

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

TMC crisis deepens as leader asks bank to freeze party accounts amid rebellion

KOLKATA, JUNE 18: The Trinamool Congress (TMC) is facing a fresh internal crisis after senior leader Aroop Biswas reportedly requested a bank to freeze all party account transactions, citing a "serious dispute" within the organisation amid an ongoing rebellion.

According to reports, Biswas—who also served as the party's treasurer—wrote to HDFC Bank seeking immediate suspension of financial operations linked to the party. He stated that there is a major disagreement over the authority and control of the



party's affairs. The development comes at a time when the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC is witnessing internal unrest, with a section of leaders and elected representatives reportedly expressing dissent

and challenging the existing leadership structure.

In his communication, Biswas flagged concerns over the management of party funds, alleging that the ongoing dispute has raised questions about financial accountability and decision-making authority within the organisation.

The request highlights widening divisions within the party as it grapples with multiple political and organisational challenges in recent weeks. Party leadership has not officially responded to the development so far.

US-Iran sign landmark deal to end West Asia Conflict, reopen Strait of Hormuz

WASHINGTON, JUNE 18: The United States and Iran have formally signed a landmark agreement aimed at ending months of military conflict and reducing tensions across West Asia. The deal, finalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), is being viewed as a major diplomatic breakthrough with significant implications for regional stability, global energy markets, and international security. According to reports, the agreement includes an immediate halt to hostilities and commitments from both countries to avoid further military confrontation. The understanding also seeks to restore stability in the Gulf region and ensure the smooth movement of commercial shipping through the strategically important Strait of Hormuz.

One of the key outcomes of the deal is the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial global energy route through which a significant share of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports pass. The reopening is expected to ease concerns over energy supplies and support stability in international oil markets. The agreement also lays the groundwork for broader negotiations over the next 60 days. Discussions are expected to focus on Iran's nuclear programme, sanctions relief, economic cooperation, and regional security arrangements.

The agreement was finalized ahead of a planned formal signing ceremony, with Iran reportedly reaffirming that it will not pursue nuclear weapons, while future monitoring mechanisms are expected to be developed in consultation with international agencies. US President Donald Trump described the agreement as a significant step toward peace, while Iranian officials said the deal would help restore economic activity and regional stability.



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leaders from both countries reportedly approving the framework electronically. The breakthrough comes after months of conflict that disrupted regional trade, affected energy markets, and raised fears of a wider war in the Middle East. Analysts believe successful implementation of the agreement could improve diplomatic relations and reduce geopolitical tensions across the region.

CBI arrests ex-CREST CEO Navneet Srivastava in Rs 75 crore fund scam

NEW DELHI, JUNE 18: In a major development in the ongoing CREST fund misappropriation probe, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday arrested senior Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officer Navneet Srivastava, who was the Chief Executive Officer of the Chandigarh Renewable Energy and Science & Technology Promotion Society (CREST) at the time of the alleged fraud. Srivastava was produced before the Special Judge, CBI, Chandigarh, and remanded to three days of police custody.

The arrest follows revelations about his role during the investigation. According to the CBI, funds parked in three CREST bank accounts maintained with IDFC First Bank in Chandigarh were fraudulently misappropriated and diverted to various shell companies. The proceeds were allegedly diverted for personal use by the beneficiaries, resulting in a loss of approximately ₹75 crore to CREST during Srivastava's tenure. The investigation further revealed that a portion of the proceeds of crime was routed into the account of a private company in which Srivastava's wife and a close relative are directors. CREST, the nodal agency of the Chandigarh administration for promoting renewable energy, solar power projects, and related initiatives, maintained the accounts at the IDFC First Bank branch in Sector 32. The alleged diversion involved collusion with bank officials and the use of shell entities to siphon public funds intended for green energy projects. The CBI filed its first chargesheet in the ₹75.34 crore CREST case before the Special CBI Court. The chargesheet named 13 accused, including five IDFC First Bank officials, two CREST public servants, former Project Director Sukhwinder Singh Abrol and accountant Sahil Kukkar, as well as private individuals and shell companies. Chandigarh Police earlier arrested Abrol and Kukkar. The CREST scam forms part of a larger series of alleged frauds linked to IDFC First Bank accounts involving government departments and entities such as the Chandigarh Smart City project and Municipal Corporation Chandigarh, with total alleged losses running into hundreds of crores.

Srivastava, an IFoS officer, had been removed as CREST CEO earlier and was subsequently suspended by the Central Government in April this year in connection with the probe. His arrest marks the first custodial action by the CBI against a senior serving or former official directly heading CREST. The agency is continuing its investigation to trace the full money trail, identify all beneficiaries, and examine the role of other individuals and entities. Further arrests cannot be ruled out as the probe deepens into the alleged civil servant-bank nexus.

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Ukraine strikes Moscow Oil Refinery again, Zelensky calls attack a 'Justified Response'

RUSSIA, JUNE 18: Ukraine has carried out a fresh drone strike targeting an oil refinery in Moscow, marking the second such attack on the facility within a week, according to reports. Thick fumes of black smoke were seen rising over the Russian capital after the strike, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky described as a "justified response" to recent Russian attacks on Kyiv.

Zelensky said the operation was in retaliation for ongoing Russian strikes on Ukrainian cities, including a recent barrage on Kyiv that caused significant damage to civilian infrastructure and historic sites. He stated that Ukrainian forces were targeting facilities supporting Russia's war efforts. "This is a fully justified response to Russian attacks on our cities and communities," Zelensky said in a post on X, adding that the strikes reflect

the work of Ukrainian forces against infrastructure linked to the conflict. Following the attack, Russian authorities temporarily suspended flights at all major Moscow airports, including Sheremetyevo, Domodedovo, Vnukovo, and Zhukovskiy, citing security concerns. The escalation occurred hours before Russian President Vladimir Putin was scheduled to meet ASEAN leaders in Kazan for a regional summit focused on economic cooperation and geopolitical stability. The latest exchange highlights the intensifying conflict, now in its fourth year, with both sides continuing long-range strikes on strategic infrastructure.



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UK PM calls actions of Russian warship in English Channel reckless

LONDON, JUNE 18: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Wednesday accused the crew of a Russian warship of acting recklessly when they fired warning shots near a British yacht in the English Channel, though he downplayed the seriousness of the incident.

The owners of the 40-foot (12-metre) sailboat Bright Future say the shots were fired early Tuesday morning when they encountered a Russian warship while crossing the English Channel to Cherbourg in France. Russia says the crew of the frigate Admiral Grigorovich fired shots into the air after the sailboat failed to respond to warnings to change course. No one was injured, but the incident underscored heightened tensions between the UK and Russia. Speaking at the G7 summit in France, Starmer said the incident was "deeply concerning," even though British defence officials have concluded the shots weren't "anything more sinister" than an effort to avoid a collision. "That doesn't take away from the fact that clearly Russia is aggressive across Europe," Starmer said. The incident occurred two days after Britain seized a



tanker from Russia's so-called shadow fleet, which Western powers say is used to skirt sanctions on Russian oil exports imposed after the invasion of Ukraine. Britain has also accused Russia of mounting a campaign of sabotage to destabilise European nations that support Ukraine. The British couple aboard the Bright Future, Jane Kelvey, 68, and her husband Alan, 70, reported that the

shots were fired about 20 nautical miles south of the Isle of Wight, outside UK territorial waters. "It was a bit scary," Jane Kelvey told the i Paper. "I crouched down. I didn't think our safety was in danger. But it was certainly unusual. As we sailed away, we said to each other, what the hell just happened?" Russia's Defence Ministry said the crew of the frigate tried to contact the yacht

when it was seen sailing on a "dangerous course in close proximity to the warship." It said the ship's crew launched flares and issued sound signals when the yacht did not respond. "After the distance had closed to 150 metres, the frigate's commander decided to fire warning shots across the vessel's bow using small arms," the ministry said. It said the yacht then changed course and sailed away.

BJP leader burnt alive in Chhattisgarh's Koriya after SUV trapped and set on fire

CHHATTISGARH, JUNE 18: A BJP leader and two others were allegedly burnt alive after their SUV was trapped between trucks and set on fire in a shocking incident linked to a sand mining dispute in Chhattisgarh's Koriya district, police said.

The incident took place late Tuesday night in Naugain village under Sonhat police station limits, when a Toyota Fortuner carrying BJP leader and former Janpad Panchayat President Bharat Singh, also known as Lalla Singh, was allegedly ambushed during a meeting over a long-standing dispute. According to police and family members, the vehicle was surrounded by trucks, blocking all escape routes before being doused with petrol and set ablaze. Three people inside the SUV, including Bharat Singh, died in the attack. The other deceased have been identified as Virendra



Singh and Nagendra Singh, a teacher and cousin of the BJP leader. Another person, Mayank Singh, sustained critical injuries and is undergoing treatment at Apollo Hospital in Bilaspur. Police have arrested four accused so far and registered a case against nine named individuals under serious charges, including murder and attempted murder. A

search operation is underway to apprehend the remaining suspects. Preliminary investigations suggest the violence stemmed from a prolonged conflict over sand mining operations and control of transportation routes in the region. Officials said both sides had been involved in multiple disputes over quarry contracts and revenue sharing. Authorities have intensified security in the area as tensions remain high, while senior officials confirmed that investigations are ongoing to determine the exact sequence of events. The incident has triggered strong political reactions, with local leaders demanding strict action and a thorough probe, including calls for a CBI investigation.

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"nikah" of the victim. The case came to light after a video went viral showing a man restraining the woman and chanting religious verses, prompting public concern and a police probe. As per the FIR, the victim alleged she was drugged, blackmailed using objectionable videos, and repeatedly sexually assaulted. She also claimed she was pressured into conversion and a forced marriage ceremony was conducted without her consent. Police said further interrogation of the arrested cleric is underway, and they are also investigating whether more individuals were involved in the alleged crime and if similar incidents occurred elsewhere.

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MADHYA PRADESH, JUNE 18: Police have arrested a cleric, Maulana Hazrat, who was wanted in connection with the alleged forced conversion and abuse of a 24-year-old woman, the wife of an Indian Air Force official, officials said. The accused cleric was arrested from Madhya Pradesh following an investigation into a case that has triggered widespread outrage after disturbing allegations of sexual assault, blackmail, and forced religious conversion surfaced. According to police, the main accused, Ayyaz Madare, along with his associate Ameen Shaikh, is already in custody. The cleric is alleged to have played a key role in conducting religious rituals and facilitating the alleged conversion and



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