

"Countries across the world are looking towards India for solutions to their challenges, and their focus is on the demographic strength of our youth," Birla said.

Young people are India's greatest strength, and their capability, confidence and new outlook are taking the country on the path of development, he said.

The proportion of youth in the population is declining in several countries, reducing their capacity to deal with emerging challenges. The



ability of Indian youth to address global challenges is steadily increasing through innovation and new research, he added.

Young people are addressing challenges faced by India as well as the world through start-ups, and resolving these challenges is their responsibility, he said.

According to him, Indian youth would have to work harder and further enhance their capabilities to deal with global challenges.

"We need to make collective efforts on our university

campuses and adapt ourselves to changing technologies so that we can become more capable of meeting global challenges," Birla said.

He said the foundation of India's changing future is being laid in the present phase and innovations and new research by the youth are taking the country forward.

The Lok Sabha speaker extended his best wishes to students graduating at the convocation ceremony to face real-life challenges ahead and expressed confidence that they would contribute in

every possible way towards making India a developed nation.

He praised educational institutions established in Indore based on initiatives taken by Vaishnav community textile traders in 1884, saying these institutions preserved Indian culture and values even during the period of foreign rule.

Birla said that during the rule of the Mughals and the British, efforts were made to erode India's spiritual culture, values and thoughts, but such attempts did not succeed due to the country's cultural vitality.

Indore Lok Sabha MP Shankar Lalwani and university chancellor Purushottamdas Pasari were also present at the ceremony.

During the event, degrees were awarded to 2,008 undergraduate and postgraduate students and 32 PhD scholars. Sixteen meritorious students were also honoured with gold medals for securing top positions in their respective courses. (Agencies)

Judiciary Cut Through Web Of Lies: Kavitha After Court Clears Her Name In Delhi Excise Policy Case

HYDERABAD, FEB 27: Telangana Jagruthi president K Kavitha on Friday expressed relief over being discharged in the Delhi excise policy case and said the judiciary has cut through the "web of lies" in the case.

Kavitha, daughter of BRS president and former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, said she has always maintained that the case was politically motivated, foisted on "opposition parties" as part of a political vendetta.

"Satyamev Jayate (truth alone triumphs). This (case) was a web of lies. Judiciary has cut right through it," she told reporters here.

A Delhi court on Friday discharged former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia, Kavitha and 20 others in the politically charged liquor policy case, pulling up the CBI by saying it found no "overarching conspiracy or criminal intent" in the policy.

Kavitha said her family members, including her husband, in-laws, and parents, and Telangana Jagruthi workers stood by her during her difficult times, and thanked them for their support.

Her father, Chandrasekhar Rao, himself time and again, said that the case was a vendetta against him and BRS which was reflected on her, she said.

"Who will account for the time that I lost with my kids (due to her incarceration for five months)?"



Who will account for the time that I lost with my family," she asked. Who will answer for her alleged harassment online and abuses in public meetings (by political leaders), she further asked.

Asked if she would like to share her happiness with her father KCR and brother and BRS Working President K T Rama Rao, she said she took her mother's blessings after coming to know about the court verdict.

"I took my mother's blessings after getting this result. This is not the time to talk about other things. I am thankful to all those who stood by me during this case," she said.

Arrested in March 2024, Kavitha walked out of Tihar jail in Delhi on August 29 the same year after the Supreme Court granted

her bail in corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy case.

Kavitha was suspended from the BRS in September, 2025 after she accused her cousins and party leaders T Harish Rao and J Santosh Kumar of "tarnishing" her father's image over the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project built during the BRS regime.

Since her suspension, she has been focusing on public issues under the banner of Telangana Jagruthi, a cultural organisation she heads.

She also announced in December last year that her political platform would contest the next assembly elections in the state. (Agencies)

Excise Scam: Delhi Court Discharges Former CM Kejriwal, Sisodia, K Kavitha And 20 Others

NEW DELHI, FEB 27: In a massive relief to the AAP's top leadership, a Delhi court on Friday discharged former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, his ex-deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others in the politically charged liquor policy case by refusing to take cognisance of the CBI chargesheet against them.

Among the 21 people given a clean chit in the case is Telangana Jagruthi president K Kavitha.

Special Judge Jitendra Singh rapped the CBI for lapses in the investigation, saying that there was no cogent evidence against Kejriwal and there was no prima facie case against Sisodia and the other accused.

The CBI has been probing alleged corruption in the formulation and execution of the erstwhile AAP government's now-scrapped excise policy. Underscoring "some misleading averments", the judge said in his strongly



worded statement that the voluminous chargesheet had several lacunas not corroborated by evidence or witnesses.

"...The chargesheet suffers from internal contradictions, striking at the root of conspiracy theory," he said.

He said that in the absence of any evidence, the allegations against Kejriwal could not be sustained and that the former chief minister was implicated without any cogent evidence.

This, the judge said, was

inconsistent with the rule of law.

Regarding Sisodia, the judge said there was no material on record showing his involvement, nor was any recovery made from him.

The court underlined its finding of the absence of an overarching conspiracy or criminal intent in the excise policy while observing that the federal agency's case did not withstand judicial scrutiny, especially when the CBI sought to construct a narrative of conspiracy on-

mere conjecture. It also rapped the agency for building its case through approver statements.

"If such conduct is allowed, it would be a grave violation of the Constitutional principles. The conduct where an accused is granted pardon and then made an approver, his statements used to fill the gaps in the investigation/narrative and make additional people accused is wrong," the court said.

The other accused discharged are Kuldeep Singh, Narender Singh, Vijay Nair, Abhishek Boinpally, Arun Ramchandra Pillai, Mootha Goutam, Sameer Mahendru, Amandeep Singh Dhall, Arjun Pandey, Butchibabu Gornatla, Rakesh Joshi, Damodar Prasad Sharma, Prince Kumar, Chanpreet Singh Rayat, Arvind Kumar Singh, Durgesh Pathak, Amit Arora, Vinod Chauhan, Ashish Mathur, and P Sarath Chandra Reddy. (Agencies)

Sweden intercepts suspected Russian drone during visit by French aircraft carrier

STOCKHOLM, Feb 27: The Swedish military has intercepted a suspected Russian drone off the south of the country as a French aircraft carrier was docked in the port of Malmö, officials say.

The armed forces said on Thursday that a Swedish naval ship observed the suspected drone during a patrol in the Oresund, the strait that divides Sweden from Denmark.

They said that unspecified countermeasures were taken to disrupt the drone, and that contact with the drone was then lost.

The French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle is in the southern Swedish city of Malmö this week as part of regular NATO exercise activities. Malmö is located on the Oresund, opposite the Danish capital of Copenhagen.

French military spokesperson Guillaume Vernet told The Associated Press that the drone was detected on Wednesday and handled by Swedish forces integrated into a security system around the carrier. He said Friday that the drone was more than 10 kilometers

(6 miles) from the Charles de Gaulle.

"This system showed it is robust, and this event had no impact on the activity of the aircraft carrier battle group," Vernet said.

Swedish Defence Minister Pal Jonson told public broadcaster SVT Thursday evening that the suspected violation of Swedish airspace by a drone happened in connection with a Russian military ship being in Swedish territorial waters. Asked what country he thinks the drone belongs to, he replied: "Probably Russia."

The Russian ship continued into the Baltic Sea, and Swedish authorities have been in close contact with Denmark about the incident, Jonson said. The armed forces said no further drones were observed.

Western officials say Russia is masterminding a campaign of sabotage and disruption across Europe. An Associated Press database has documented well over 100 incidents.

Not all incidents are public and it can sometimes take officials months to establish a link to Moscow.