



- Germany rejects allegations that it's facilitating acts of genocide in Gaza
Biden to meet Japan's PM amid shared concerns about China
'Cong insulted Lord Ram by refusing invite for pran pratishtha ceremony'
ED makes fresh arrest in money laundering case against Hemant Soren

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Shah highlights Himanta govt's success story China couldn't encroach 'single inch' of land under Modi govt: Union Home Minister

LAKHIMPUR, April 9: Asserting that China couldn't encroach "single inch" of land under the Narendra Modi government, home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday claimed that people will never forget how former PM Jawaharlal Nehru said "bye-bye" to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh during the 1962 Chinese aggression.



"Then the Modi government came to power at the Centre, and the Himanta Biswa Sarma's government was formed here. Now, we can say that infiltration has stopped," he said. Taking a swipe at the Congress, he said, "A few days back I saw Rahul Gandhi saying that he is here to save Assam's culture. I want to ask, what have you done for Assam? Since the days of your grandmother, injustice has been done to Assam. Scores of youths have lost their lives."

HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, April 9: Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, while rallying support for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, accused the Congress-led opposition of sowing seeds of division along religious lines.

Sarbananda accuses Congress of playing divisive politics



Addressing public meetings at Nigam Paanch Ali, Ofulia Tea Estate, and Kushal Nagar under Tingkhang LAC on Tuesday, Sonowal emphasized that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, has been tirelessly working towards the upliftment of every member of society and improving their quality of life.

tal to political discourse and the overall environment," he added. As a senior leader of the BJP contesting from the 13th Dibrugarh Lok Sabha Constituency, Sonowal highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity across all religions and sects, attributing it to his efforts to uplift every section of society and bring the northeast out of decades of violence and neglect by the Congress.

for all. We must strive for harmony and unity, regardless of our religious affiliations," he stated. He further said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiatives to strengthen ties with Islamic countries and his respectful gestures towards the Pope reflect our commitment to the vision of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabkar Prayas,' aimed at building a strong and inclusive society.

Expenditure observer inspects candidate's spending ahead of LS polls

JORHAT, April 9: Ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in Jorhat, the expenditure observer for the 14 Jorhat HPC, Ashok Kumar Suthar, conducted a thorough inspection of the expenditure registers of contesting candidates at the Jorhat Circuit House on Monday.

Political parties intensify campaigns in West KA ahead of LS polls

DONGKAMUKAM, April 9: With the Parliamentary elections drawing near, political fervor in West Karbi Anglong is on the rise as parties have geared up for the second phase of polling scheduled for April 26.

gress candidate Joyram Englung expressed confidence in his party's prospects, asserting that the people are disenchanted with the Modi government's promises of "ache din" and are seeking change. Meanwhile, independent candidate JI Kathar has been advocating for the strengthening of the Sixth Scheduled and the implementation of Article 244 (A) to grant autonomous statehood in hill districts of Assam.

ceived support from chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and chief executive member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, along with various MLAs, executive members, and MACs. During campaign meetings, the BJP highlighted plans for the development of Ronghang Rongbong, the seat of Karbi traditional kings, into a model village, promising further progress under their governance.

Assam CEO issues notice to Cong over model code violation charges

GUWAHATI, April 9: The Assam Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has issued notice to the Congress on allegation of violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), raised by the BJP. A complaint was filed by the BJP on Monday, alleging that the Congress 'guarantee cards', which are being distributed house-to-house, were in violation of the MCC.

to every educated youth in the first year and Rs one lakh per year to one female member of every poor family, without disclosing the source of funds to fulfill these promises. The CEO maintained that prima facie scrutiny indicated that the card contains a form which collects certain details of the person, including data which are of the nature of personally identifiable information. It said that while 'electoral promises are in the realm of possibility, form distribution and data collection make the design transactional and in the nature of inducement of electors', which is a prohibited activity.

AAU prioritises healthcare and women's wellbeing on World Health Day

JORHAT, April 9: The Department of Food Science and Nutrition at the College of Community Science, Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat, marked World Health Day with a fervent dedication to promoting accessible healthcare and raising awareness about women's wellbeing on Tuesday.

We are not outsiders: Manipuris who took refuge outside state yearn to vote in LS polls

IMPHAL/NEW DELHI, April 9: "Don't treat us like outsiders". Forced to leave their state after clashes broke out last year, that's the impassioned plea from Manipuris who fled to other parts of the country to escape the violence and long to vote in the Lok Sabha election but can't because there is no such provision.

holding elections in the current circumstances. As leaders of both the Kuki-Zo and Meitei groups take up the issue with the Election Commission, those who took shelter outside the state say they have stakes in the future of Manipur and should be allowed to vote through postal ballots if no other arrangement can be made. Like Biren Chandam, a Manipuri now living in Delhi. "I came to Delhi and found a job here while my family moved to neighbouring Mizoram. We long to go back to our house which may or may not be existing right now but we cannot vote for our state. Why?"

'Alarm bells ringing in economy, households slowly sinking into debt'

NEW DELHI, April 9: Asserting that "alarm bells" are ringing in the Indian economy, the Congress on Tuesday claimed stagnant wages and high inflation have forced households to take loans just to get by and are slowly sinking into debt. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also stressed that the Congress' 'Nyay Patra' is a direct response to the "failures" of the government and said "dus saal anany kaal" ends on June 4.

due to weak income growth, which explains why both private consumption and household investment growth have remained markedly subdued in 2023-24, Ramesh said. "The authors make sure to point out that the 'disarmal' savings rate is 'not an anomaly', and that net financial savings have remained at 5% of GDP for the first nine months of 2023-24. Reduced savings means less capital available for business and government investments, and increased reliance on volatile foreign capital," he said. The report also confirms that a spike in unsecured personal loans is to blame for high levels of household debt, not home loans or vehicle loans as the Finance Ministry would have us believe, he said.

'Road to India bloc majority in IS polls will begin from Nagaland'

DIMAPUR, April 9: Exuding confidence that the Congress Party and the INDIA bloc would get a clear majority in the 2024 Loka Sabha elections, AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday said the road to that majority will begin from Nagaland. With Nagaland having only one Lok Sabha seat, Ramesh said every vote and every seat counts as the country is at a turning point.

'We are hopeful of an emotional impact generated by the children appealing directly to their parents' Assam: One lakh students send postcards to parents to vote

GUWAHATI, April 9: One lakh students of Assam's Kamrup district on Tuesday wrote postcards to their parents, urging them to exercise their voting rights in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The campaign 'Maa-Deutaloit Voddanor Ahbaan' (appeal to mother-father to vote) by the Kamrup Election District is targeted to ensure 100 per cent voter turnout when polling will be held in the district in the third phase on May 7.



across the district wrote postcards, beseeching their parents to cast their ballots on election day for their better future, more participative democracy and growth of India. "I remember writing letters to friends as an assignment in school. It used to be an exercise we all looked forward to. The nostalgic joy associated with receiving a stamped letter in your name from a postman is unparalleled," she added. The postcards will be posted with cooperation of the postal department so that they reach the parents within 15 days.

The postcards have been stamped with 'Kamrupa' and 'Luit', the black softshell turtles which are election mascots of the district. Upon receipt of the letter, students will be encouraged to upload selfies with their parents and the postcards. Jalli said the writing exercise is important to inculcate the value of writing letters for a generation most accustomed to computers and phones. As the students are from high schools, these children will always remember this message of need to vote and as they grow into their adulthood, they would carry on their democratic duties by casting their votes on time, Jalli, also the district election officer, said. "With a target of one lakh households, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SC to hear on April 16 pleas for cross verification of votes cast with VVPAT slips

NEW DELHI, April 9: The Supreme Court said on Tuesday it will hear on April 16 a batch of pleas seeking cross-verification of the votes cast with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). The VVPAT is an independent vote verification system which enables an elector to see whether his vote was cast correctly. It generates a paper slip which can be viewed by the voter. It is kept in a sealed cover and can be opened in case of a dispute. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, which could not take up the petitions re-

lated to Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), said it will consider all pleas in the matter for hearing on next Tuesday. The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls will begin on April 19. The top court had said on April 3 it would hear next week the plea filed by NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) along with other matters, after advocate Prashant Bhushan sought an urgent hearing. On April 1, the top court had sought responses from the Election Commission and the Centre on a plea by activist Arun Kumar Agrawal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)











### Biplab Deb should tell people why he had to resign as Tripura CM: CPI(M) leader



**AGARTALA, April 9:** BJP's Tripura West candidate Biplab Kumar Deb should tell people the reason behind his resignation as the chief minister a year before the 2023 assembly polls, leader of the opposition Jitendra Chaudhury said on Tuesday.

Addressing an election rally in Badharghat, the CPI(M) state secretary also sought to know why Union minister Pratima Bhoumik was not re-nominated for the Tripura West Lok Sabha seat.

"We don't indulge in personal attacks but the people have the right to know why Biplab Deb was removed suddenly. It is still unknown why he was forced to quit as the chief minister even as he dreamt of staying in the post till 2027," Chaudhury said.

"People also have a right to know why Pratima Bhoumik was

denied a ticket in the Lok Sabha polls," he added.

Deb, who guided BJP to a massive victory in the 2018 assembly polls bringing an end to the CPI(M)-led Left Front government of 25 years, resigned as the CM abruptly in 2022, following which Manik Saha took over.

Chaudhury alleged that there was no internal democracy within the BJP.

"They don't hold organisational elections be it at the national level or the state level. JP Nadra selected Rajib Bhattacharjee (state BJP president) and he then selected the mandal presidents," he claimed.

Maintaining that the INDIA bloc was formed to "save the country", Chaudhury urged people to vote for Congress candidate Asish Kumar Saha in the Tripura West seat. (PTI)

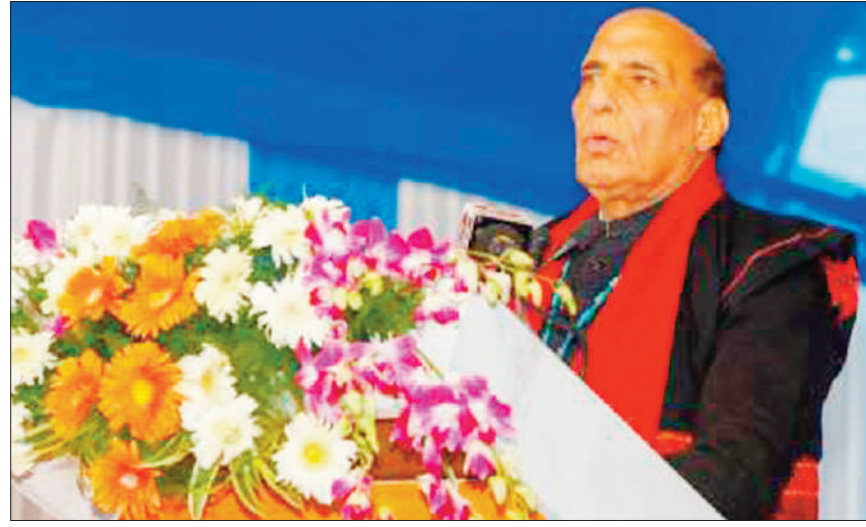
China's move to rename 30 places in Arunachal will not alter ground reality, says Union defence minister

# What if we rename parts of China: Rajnath on Beijing changing names of Arunachal areas

**NAMSAL, April 9:** Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday criticised China for renaming several places in Arunachal Pradesh, and wondered whether a similar attempt by India will result in those areas of the neighbouring country becoming parts of our territory.

Addressing an election rally at Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh East Constituency, Singh said China's move to change the names of 30 places in the northeastern state will not change the ground reality.

Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India, he asserted.



"I want to ask China if we change the names of various states of the neighbouring country, will those be parts of our territory? Because of such activities, the relationship between India and China will deteriorate," Singh said.

"We want to maintain good relations with all our neighbours. But if anybody tries to harm our self-respect, India has the capability to give a befitting reply," the defence minister asserted.

India had earlier this month outrightly rejected as "senseless" China renaming some places in Arunachal Pradesh, and asserted that assigning "invented" names does not alter the reality that the state "is, has been, and will always be" an integral part of India.

Beijing had recently announced Chinese names for 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh, which the neighbouring country claims as southern part of Tibet.

Singh alleged that the Congress was never interested in developing the border areas and as a result, the country lost around 1000 square kilometres of its territory to the

neighbouring country.

"I assure you that India will now never allow even an inch of land to be captured by its neighbour," Singh said in the rally.

Accusing the Congress of neglecting Arunachal Pradesh as well as the entire northeast during its 60 years of rule, he said that the grand old party used to consider every border village as the last village of the country while the Modi government considers it as the first.

"We have rectified the mistakes of the Congress since 2014 after our party came to power and initiated infrastructure projects in border areas so that our borders are secured. For the NDA government, border villages are strategic assets of the country," he said.

Singh added that the residents of the bor-

der villages immensely helped the country during the war with China in 1962.

"Their contributions will always be remembered by the country and we will remain grateful to them forever," the minister said.

Referring to the quantum of investment made in the northeast in the 10 years of the BJP-led NDA government, Singh claimed that the amount of funds pumped into the region was much more than the amount sanctioned during the Congress rule.

"We have launched the UNNATI scheme for the northeast with a total investment of Rs 10,000 crore. The youth of the region will get employment through it," he said.

The UNNATI scheme aims to boost development of new industries in the region

and generate employment. It will also promote trade and commerce with Southeast Asia.

Singh said that Modi's guarantee is to make three crore lakhpati didi in the country through various women self help groups.

"Modi does whatever he says. All the projects whose foundation stone were laid by the Prime Minister were completed on time. While the Congress laid foundation stones for several projects in the region as an election plank, but the projects failed to see the light of the day," he said.

Earlier, India failed to get recognition in the world but today, what the country says, the world listens and it was only because of Modi, he added.

"After the Modi's government came to power the status of around 25 crore poor people in the country improved. This is not our claim but revealed in a survey carried out by reputed organisations including the Niti Aayog," he said and added that the 21st century is going to be for India.

Singh also referred to the Prime Minister's effort to safely evacuate thousands of Indian students from war-ravaged Ukraine and also brought home eight former Indian Navy officers who were served with death sentences in Qatar.

Stating that Arunachal Pradesh is strategically important for India, the defence minister said that the BJP government initiated various projects in the state including the Sella Tunnel, Dibang multi-purpose power project, the biggest in the country.

Alleging that the Congress has been spreading false narratives about the CAA, he said people should ignore it. (PTI)

## PM targets 370 seats to 'pay respect' to abrogation of Article 370: Tripura CM

**AGARTALA, April 9:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi set the target of 370 Lok Sabha seats for the BJP to "pay respect" to the decision to abrogate Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, Tripura chief minister Manik Saha said on Tuesday.

Addressing an election rally in South Tripura's Hrishyamukh, he asked party workers to work hard to achieve the target.

"At the BJP's national executive meet-

ing in Delhi, PM Modi set the target for the BJP to win 370 seats to pay respect to the abrogation of Article 370. He also emphasised the need to work hard to achieve the target," Saha said.

He said that in accordance with the direction of the PM, BJP workers will visit every house in the state and seek "blessings" for him.

"We are aiming to visit every house to seek blessings for the PM. Wherever we are going, we are witnessing people's faith and love for PM

Modi," he said.

Hailing the 'Mann Ki Baat' radio programme, Saha claimed that world leaders were surprised to see how a prime minister could reach out to the people and solve their problems.

Criticising the opposition, he said they have formed a platform -- INDIA, aiming to oust the PM who "made the country a global leader".

"They have failed to bring together the anti-BJP forces in West Bengal and Kerala. They will not be able to stall a third consecutive term for Modi," he said. (PTI)



This may be published in Newspapers and TV from the day following the last date for withdrawal of candidature and upto two days before the date of poll

Format C-1

(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

#### Declaration about criminal cases

(As per the judgment dated 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: JONES INGTI KATHAR, D.C. COLONY DIPHU, K/A, ASSAM-782460

Name of Political party: INDEPENDENT (Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election: GENERAL ELECTION TO THE LOK SABHA-2024

\*Name of Constituency: 6-DIPHU (ST) PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

I JONES INGTI KATHAR (name of candidate), a candidate for the abovementioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

#### (A) Pending criminal cases

Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and Dated	Status case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1	ACJM-DIPHU	PRC 46/2023 DATED: 18/03/23	PENDING	IPC U/S 188. Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant. 143. Unlawful Assembly. 269. Negligent act likely to spread to infection of disease dangerous to life. 270. Malignant act likely to spread to infection of disease dangerous to life. 336. Act endangering life or personal safety of others. 353. Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty. 506. Punishment for criminal intimidation. 323. Punishment for voluntarily causing hurt.  JJ Act Sec. 83(2) Any adult or an adult group uses children for illegal activities.
2	JMFC-HAMREN	C 29/2023 DATED: 18/12/23	PENDING	IPC U/S 120(B). Criminal Conspiracy. 143. Unlawful Assembly. 145. Joining or Continuing Unlawful Assembly. 153(A). Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc. 186. Obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions. 290. Punishment for public nuisance in cases not otherwise provided. 291. Continuance of nuisance after injunction to discontinue. 353. Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty. R/W PDPP Act. Sec. 3: Mischief causing damage to public property

#### (B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences

Sl.no.	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE
NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE
NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE

\*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

### LOST

I, Shri. Nobin Timung (General Secretary of Jakve Asong NGO), S/o Rensing Timung, R/o Dilawjan, Police Station Borpathar, district Karbi Anglong, on 27/03/2024 has lost the registration certificate of Jakve Asong at Diphu town from my safe custody.

Any person (s) finding the same may kindly reach the address mentioned below.

Ronardson Bey, Co-ordinator, Jakve Asong, Rukasen, Diphu. Mobile No. 60015-85977. Nobin Timung, General Secretary, Jakve Asong. Mobile No. 86382-05944

## NFR surpasses target of track renewal works in 2023-24

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, April 9:** In a bid to maintain railway tracks in proper condition and provide safe transportation and comfortable journeys to rail passengers and stake holders, several track renewal works were undertaken by the Northeast Frontier Railways (NFR) during the fiscal year of 2023-24, as a part of the ongoing safety action plan and works.

These track renewal works have surpassed the set annual targets during the last fiscal year, projecting the remarkable works done by the zone.

During the financial year 2023-24, 257.98 TKM of through rail renewal, 210.71 TKM of through sleeper renewal and 264.16 CTR units of complete track renewal works have been completed. NFR has also achieved 7.27 lakh cubic meter of progress in ballasting works against a target of 5 lakh cubic meter, which is marked as the highest ever progress surpassing last year's progress of 6.34 lakh cubic meter. In addition, 134 thick web switches have been installed as compared to 35 during the progress of 2022-23.

As a part of the road safety works, for has-

sle free movement of road and rail users, 19 manned level crossings have been eliminated as well as 20 road over bridges (ROB) and 48 road under bridges (RUB) were commissioned during the fiscal year of 2023-24 within NFR.

Moreover, up to March 2024, maximum speed limits on 118.20 Km loop lines were raised to 30 Kmph and sectional speed of 803.5 Km was raised to 110 Kmph. The sectional speed marked a progress by 42 per cent. Also, nine additional waterways have been constructed to mitigate the problem of flooding during the monsoon. Modern monitoring techniques like structural health monitoring, 3D scanning of river bed, under water inspection by remote operated robotic vehicle, scour monitoring and water level monitoring are also introduced for monitoring railway bridges.

Maintenance of tracks at regular intervals have resulted in smooth operations of trains and providing better travelling experience for passengers. The increased emphasis given on safety measures for railway track by the engineering department of NFR has led to safer running of trains with increased speed.

**অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ**  
**ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**  
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

No. 117PSC/CON/Exam-13/2023-2024

**NOTIFICATION**

The Assam Public Service Commission hereby declares today, the 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2024, the result of the Screening Test (OMR based) for the post of **Junior Manager (Mechanical, Civil & IT) in Assam Electricity Grid Corporation Limited (AEGCL)** (Advt. No. 14/2023 dated 28/04/2023) conducted by the Commission on 26/11/2023. Candidates bearing the following Roll Numbers will have to appear in the Interview to be conducted by the Commission. The date(s) of Interview will be notified shortly.

Roll Numbers of candidates to be appeared in the Interview are stated below (horizontally):

**(A) Junior Manager (Mechanical), AEGCL:**

40004	40081	40155	40167	40228	40279	40292	40324	40358	40389
40402	40422	40463	40496	40502	40557	40580	40586	40644	40656
40667	40683	40706	40750	40756	40762	40798	40809	40822	40869
40920	40947	40980	40984	41092	41155	41176	41184	41223	41247

**(B) Junior Manager (Civil), AEGCL:**

10049	10113	10122	10155	10165	10198	10222	10274	10387	10394
10417	10646	10682	10784	10793	10831	10850	10962	11038	11077

**(C) Junior Manager (IT), AEGCL:**

30011	30019	30058	30141	30150	30191	30196	30198	30202	30231
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**N.B.:** The Commission will not be responsible for any typing/printing mistakes.

Sd/-  
Principal Controller of Examinations,  
Assam Public Service Commission,  
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22

**Janasanyog /D/126/24/10-Apr-24**







## AKSHAY-TIGER'S 'BADE MIYAN CHOTE MIYAN' & AJAY'S 'MAIDAAN' TO NOW RELEASE ON APRIL 11

**MUMBAI, April 9:** Action film "Bade Miyan Chote Miyan", starring Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff, and Ajay Devgn-led "Maidaan" will now release on April 11, the makers have announced. The two films were earlier scheduled to be made their debuts in theatres on April 10 but as the festival of Eid will be celebrated on April 11, the makers decided to shift the release. Akshay and Tiger shared the news of their film's new release on their respective Instagram pages on Monday evening. "Bade aur Chote aur poori 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan' ki team ki taraf se aap sab ko advance mein Eid Mubarak. Dekhiye #BadeMiyanChoteMiyan on Eid with your entire family, now releasing on 11th April only in cinemas," read the post on Akshay's page.



"Bade Miyan Chote Miyan" is directed by Ali Abbas Zafar of "Sultan" and "Bharat" fame, and produced by Pooja Entertainment in association with AAZ. The film, which also stars Prithviraj Sukumaran, Manushi Chhillar and Alaya F, will see Akshay and Tiger perform death-defying stunts as they play two elite soldiers who embark on a mission to recover a stolen AI weapon. Devgn also announced that "Maidaan", a period sports biopic on Syed Abdul Rahim, will release on April 11. "Mark your calendars! #Maidaan release across cinemas in India on 10th April, with special previews starting 6pm onwards. Full scale release to follow on the Eid holiday on 11th April. Reserve your seats now," the actor posted. "Maidaan" is directed by Amit Sharma and produced by Boney Kapoor. (PTI)



## MARRIED STATUS NO LONGER MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN INDUSTRY: PRIYAMANI

**MUMBAI, April 9:** Actor Priyamani says it is a welcome change in the Indian film industry where female actors are not relegated to supporting roles post marriage. The National Award-winning actor praised her contemporaries Nayanthara, Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Kajal Aggarwal for making some great career decisions. "Once upon a time, married actresses, at least in the south, were reduced to doing. They said, 'once the actress is married, fans will not be there. Probably your body shape will change.' "They were reduced to getting mother or sister-in-law's roles to actors who were earlier their co-stars," Priyamani added. The actor is currently looking forward to the release of her upcoming Hindi movie "Maidaan", in which she stars alongside Ajay Devgn. The film, which chronicles the golden years of Indian football in the early 1950s-60s through the eyes of the team's coach Syed Abdul Rahim, played by Devgn, is directed by Amit Sharma of "Badhaai Ho" fame. Priyamani is aware of the limited screen time allotted to her character Saira, who she described as Rahim's confidante and emotional support system. "The camaraderie between both of them is actually like friends. The family dynamics

are very important ... All of them have a significant part to play in the film," Priyamani said, adding, she shot for the film for 15 days. Produced by Zee Studios, Boney Kapoor, Arunava Joy Sengupta and Akash Chawla, "Maidaan" is set for a theatrical release on the occasion of Eid on April 11. Priyamani is equally thrilled about kick-starting work on the third season of the critically-acclaimed OTT series "The Family Man". It is headlined by Manoj Bajpayee and directed by Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK. "I would not say it is a cakewalk to play the character. I'm definitely very careful. I don't know what season three has in store for us. We are also waiting to start shooting. We will be called for the reading very soon," she said. Priyamani said she also wants to collaborate with Vidya Balan, who is her second cousin. "I would love to collaborate with her. It is something that even I'm manifesting. Let's hope we sisters get to work together. I met her recently at a party in November, it was a fleeting moment, she came and left in ten minutes," the actor said. Going forward, the actor said she has been quite picky about choosing her next role. "I'm very choosy about what I do. I hope I get to do something nice here. There are a lot of offers which are led by female protagonists but I'm just taking my time and choosing. I don't want to just keep doing everything and anything that is being offered to me," Priyamani said. (PTI)

## Scarlett Johansson, Channing Tatum's 'Fly Me To The Moon' to release in India in July



**LOS ANGELES, April 9:** Hollywood stars Scarlett Johansson and Channing Tatum's romantic comedy "Fly Me To The Moon" will make its debut in Indian theatres on July 12, Sony Pictures Entertainment India announced on Tuesday. Described as a "sharp, stylish comedy-drama set against the high-stakes backdrop of NASA's historic Apollo 11 moon landing", the movie is directed by Greg Berlanti. Sony Pictures shared the news of the film's release date on its official social media handles along with its trailer on Monday evening. "The whole world will be watching. Scarlett Johansson and Channing Tatum star in #FlyMeToTheMoon - exclusively in cinemas July 12," the stu-

dio posted on X. Johansson plays the role of marketing maven Kelly Jones, who is brought in to fix NASA's public image. "Sparks fly in all directions as Jones wreaks havoc on launch director Cole Davis's (Tatum) already difficult task. When the White House deems the mission too important to fail, Jones is directed to stage a fake moon landing as backup and the countdown truly begins. The film will finally put to rest to the question - Did the USA fake the moon landing?" read the official logline. "Fly Me To The Moon" will also feature Nick Dillenburg, Anna Garcia, Jim Rash, Noah Robbins, Colin Woodell, Christian Zuber, Donald Elise Watkins, Ray Romano, and Woody Harrelson. (PTI)

## PRESSURE TO MAKE ACTION FILM WITH ACTION HEROES MORE AS EXPECTATIONS ARE HIGH: ALI ABBAS ZAFAR

**MUMBAI, April 9:** When there are two top action stars like Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff shouldering a stunt-intensive film, the pressure to deliver is more, says Ali Abbas Zafar, who has directed the duo in "Bade Miyan Chote Miyan". "Bade Miyan Chote Miyan" will see Akshay and Tiger perform death-defying stunts as they play two elite soldiers who embark on a mission to recover a stolen AI weapon from a notorious enemy. The film hits the screens on Thursday. Ali, known for stylised action in films like "Tiger Zinda Hai", and "Bharat", said he felt compelled to present the actors in a never-before-seen avatar. "There's actually more pressure when you make an action film with an action hero as the expectation is already very high. So, with

them the idea is to show the audience something that they've never seen before, whether it's hand-to-hand, or chase sequence. So, the bar has to be higher because they are known as action heroes," the director told PTI in an interview here. Having already directed superstars like Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and Anushka Sharma in separate films, Ali said working with a popular actor these days comes with its own set of challenges. "Today, my biggest worry is that all of them are such big superstars and with such a huge fan base. You can't do frivolous work with any of them. The script needs to be good and it should be of their level. "For me, that wow factor needs to be there in a script, whether I go to

Akshay Kumar sir, Salman Khan sir, SRK, Aamir Khan or anyone. They should feel that the material I brought to them is 'worth their time'," he added. Ali recalled when producer Jacky Bhagnani asked him to helm the movie, he immediately accepted the offer. According to Ali, he invests almost a year-and-a-half writing a script. "Once my script is ready, everything else is a cakewalk, I start pre-production, so I'm not wasting the time. If the script is good and even if you make a bad film, your film will not be a flop, but if the script is not good, even if you make the best film it will not work," he added. When it came to casting the antagonist, the filmmaker said he was eager to work with a superstar from a

different industry. Enter Malayalam star Prithviraj Sukumaran, who Ali pursued for over a month. "The beauty of the film is that when you've a stronger villain, then automatically your heroes become stronger, it's all through writing. I was sure from day one that I wanted to cast a superstar from another industry for the role of a villain. "I've been a very big fan of Prithvi because of the way he has handled his stardom in Malayalam cinema, which is commercial and critical both," he said, heaping praises on Prithviraj's latest release "Aadujeevitham". Ali said he wasn't particularly concerned about Akshay's recent box office setbacks, with "OMG 2", which featured the actor in a pivotal role, being an exception. (PTI)



# Candidates chess: Indians in hunt, but Nepomniachtchi clear favourite on first rest day

**TORONTO, April 9:** The great Viswanathan Anand felt Indians were "a long shot" in the Candidates Chess Tournament but the duo of D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa have done surprisingly well to withstand the early storm as the prestigious event took its first rest day of the ongoing edition.

The Indians were never the favourites in the bigger scheme of things but yet, Gukesh has held his own and so has Praggnanandhaa. However, the same cannot be said about Vidit Gujrathi, who became a favourite after his stunning win over world No.3 Hikaru Nakamura.

With four rounds done out

of 14, there are 10 more games still to play. Things have been going well for the Indians but not in the purest way possible.

Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, who has to play under the FIDE flag due to sanctions against his country, is sitting firmly at the top of the table on three points out of a possible four and he could not have hoped for a better start to his campaign.

With victories against Gujrathi and Firouza Alireza of France and two draws, the Russian got a heads-up to what could possibly be a third attempt to fight for the crown of world champion.

Historically, no one has ever won the candidates three times

in a row.

Nepomniachtchi became the first sole leader in the event following his second victory with white pieces and he is now followed by Fabiano Caruana and Gukesh on 2.5 points apiece.

Praggnanandhaa is not far behind on two points holding the fourth spot while Gujrathi, Abasov, Alireza and Nakamura have an identical 1.5 points each. The youngster has his mother, Nagalakshmi, travelling with him like usual and counts her as a big emotional support.

"It's important to have someone in the room, especially when you lose. I am grateful for her support," he said in an



interaction with FIDE's official website.

If any one had asked Gukesh about his start in the tournament, he would probably have settled for 2.5 out of four but then it is hard to imagine that

he would have envisaged Nepomniachtchi being just ahead of him.

However, the Indian stalwart is close and has shown steely nerves especially when he beat Praggnanandhaa out of a no-

man's land kind of position. His chances depend on whether or not he collapses after a bad day.

One person who gives a knee-jerk reaction to bad result is the 18-year old Praggnanandhaa.

Bouncing back from a bad loss against Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa has earned the respect he deserves at the highest level and his chances will depend on his acumen to deal with any position that arrives on board.

Caruana still remains a feared contender given his history and pedigree. However, one cannot rule out the fact that he has not had a dominating start despite being the hot

favourite and top seed.

Nakamura, who is also an ardent streamer, does not seem as focused as others but still a couple of good games can see him bouncing back in the scheme of things.

For Gujrathi, the road might be tough but as everyone saw in the FIDE Grand Swiss, the Indian has too much fire power and will come back roaring.

Pairings round 5: Firouza Alireza (FRA, 1.5) vs Hikaru Nakamura (USA); D Gukesh (IND) vs Nijat Abasov (AZE); Vidit Gujrathi (IND) vs Fabiano Caruana (USA); R Praggnanandhaa (IND) vs Ian Nepomniachtchi (FIDE). (PTI)

# India eye cohesive effort to keep 5-Test hockey series alive against Australia

**PERTH, April 9:** The Indian men's hockey team would aim for a cohesive effort to avoid a hat-trick of losses when it takes on a formidable Australia in the third Test of the five-match series here on Wednesday.

The Indians were drubbed 1-5 and 2-4 by Australia in the first two matches of the series, which is a part of preparations for this year's Paris Olympics for both the sides.

The tour is of huge significance for India as it will provide valuable inputs about the areas to improve to chief coach Craig Fulton.

And the first two matches have already done that as the Indian defence was put under continuous pressure by quick turnovers by the Kookaburras.

The Indian defence, led by skipper Harmanpreet Singh, did not have the best days in the first two games as it wilted when put under pressure and conceded both penalty corners and soft field goals.

The lack of ideas from the forwards inside the opposition circle is another area the Indians would need to address.

The likes of Mandeep Singh, Abhishek, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Gurjant Singh and Sukhjeet need to make use of the chances they get if they are to outplay a strong side like Australia.

The Indian mid-field, how-



ever, has been decent so far.

Vice-captain Hardik Singh has been the backbone of the mid-field, which combined well with the strikers, to create plenty of opportunities.

India coach Fulton was expected to try different strategies during the tour and he already

started that which was evident in the last two games.

From short and brisk passing hockey using the flanks to counter-attacking moves, all these gameplans were on full display from the Indians in the two games.

The Indians also used long

aerial lobs from the deep to build attacks but failed to breach a resolute Australian defence.

With a world renowned drag-flicker in skipper Harmanpreet, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay and Amit Rohidas in the rank, India boast of a potent force in penalty cor-

ners and all their three goals in the tour came from set pieces.

But Fulton would be expecting more direct strikes from his penalty corner specialists.

The fourth match of the series will be played here on April 12 followed by the final games on April 13. (PTI)

**LAHORE, April 9:** Having reversed their decisions of retiring from international cricket, fast bowler Muhammad Amir and left-arm spinner Imad Wasim were recalled to the 17-member Pakistan squad for the five-match T20I series against New Zealand, starting April 18.

The 10-day series will feature three games in Rawalpindi and two games in Lahore.

Amir, who was convicted for spot-fixing charges and also briefly did jail time in England, had last played international cricket in 2020 before calling it quits to ply his trade in T20 leagues. He retired from international cricket due to his differences with erstwhile coaches Misbah ul Haq and Waqar Younis.

Imad, a spin all rounder had retired from international cricket in November 2023 but took back his retirement after persuasion from the board and selectors after he had a productive Pakistan Super League in which the team won the title.

"I trust that both players will continue their upward trajectory, sparing no effort in proving themselves worthy of the selectors' and captain's trust and confidence," selector Muhammad Yousuf said.

The selection committee comprising Yousuf, Abdul Razaq, Asad Shafiq, Wahab Riaz and Bilal Afzal told media those who have performed consistently have been rewarded.

They also called up uncapped batsmen Usman Khan, Irfan Khan Niazi and spinner Abrar Ahmed.

Wahab defended Amir's selection, who was roundly criticised recently by former Test captain and commentator, Ramiz Raja for his role in the 2010 spot-fixing scandal.

Ramiz had said if he had been in charge and even if his son had done spot-fixing he would never have allowed him back into the team. "I think Ramiz Raja's comments were very negative and you can't say such things about an individual. Even our religion allows a second chance to even someone who has been convicted of a

crime," Wahab said.

Wahab also said Amir was recalled from retirement as he had been bowling very well in leagues and secondly the selectors wanted to manage the workload of all pace bowlers.

"The decision to include Imad and Amir was a straightforward one, given their availability for selection and considering Haris Rauf's injury and Mohammad Nawaz's current form.

"Both Amir and Imad possess undeniable match-winning capabilities, and we trust they will consistently deliver strong performances to bolster the team's objectives," Wahab added.

Yousuf said that in a recent meeting with all the players, the selectors had clearly communicated their selection policy and strategy to all elite players, and there is complete alignment within the group.

Wahab also said that they is no internal politics in the Pakistan camp. The PCB selection committee has no chairman and under a new policy, the captain, Babar Azam in this case and the head coach are also on the committee with data analyst, Bilal Afzal.

Interestingly, Afzal was a former caretaker minister for planning and co-ordination in the cabinet of former caretaker CM of Punjab, Mohsin Naqvi, who now heads the PCB.

There is no known cricket background of the former minister but he was appointed on the selection committee last month.

The team selection was done by majority voting the first time this has happened in Pakistan cricket history as in the past the chief selector had final say.

The New Zealand squad coming for the series is without ten of their first choice selections including Kane Williamson, Tim Southee, Trent Boult, Michael Santner, Glenn Phillips, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Matt Henry, Will Young, Henry Nicholls who are either busy in the Indian Premier League or English county cricket or have taken a break. (PTI)

# Amir, Imad recalled to Pakistan squad for NZ T20I series

# Indian performance satisfactory so far, say GMs Barua and Thipsay

**TORONTO, April 9:** Indian Grandmasters Dibyendu Barua and Pravin Thipsay are quite impressed with how the country's five-strong contingent, led by the prodigal R Praggnanandhaa, has performed so far at the prestigious Candidates Chess Tournament here.

The Candidates tournament has a rest day after four rounds of intensive chess with Ian Nepomniachtchi from Russia leading the standings. India's D Gukesh is a joint second on the table with Praggnanandhaa at fourth along with Vidit Gu-

jrathi.

With 10 rounds still to go, Barua feels that Koneru Humpy can still strike back in the women's competition after succumbing to her first defeat at the hands of lowest seed and youngest participant Nurgul Salimova of Bulgaria.

"Vidit can bounce back and Gukesh can score well. I would not rate Humpy out of equations as yet, she has the acumen and a great will to win, we will know in a few days," Barua, a three-time national champion who was sec-

ond Indian chess player after Viswanathan Anand to become a GM, told PTI.

In women's section, R Vaishali holds the joint third position. Humpy slipped to joint sixth on 1.5 points.

Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay said the Indians are in with a good chance.

"Nakamura is not motivated so that leaves the Indian trio plus Nepo and Fabio Caruana," Thipsay said.

Praggnanandhaa's long-time trainer R B Ramesh said that it's a good beginning for the 18-

year-old.

"I think Pragg did exceptionally well coming out with that loss and I also feel bad that he could have done better against Gukesh," he said.

When asked about his absence from Praggnanandhaa's corner, Ramesh said that it was a conscious decision.

In the Women's event Tan Zhongyi of China has taken the early lead with. A full point behind is R Vaishali, Praggnanandhaa's sister.

Aleksandra Goryachikina might feel threatened as of now

as the rating favourite in the section as she the one trying to compete desperately with Tan.

The women's section may see a lot of turnaround as the matches progress but on everyone's mind is Tan who has steely nerves and the will to win.

Pairings women round 5: R Vaishali (2) vs Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 1.5); Koneru Humpy (1.5) vs Aleksandra Goryachikina (Fid, 2.5); Tingjie Lei (Chn, 1.5) vs Kateryna Lagno (Fid, 2); Zhongyi Tan (Chn, 3) vs Nurgul Salimova (Bul 2). (PTI)

# Injuries are mentally challenging, delighted to be back in competition: Mirabai Chanu

**NEW DELHI, April 9:** She heaved her lowest weight in years at the World Cup recently but Olympic silver-medallist Mirabai Chanu is actually quite chuffed about her performance as she managed it on the back of just one month's training after enduring a challenging injury breakdown.

With only four months to go for the Paris Olympics, Chanu, who was competing in her first tournament since her Asian Games breakdown, finished 12th at the IWF World Cup with a total effort of 184kg (81kg+103kg), a whopping 33kg behind China's Hou Zhihui, who will look to defend her Olympic title.

"I was delighted to be back in competition. Everything is okay now, recovery is good. I'm training at 70 per cent," Chanu told

PTI. After watching her opponents raise the bar by breaking records in the 49kg weight class, Chanu's confidence received a significant boost when she heaved the barbell after just a month of training.

"It felt very good. After the injury (at Asian Games), I lifted weights after 4-5 months and I got a lot of confidence," she said.

"Weightlifting is different, there is always fear as to what will happen. I felt confident that I was able to make a recovery so fast," added Chanu, who is exclusively managed by IOS Sports.

An Asian Games medal is the only one that Chanu, who has a personal best of 88kg in snatch and 119kg in clean and jerk, hasn't been able to get her hands on. She has stood on the podium



at the Olympics, World Championships, Commonwealth Games and the Asian Championships.

In the 2022 edition of the continental showpiece, she not only missed a medal in Hangzhou but also suffered hip tendonitis, with less than a year to go for the Olympics.

What ensued was a dark and challenging period for the 29-year-old as she could only do upper-body exercises and relied on her mother, who travelled to Patiala, for emotional support.

"When we returned from the Asian Games, the doctor said I need to rest. But even after that, it didn't get okay. I used to feel pain while squatting. Injury always leads to mental disturbance. You keep on thinking what will happen in the future? Will I be able to train?"

"I called my family, my mother stayed here with me. That gave me a lot of support. I relaxed my mind and did the exercises that I could in 4-5 months."

Chanu's perseverance paid off and she was able to make a relatively quick recovery.

"I only just started training...hardly one month. Given that, I was able to perform well. But now we know what I have to work on and what needs to be done. Everything is going well and if things continue I will give my best in Paris."

Only wrestler Sushil Kumar and shuttler PV Sindhu have won back-to-back medals in individual sports for India at the Olympics.

"This time 200kg won't fetch a medal. There will be a tough

fight. Plans are in place for a 205kg plus total but execution needs to be perfect.

"The daily training will determine how the total will be in Paris," chief coach Vijay Sharma said.

At the Tokyo Games, a total effort of 202kg was enough for Chanu to fetch the silver. But with competition increasing, Sharma reckons a 205kg plus total is the minimum she will have to lift.

"We need to work really hard for a medal. Because of the injury, we have to go slow. Every training session is important. We don't want to risk anything by going fast."

"The main training is left. 184kg was an easy task. The most important thing is to go from 184kg to 205kg. A lot of things need to be done. (PTI)

