



- China retaliates with 125 per cent tariffs against US imports
- Israel releases Palestinian who took part in attack at 13
- PM takes dig at opposition parties, says they only promote family interests
- 'Scams, kickbacks and favoritism have become order of the day'

## Lot of possibilities to finalise interim trade pact between India-US: Official

**NEW DELHI, April 11:** An interim trade agreement between India and the US could be finalised in the 90-day tariff pause announced by the Trump administration if it is a "win-win" for both sides, an official said on Friday.

The official also said the two countries have already finalised the terms of reference to start negotiations for the pact.

"Lot of possibilities are there to finalise low hanging fruits. Lot of possibilities are there to finalise form and shape of the BTA," the official said, adding everything is possible in 90 days if it is a "win-win" for both sides.

India and the US are engaged in finalising the trade agreement. Both sides have targeted to conclude the first phase by fall (Sep-

tember-October) this year with an aim to more than double the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the current about USD 191 billion.

"The work has started. India is far ahead of other countries in negotiating a trade deal," the government official said, adding India is in continuous engagement with the US.

A lot of negotiations will happen through video conferencing, and there could be some visits.

The US, on April 2, announced an additional 26 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering the US. But on April 9, the Trump administration announced the suspension of these on India for 90 days until July 9 this year. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed on the countries will continue to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



HSLC results declared in only 37 days, CM terms it landmark achievement ● Pass percentage 63.98

## 2 Jorhat, 1 Guwahati students secure positions

**GUWAHATI, April 11:** The Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB), conducting the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examinations for the first time this year, declared its results within just 37 days on Friday with an overall pass percentage of 63.98 per cent.

In previous years, the class 10 state board exams were conducted by the Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA).

In September 2024, the state government formed the Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB) by merging the SEBA and Assam Higher Secondary Education Council.

"In a landmark achievement, ASSEB successfully conducted the HSLC 2025 examination its first ever between 15 February and 3 March 2025, and declared results



within just 37 days on 11 April 2025," Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on X.

This swift and efficient result declaration marks a significant departure from past practices, setting a new benchmark for transparency

and accountability in Assam's school examination system, he said.

The examination and the declaration of results within such a short time is 'a milestone in governance and timeliness' and a 'bold shift to-

wards concept-based evaluation', Sarma said.

A total of 4,22,737 students, including 2,34,985 female and 1,87,752 male candidates appeared for the examinations with the pass percentage being 61.09 and 67.59 respectively.

Altogether 89,041 students secured first division, 1,35,588 second and 45,862 third division.

"This year's exam marked a pedagogical shift as the entire question paper format was redesigned, focusing on knowledge and concept-based assessment -- a break from the rote-learning style seen during SEBA days. Despite this major academic reform, the overall pass percentage was 63.98 per cent, a testament to the adaptability and potential of Assam's students and teachers under the new (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## KA, West Karbi Anglong see dip in HSLC pass rates

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, April 11:** Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong have recorded passing percentages of 66.80% and 61.13%, respectively, in the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examination results announced by SEBA on Friday.

Last year, both districts showed an upward trend in their HSLC results. Karbi Anglong recorded a pass percentage of 81.06% and stood in 8th position, while West Karbi Anglong registered 78.2% and ranked 18th.

This year, a total of 10,658 candidates appeared from Karbi Anglong. Of them, 1,233 secured first division, 3,896 second division, and 1,771 third division. The total number of students who passed was 7,120. Similarly, in West Karbi (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Public holiday for panchayat polls on May 2, May 7

**GUWAHATI, April 11:** The Assam government has declared a public holiday in the districts where panchayat polls will be held in two phases on May 2 and May 7.

All government and non-government offices, educational institutions and business establishments, including banks, tea gardens and others situated in the panchayat election area where polling will be held on these days will remain closed, under the Negotiable Instruments (NI) Act, according to a notification issued on Friday. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## NIA takes Rana into 18-day custody

**NEW DELHI, April 11:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday took Mumbai attacks mastermind Tahawwur Hussain Rana into 18-day custody, during which he will be questioned in detail to unravel the complete conspiracy behind the deadly 26/11 terror strike.

The anti-terror agency had produced Rana before the NIA Special Court at Patiala House after formally placing him under arrest on his arrival at Indira Gandhi Inter-

national (IGI) airport here on Thursday evening, following his successful extradition from the US.

The court on Friday sent Rana to 18-day NIA custody, following which he was brought from Patiala House courts complex to the NIA headquarters in a heavily-secured motorcade comprising Delhi Police's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) and other security personnel.

Rana will be kept in a highly secured cell inside the anti-terror

agency's head office at CGO complex here, officials said.

"Rana will remain in NIA custody for 18 days, during which time the agency will question him in detail in order to unravel the complete conspiracy behind the deadly 2008 attacks, in which a total of 166 persons were killed and over 238 injured," said a statement issued by the probe agency soon after the court's order. In a day of fast-paced developments linked (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Mamata gets contempt notice over remarks on SC verdict

**KOLKATA, April 11:** A lawyer representing an NGO on Friday said he has sent a contempt notice to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, alleging that she made wilful attack of the Supreme Court judgment annulling the appointment of over 25,000 school jobs in the state.

The notice claimed that during a programme in Kolkata on April 7, Banerjee made certain statements that "presented a direct challenge to the majesty of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India".

Supreme Court lawyer Siddharth Dutta said he is representing NGO "Aatmadeep", based in Nabanagar in Bengal's North 24 Parganas district.

A copy of the notice was made available to PTI by

the lawyer.

The contempt notice also claimed that Banerjee's statements were an "affront" of the apex court's April 3 judgment invalidating the appointment of over 25,000 teaching and non-teaching staff at West Bengal government-run and aided schools.

"You are called upon not to make any statement, in public or otherwise, having the effect of creating an impression or hope in the mind of anyone that the judgment and directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court dated April 3, 2025, shall not be implemented," the notice said. It also sought an unconditional apology to the Supreme Court for the statements made by her on April 7. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



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## Sensex, Nifty surge nearly 2 pc as US suspends additional 26 pc tariffs on India till July 9

MUMBAI, April 11: Benchmark Sensex surged by 1,310 points while Nifty closed above 22,900 level on Friday on gains in banking, oil and metal shares as investors rejoiced the 90-day suspension of additional import duties by the US.

Defying a bearish trend in world markets, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,310.11 points or 1.77 per cent to settle at 75,157.26. During the day, it soared 1,620.18 points or 2.19 per cent to 75,467.33.

The NSE Nifty surged 429.40 points or 1.92 per cent to 22,828.55. In intra-day trade, the benchmark rallied 524.75 points or 2.34 per cent to 22,923.90.

The US announced suspension of additional tariffs on India for 90 days until July 9 this year, according to the White House executive orders. On April 2, US President Donald Trump slapped universal duties on about 60 countries exporting goods to America and additional steep levies on countries like India, potentially impacting sales of products from shrimp to steel in the world's biggest economy.

Tata Steel was the lead gainer among Sensex shares, rising by 4.91 per cent after the company announced a transformation plan, including job cuts, for its Netherlands steel plant to improve



efficiency and margins.

HDFC Bank rose by 2.33 per cent, emerging as the biggest contributor to the Sensex's rise. Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, NTPC and Adani Ports were among the gainers.

IT behemoth TCS dropped 0.43 per cent after the company reported a 1.7 per cent decline in the March quarter net profit due to lower margins. Asian Paints declined 0.76 per cent.

"An unexpected pause on reciprocal tariffs by the US provided relief in the midst of the uncertainty. Though the IT major's (TCS) result missed the street estimates, it opines optimism in the latter half of FY26 owing to growth in the

order book," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 3.04 per cent and midcap index rallied 1.84 per cent.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher. Commodities surged the most by 3.40 per cent, followed by consumer durables (2.92 per cent), utilities (2.76 per cent), power (2.64 per cent), energy (2.51 per cent), industrials (2.34 per cent) and consumer discretionary (2.25 per cent).

As many as 3,115 stocks advanced while 846 declined and 118 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Equity markets would remain closed on Monday for Dr. Baba

Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti.

World markets largely slumped amid growing concerns due to a tit-for-tat tariff war between China and the US.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index and South Korea's Kospi settled lower while Shanghai SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended higher. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index dropped nearly 3 per cent. European markets were trading lower.

US markets ended significantly lower on Thursday a day after a sharp rally. The Nasdaq composite tanked 4.31 per cent, S&P 500 slumped 3.46 per cent and Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 2.50 per cent.

China on Friday raised its additional tariffs on imports from the US to 125 per cent in retaliation to the Trump administration's 145 per cent levies on Chinese exports.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 4,358.02 crore on Wednesday.

Indian stock markets were closed on Thursday for Shri Mahavir Jayanti.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.32 per cent to USD 63.53 a barrel.

On Wednesday, the BSE benchmark dropped 379.93 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 73,847.15. The Nifty declined 136.70 points or 0.61 per cent to 22,399.15. (PTI)

## Classmate All Rounder champions holistic learning



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: ITC's Classmate, India's leading notebook and stationery brand, concluded the third edition of its flagship "Classmate All Rounder (CAR)" programme with a vibrant national finale on Friday, in New Delhi.

Sixty exceptional students from across the country competed in the final round after emerging successful from earlier stages.

Two winning teams—one each from the junior (Classes 6-8) and senior (Classes 9-12) categories—claimed the Classmate All Rounder 2024 title, receiving ₹1 lakh each and the winner's trophy.

According to an official statement, the programme was created to help students discover and celebrate their all-round potential.

Participants were evaluated across diverse skills, including critical thinking, cultural awareness, sustainability, sports, ethics, creativity, and communication—promoting a well-rounded approach to learning aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

This year's edition saw 2.1 lakh students from 700 schools across 14 cities take part.

The finale was graced by CISCE Chairperson Dr Joseph Emmanuel as Chief Guest, with Apurva Chamaria and Manoj Mittal serving as judges.

Vikas Gupta, Chief Executive of ITC's Education and Stationery Products Division, congratulated the winners and reaffirmed Classmate's commitment to fostering all-round growth and a lifelong love for learning.

Dr Emmanuel praised the initiative as a strong example of NEP 2020 in action, highlighting its role in nurturing balanced development in students.

The competition's final round tested students through team presentations, quizzes, and real-world Q&A challenges, all designed by experts from NCERT, SCERT, NEP, and NCF to ensure academic depth.

Classmate continues to support innovative learning through tools like AR-based notebooks, logic-building eduGAMES, and the 'myClassmate' app—making education more immersive, engaging, and enjoyable.

## KFC India and CarryMinati launch limited-edition saucy popcorn

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: In a first-of-its-kind collaboration, KFC India has partnered with Gen Z icon and YouTube star CarryMinati (Ajay Nagar) to co-create a brand-new menu item: the KFC X CarryMinati Saucy Popcorn.

This bold new launch brings together KFC's signature Chicken Popcorn and CarryMinati's trademark energy and flavour in a snack designed for the digital generation.

According to an official statement, this collaboration goes beyond branding.

CarryMinati has actively contributed to the creation of the Saucy Popcorn, infusing the product with his personality and preferences.

The Chicken Popcorn is tossed in a spicy and tangy Nashville sauce—bringing a punch of flavour that reflects Carry's bold online persona.

The limited-edition snack is served in exclusive packaging featuring CarryMinati himself, marking the first time a celebrity has appeared on KFC's packaging in India.

Adding a fun and functional twist, the Saucy Popcorn also includes a spork—CarryMinati's idea—perfect for gamers and multitaskers who prefer snacking without the mess.

Priced from ₹199, the KFC X CarryMinati Saucy Popcorn is available for a limited time starting from Friday at over 1200 KFC restaurants across India.

Fans can grab it in-store, via takeaway, on the KFC app and website (<https://online.kfc.co.in/>), or through leading food delivery platforms.

This limited-time offering celebrates creativity, internet culture, and bold flavours—bringing together the worlds of food and digital entertainment like never before.



## Asian shares sink, with Japan's Nikkei down 5.6% as China-US trade war escalates

BANGKOK, April 11: Asian shares sank Friday after US stocks reversed much of their historic gains from the day before.

The deepening worries over President Donald Trump's trade war initially helped pull Japan's Nikkei 225 share index down 5.6%.

By mid-morning in Tokyo, it was down 4.7% at 32,969.95.

The yen surged against the US dollar, which also lost value against the euro.

One dollar bought 143.48 Japanese yen, down from about 146 yen a day earlier. The euro rose to \$1.1305 from \$1.1195.

South Korea's Kospi fell 1.6% to 2,400.34, while in Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 shed 2.1% to 7,552.10.

On Thursday, the S&P 500 tumbled 3.5%, slicing into Wednesday's surge of 9.5% following Trump's decision to pause many of his tariffs worldwide. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 1,014 points, or 2.5%, and the Nasdaq composite tumbled 4.3%.

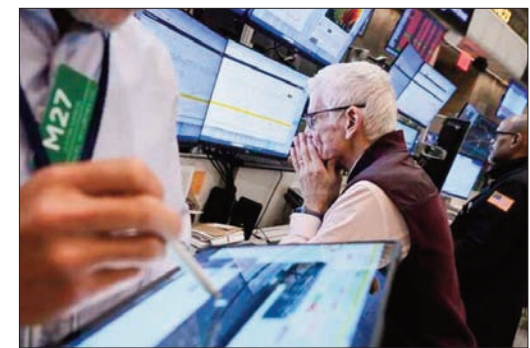
But China announced more countermeasures against the United States and losses for US stocks accelerated after the White House clarified that the United States will tax Chinese imports at 145%, not the 125% rate that Trump had written about in his posting on Truth Social Wednesday, once other previously announced tariffs were included. The drop for the S&P 500 exceeded 6% at one point.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 188.85 points Thursday to 5,268.05. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 1,014.79 to 39,593.66, and the Nasdaq composite sank 737.66 to 16,387.31.

"Trump blinks," UBS strategist Bhanu Baweja wrote in a report about the president's decision on tariffs, "but the damage isn't all undone."

China, meanwhile, has been seeking to join forces with other countries in apparent hopes of forming a united front against Trump. The world's second-largest economy is also ramping up its own countermeasures to Trump's tariffs.

The stock price of Warner Bros Discovery, the com-



pany behind "A Minecraft Movie," dropped 12.5% for one of Wall Street's sharpest losses after China said Thursday it will "appropriately reduce the number of imported US films." The Walt Disney Co's stock sank 6.8%.

A spokesperson for the China Film Administration said it is "inevitable" that Chinese audiences would find American films less palatable given the "wrong move by the US to wantonly implement tariffs on China."

That was after Trump and his Treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, sent a clear message to other countries Wednesday after announcing their pause on tariffs for most countries: "Do not retaliate, and you will be rewarded."

The European Union said Thursday it will put its trade retaliation measures on hold for 90 days and leave room for a negotiated solution.

Thursday's swings also hit the bond market, which has historically played the role of enforcer against politicians and economic policies it deemed imprudent. It helped topple the United Kingdom's Liz Truss in 2022, for example, whose 49 days made her Britain's shortest-serving prime minister.

Earlier this week, big jumps for US Treasury yields had rattled the market, so much that Trump said Wednesday he had been watching how investors were "getting a little queasy". (AP)

Contd. from Page 1...

## 2 Jorhat, 1 Guwahati students

system," the chief minister said. The results are also a reflection of social inclusion with empowered marginalised communities excelling, he said. Students from Scheduled Tribes (Plains), with a 71.32 per cent pass percentage, outperformed general category students at 63.45 per cent by a significant margin.

"This reflects the positive outcomes of focused educational support and the increasing academic confidence among tribal communities", Sarma said.

Scheduled Tribe (Hills) students with 65.86 pass per cent also outperformed the general category and this is 'noteworthy considering the historical challenges faced in hill districts with accessibility, resources, and infrastructure,' the CM said.

The pass per cent of More Other Backward Classes (MOBC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) is 70.78 per cent and 69.64 per cent respectively and these 'figures suggest that targeted state welfare measures, scholarship schemes, and academic support structures are yielding measurable success'.

"Traditionally among the most educationally disadvantaged, Tea Tribe students achieved a pass rate of 51.89 per cent, crossing the crucial 50 per cent threshold for the first time. This is a significant social milestone and reflects rising aspirations and outreach efforts in tea garden region", Sarma said.

Amishi Saikia and Anirban Borgohain of Jorhat's Pragya Academy Senior Secondary School secured the first and third positions with 98.5 and 98.17 per cent marks, while Saptarswa Bordoloi of Guwahati's Assam Jatiya Bidyalay scored 98.33 per cent.

The 2025 HSLC results under the newly established ASSEB not only delivered administrative efficiency and academic reform but also marked a resounding success in inclusion and equity, the CM said.

"The performance of ST, OBC, and Tea Tribe students is an indicator of rising social mobility. The shift to conceptual and analytical learning represents Assam's ambition to align its education system with national standards and 21st-century learning goals", Sarma said. "This is more than an exam result, it is a renewed vision for educational empowerment and social justice in Assam", he added. (PTI)

## Lot of possibilities to finalise

remain in place. From 2021-22 to 2023-24, the US was India's largest trading partner. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade.

With America, India had a trade surplus (the difference between imports and exports) of USD 35.32 billion in goods in 2023-24. This was USD 27.7 billion in 2022-23, USD 32.85 billion in 2021-22, USD 22.73 billion in 2020-21, and USD 17.26 billion in 2019-20.

In 2024, India's main exports to the US included drug formulations and biologicals (USD 8.1 billion), telecom instruments (USD 6.5 billion), precious and semi-precious stones (USD 5.3 billion), petroleum products (USD 4.1 billion), gold and other precious metal jewellery (USD 3.2 billion), ready-made garments of cotton, including accessories (USD 2.8 billion), and products of iron and steel (USD 2.7 billion).

Imports included crude oil (USD 4.5 billion), petroleum products (USD 3.6 billion), coal, coke (USD 3.4 billion), cut and polished diamonds (USD 2.6 billion), electric machinery (USD 1.4 billion), aircraft, spacecraft and parts (USD 1.3 billion), and gold (USD 1.3 billion). (PTI)

## KA, West Karbi Anglong

Anglong, 5,366 candidates appeared for the examination. Among them, 792 secured first division, 1,486 second division, and 809 third division, with a total of 3,280 passing.

Meanwhile, the neighbouring hill district of Dima Hasao recorded a pass percentage of 76.64% this year, securing 8th position.

Congratulating the successful candidates, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, said in a social media post: "Heartiest congratulations to each and every student who has successfully passed the 2025 Matriculation Examinations. Wishing you all the best for your future endeavours. Keep shining!"

## NIA takes Rana into 18-day

with the extradition of Rana, the NIA took his custody on the orders of the special court in New Delhi, it said. NIA had secured Rana's extradition from the US following years of sustained efforts, and after the terror mastermind's last-ditch efforts to get a stay on his extradition from the US failed.

Rana was brought to New Delhi Thursday evening, escorted by teams of NSG and NIA, comprising senior officials, on a special plane from Los Angeles. The extradition finally came through after Rana's various litigations and appeals, including an emergency application before the US Supreme Court, were rejected.

With the coordinated efforts of India's Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs, along with the relevant authorities in the United States, the surrender warrant for the wanted terrorist was eventually secured and the extradition was carried out, the statement said. (PTI)

## Mamata gets contempt notice

Dutta, in the notice, said in the event of failure to comply, his client will "seek appropriate legal recourse" against the chief minister. He said the notice was sent to Banerjee through email on Thursday and by postal service on Friday to both her residential address and her office at Nabanna, the state's administrative headquarters. The notice said that everyone concerned is duty-bound to comply with and implement the judgement passed by the Supreme Court.

The top court had on April 3 upheld a 2024 Calcutta High Court judgment annulling the recruitment of 25,753 teaching and non-teaching staff appointed through the 2016 School Service Commission (SSC) recruitment drive, terming the entire selection process "vitiated and tainted".

Banerjee had on April 7 pledged to protect the rights of "eligible candidates" who lost their jobs after the verdict. She had said the state administration would first seek clarification from the Supreme Court, and if needed, file a review petition to ensure the interests of eligible candidates are safeguarded.

Banerjee also announced the formation of a legal team comprising Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Kapil Sibal, Rakesh Dwivedi, Kalyan Banerjee and Prashant Bhushan, who would represent the state and the affected candidates in court. "We will explore all legal avenues, including seeking clarification and modification of the judgment. We are ready with plans A, B, C, D, and E," the CM had asserted. (PTI)

## Public holiday for panchayat polls

In the first phase of polling on May 2, there will be a holiday in the 14 districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Charaideo, Sivasagar, Majuli, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Biswanath, Cachar, Hailakandi and Sribhumi. On May 7 in the second phase, there will be a public holiday in the 13 districts of Dhubri, South Salmara, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Bajali, Nalbari, Kamrup, Kamrup (Metro), Hojai, Nagaon, Morigaon and Darrang, it said. Panchayat polls will be held in 27 of the 34 districts, while seven districts of the state are under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution where autonomous council polls are conducted.

A total electorate of 1,80,36,682, comprising 90,71,264 males, 89,65,010 females and 408 others, are eligible to exercise their franchise in 25,007 polling stations.

The total seats include 21,920 gram panchayat (GP) members with 10,883 seats for women, 2,192 GP presidents, including 1,097 reserved for women, 2,192 GP vice-presidents, 2,192 anchalik parishad (AP) members, 181 AP presidents, 181 AP vice-presidents and 397 zilla parishad members, officials said. (PTI)

## Tesla launches in Saudi Arabia with its first showroom, service centre in Riyadh

RIYADH, April 11: Tesla officially launched in Saudi Arabia on Thursday, marking a new chapter in the company's global expansion after Elon Musk's troubled relationship with the kingdom — but the Middle East country's extreme heat could pose a challenge for its electric vehicle performance and battery efficiency.

Musk and Saudi Arabia have had a complicated history. Back in 2018, the Tesla CEO claimed he had secured funding from the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund to take the company private. That deal never happened, leading to lingering tensions.

With the launch of its first showroom and service centre in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, Tesla makes its long-anticipated entry into the Saudi market. The facility will offer models, including Model 3, Model Y and the Cybertruck, and pop-up stores are also opening in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam.

The Riyadh event drew a large and diverse crowd — from content creators and car enthusiasts to visitors excited about Tesla's launch.

"It's a beautiful step we've been waiting for — to finally see Tesla open in Saudi Arabia," said Bader Khalid, a local businessman. "The country is clearly moving toward electric vehicles."

"Tesla is one of the most important EV companies in the world, so it's a big deal to have them present in our market," he added.

However, the kingdom still faces significant challenges in infrastructure, with a limited number of public EV charging stations available. The government has announced plans to expand charging networks as part of its sustainability goals.

Musk has a large fan base in the kingdom, praised by many for his creativity and innovation, and seen as a visionary of the future.



"He's always looking ahead," said Mohammed Osama, a teenager who describes himself as enthusiastic about everything Tesla. "Maybe a few things don't make sense right now, but in the future, it'll all come together — he's building something bigger."

Many attendees expected Musk to make an appearance, at least via video, but he didn't show.

Though Tesla has faced criticism and even vandalism in parts of the United States and elsewhere, after Musk took a prominent role in President Donald Trump's administration.

People have protested Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, which has been moving to slash the size of the federal government through large-scale layoffs, contract cancellations and other moves.

Still, many in Saudi Arabia believe that won't impact Tesla's performance in the kingdom.

"Political events outside of Saudi Arabia don't concern us," said Khalid. "So I don't think this thing has any effect."

Lucid Motors, another luxury electric vehicle manufacturer, headquartered in California, has had a deepening relationship with Saudi Arabia.

The kingdom's Public Investment Fund is one of Lucid's largest backers, owning a majority stake in the company. In 2022, Lucid announced plans to build its first international manufacturing plant in the city of Jeddah, a major step in the kingdom's push to become a hub for advanced automotive technology.

The growing interest in electric vehicles aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 — an ambitious plan to diversify the economy and reduce its dependence on oil. EVs are a key part of the strategy, with the government aiming for 30% of all vehicles in Riyadh to be electric by 2030. (AP)

# Sivasagar secures top position in HSLC results 2025

## Jonak Jilmil Baruah secures state highest marks in Geography

**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, April 11:** Sivasagar secured the top position with 85.55 pass per cent in the HSLC Results 2025 declared on Friday among the 33 districts.

Dibrugarh followed with 81.10 p.c. and Dhemaji with 80.64 secured the third position. A total of 8371 candidates appeared from the district, 2918 of them got first division, 3093 second division, 790 were placed in the third division.

The 150 government schools in the district faced a stiff challenge from mushrooming of the private schools as long as HSLC results are concerned.

New Look Academy continue to achieve cent percent first division results for the last 11 years and this year as well 42 of them got first division (19 D, 15 St) with three students Jonak Jilmil Baruah securing state highest marks in Geography, while Anchit Saikia, Abhigyan Dihinia and Anurag Baruah in Advanced Maths.

A total of 119 candidates appeared from Fuleswari Girls HS, and 45 of them got first division, 71 second and 2 third division. In Government HS School, 129 candidates were successful with 80 getting 1st division (5D, 16 St), 26 second and 2 third division out of a total candidates 132. Sundarnal School achieved 100 p.c. results with 60 candidates all passing out in 1st division. From TRB Senior Secondary School, all 42 candidates got

1st division (7D, 21 St). From Dimuwal Bidya Bhawan, 40 candidates out of 46 got 1st division and 6 got 2nd division. From Adarsha Vidya Bhawan, 16 got 1st division (6D, 1 St) and 6 2nd division.

From Sivasagar Jatiya Vidyalaya, 19 out of 21 were successful with 10 of them got 1st divisions.

A total of 21,758 students appeared HSLC Examination 2025 from Nagaon district among which 15,643 students cleared the examination.

Among the successful students, 5255 students bagged 1st division, 8046 students secured 2nd division while 2048 students achieved 3rd division in the district. The pass percentage of the district is 71.90 per cent.

On the other hand, Ajmal Modern Residential School (AMRS), Hojai, a unit of Ajmal Super 40 emerges out with a remarkable per-

formance in the HSLC Examination 2024-25. A total of 186 students appeared in the HSLC 2024-25 and all of them achieved 1st Division with 113 distinctions and 179 stars.

Mustafizur Ahmed has achieved 96.6% and becomes the batch topper. In the subjects General Mathematics and Advance Mathematics 29 and 20 students have secured cent percent marks respectively and emerges out as the state subject toppers.

The Trustees of Ajmal Foundation Maulana Badruddin Ajmal, former MP Dhubri and Mr. Sirajuddin Ajmal, MLA Binnakandi along with Dr Khasrul Islam, Director, Ajmal Foundation; Dr MRH Azad, General Manager, Ajmal Foundation and Abdul Kadir, General Manager, Ajmal Edu-care India Pvt Ltd

extended their cordial greetings and best wishes to all the successful students, parents, teachers, staff and the Principals of Ajmal Modern Residential School.

In Morigaon the leading non govt school

Charabahi re-excelled with 100 percent for the 17th year. Altogether 113 students from Charabahi Niketan sat for the High School Leaving Certificate Examination announced on Friday. 12 students passed with Distinction, 33 students with Star marks, 62 students with First Division and 6 students with Second Division with 100% results. According to the results, 42 students got letter marks in Assamese, 20 in English, 38 in Social Science, 36 in General Mathematics, 46 in General Science, 24 in Higher Mathematics, 9 in Sanskrit, 5 in Yoga and 12 in Hindi.

The Niketan was established in 1998 and has achieved 100% pass rate since 2009. The Niketan has achieved 100% pass rate since. Besides total 25 students from Bhumraguri Secondary School, Charabahi, a tribes dominated area where 12 students passed in first division and 13 students passed in second division with 100% results. According to the results of the school, 18 students got letter marks in Sanskrit, 3 in Assamese and 3 in Science.

Sonitpur secured pass percentage of 60.78 in the results of the HSLC (Class 10) examination declared on Friday by the Assam State School Education Board. This year, a total of 13401 numbers of candidates appeared for the examination from the district where 2374 students secured first division, 4023 students secured second division and 1475 students secured third division marks.



Jonak Jilmil Baruah secured state highest marks in Geography.

# Differently abled persons to take part in Bwisagu/Bihu celebrations in BTC



**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, April 11:** In a significant move towards increasing inclusivity, the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) has proposed the active participation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in all cultural events during the upcoming Bwisagu/Bihu celebrations.

As part of this initiative, at least one PwD will be encouraged and facilitated to partici-

pate in cultural programmes across various levels—community/village, block, and district. The step aims to ensure that festive platforms reflect the diverse social fabric of the region.

The initiative will be implemented in collaboration with the Hans Foundation's Mobile Therapy Van Projects, currently operational in the districts of Baksa, Udalguri, Chirang, and Kokrajhar. Organizing committees and relevant authorities have been advised to extend full support to ensure accessibility, mobility, and logistical needs for effective inclusion.

# Biswanath Police cracks down on Illegal Ganja Sale, one apprehended

**HT Correspondent**  
**BISWANATH CHARALI, April 11:** Acting on reliable information regarding the illegal sale of ganja near Goshala on the bank of the Buroi River, a swift operation was carried out by the Biswanath Police on Friday.

During the operation, one Umesh Payang (62) Son of Late Ataram Payang, R/O Bihumari Bongaon, PS-Behali under Biswanath district was apprehended, stated a press release.

A total of 1.065 kg of ganja was recovered from his possession. In this regard, Helem PS Case No. 29/25 has been registered under Section 20(b)(ii)(B) of the NDPS Act, read with Section 4 of the Assam Ganja and Bhang Prohibition Act, 1953. Biswanath Police remains committed to its fight against the menace of drugs.

Police investigation is on.

# Nominations papers filed in Morigaon

**HT Correspondent**  
**MORIGAON, April 11:** A total of 1,008 nomination papers have been filed at Gaon Panchayat level, 59 at Anchalik Panchayat level and 10 at Zila Parishad constituency level till Thursday in the second phase of panchayat elections in Morigaon district. At the gram panchayat level, 149 nominations were accepted on April 9 and 853 yesterday. The nominations will be examined on April 12 and the list of valid candidates will be announced tomorrow. Candidates can withdraw their nominations till 3 pm. The final list of candidates will be released after 3 pm. Morigaon district has 12 Zila Parishad constituencies, 5 Anchalik Panchayats, 84 Gaon Panchayats and 840 wards.

# Bus services from Diphu, Umlapher to Guwahati flagged off

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, April 11:** The Deputy Chairman of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Avijit Kro, on Friday flagged off bus (Cruiser) services from Umlapher to Guwahati and Diphu to Guwahati here at KAAC's workshop, in the presence of KAAC Executive Member, Transport, Bilimohon Khaklary, and Secretary in-charge of Transport, Ibon Teron.

# 'My Boss is Rakibul': Dhubri Congress district president remark triggers political storm



**HT Correspondent**  
**DHUBRI, April 11:** Nripendra Thakuria, Vice President of the APCC and in-charge of the Election Disciplinary Committee for Dhubri, warned that all nomination papers submitted by Congress candidates under Zaman's leadership could be invalidated. Thakuria stated that APCC President Bhupen Bora is set to write to the district commissioner, requesting cancellation of all

tickets issued by the Dhubri DCC. The power tussle between Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) President Bhupen Bora and MP Rakibul Hussain has taken a sharp turn in Dhubri, with District Congress Committee (DCC) President Abedur Zaman openly siding with Hussain. In defiance of the APCC leadership, Zaman allegedly rejected the official list of party candidates and distributed nomina-

tions without the mandated consultation with the selection committee.

Allegations against Zaman are grave. He is accused of selling party tickets for money and bypassing the party's constitutional process. The situation escalated when a recorded phone conversation surfaced in which Zaman reportedly made derogatory remarks against APCC President Bhupen Bora and AICC General Secretary Jitendra Singh, stating, "Who are Bhupen Bora and Jitendra Singh? My boss is MP Rakibul Hussain. I walk according to Rakibul Hussain."

The infighting has triggered a full-blown political crisis within the Congress party in Dhubri, highlighting a growing divide between loyalists of Bhupen Bora and Rakibul Hussain. While the party high command has yet to release an official statement, insiders say disciplinary action against Zaman is likely.

"The actions of Abedur Zaman are in clear violation of party discipline. Tickets issued without the approval of the APCC will not be recognized. We will take necessary steps to cancel them," added Thakuria. As tensions rise, the Dhubri episode has become a flashpoint in Assam's pre-election politics, putting the Congress's internal unity to the test.

Fresh tickets are expected to be distributed during the nomination scrutiny stage. "In light of the situation, many Congress aspirants have been advised to file their nominations as independents until the crisis is resolved," said Thakuria.

# Project implementation meeting held in West KA

**HT Correspondent**  
**HAMREN, April 11:** The 8th Project Implementation & Monitoring Committee (PIMC) meeting for various developmental projects supported by NABARD, Assam Regional Office, and implemented by Amri Helping Hands Society (AHHS) was held at the office of the Block Development Officer (BDO), Ulukunchi, West Karbi Anglong on April 9.

The meeting was chaired by BDO Sanju Teron Langneh and attended by Kamkhogin Vaiphei, District Development Manager (DDM), NABARD, the Branch Manager of Assam Gramin Vikash Bank (AGVB), Ulukunchi Branch, officials from the Handloom & Textile Department, and representatives from AHHS.

During the session, a detailed review of ongoing projects was conducted, including the Livelihood & Enterprise Development Program (LEDP) focused on weavers' skill upgradation. AGVB was presented with a detailed project report (DPR) for setting up individual jacquard weaving units for further processing and approval, aiming to benefit local weavers. After the DPR is approved, individuals will be given loans by AGVB.

AHHS also showcased progress in several other initiatives, including the Model Millet Project and the Micro Enterprise Development Program (MEDP) on improved methods of pig farming. Additionally, proposals for new developmental projects were presented for consideration.

BDO Sanju Teron Langneh noted the diverse developmental efforts within the block and assured the administration of its full support in implementing these initiatives successfully.

# Jorhat shines with two out of three HSLC rank holders



**HT Correspondent**  
**JORHAT, April 11:** Amishi Saikia and Anirban Borgohain of Pragma Academy Senior Secondary School, Jorhat, brought laurels to the district by securing the first and the third positions, respectively in HSLC examination this year, the results of which were announced on Friday. This time only the top three positions were declared.

Amishi with 591 marks (98.50 per cent) and Anirban with 589 (98.17 percentage) were among the top three. Amishi secured 100 marks in Assamese and also in General Mathematics, 99 in Advanced Mathematics, 97 in English and also in General Science, 98 in Social Science.

Anirban secured 100 marks in General Mathematics and also in Advanced Mathematics, 99 in Assamese, 97 in English, 98 in Social Science, 95 in General Science.

With two of the three toppers passing out from Pragma Academy, the school was bursting with joy and merriment. The students and teachers celebrated the feat achieved by the duo who were given a rousing welcome when they came to the institute. Both were felicitated with phulam gamosas by the teachers.

Speaking to newsmen at the school campus, an elated Amishi said that her hardwork, dedication and regular studying had paid off. She said that though she did not expect a berth amongst the top three she was expecting a good result. Thanking her teachers and parents for their strong support in pursuing her studies, Amishi said that she would go for science stream in the higher secondary level at the same school.

Replying to a query, she said that she has not yet decided about choosing a career, but she wanted to become a "good and responsible citizen in the society". Amishi is a Visharad degree holder and likes singing in her leisure time. Her parents who are both doctors - Manash Jyoti Saikia and Ritu Saikia - also joined her in the celebration at the school.

A jubilant Anirban while thanking his teachers and his parents for their steadfast support to be in the top three slots, said that he too would pursue his higher secondary studies in the same school. He added that he would like to be a doctor like his father, Dr Amarjit Borgohain, a faculty of Tinsukia Medical College and Hospital.

Replying to a query, Anirban said that in his leisure time he likes playing the guitar, listening to songs and watching football. His mother Rashika Gogoi was with him at the school.

# Bongaigaon Refinery donates Advanced Diagnostic Equipment to Chirang

**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, April 11:** In a significant step towards combating Tuberculosis (TB) in Chirang district, Bongaigaon Refinery inaugurated state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment at JSB Civil Hospital, Kajalgaon, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative on Friday.

The event, chaired by Jatin Bora, District Commissioner of Chirang, marked a major milestone in enhancing the district's public health infrastructure to check and control the TB related cases.

As part of the initiative, Bongaigaon Refinery has provided two ultra-portable, high-tech X-ray machines to enable early TB detection in remote and underserved areas. Additionally, two CBNAAT machines, crucial for identifying Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB), were handed



Earlier, the refinery had also contributed three TRUNAT machines over to strengthen diagnostic capabilities.

under the same CSR program, further reinforcing the district's capacity to detect and manage TB cases efficiently.

Speaking at the event, Dr Rajesh Pandey, District TB Officer, highlighted the vital role of public-private partnerships in healthcare and reaffirmed Bongaigaon Refinery's continued support for the region's health needs.

The ceremony was attended by dignitaries including Nayan Kumar Barua, Executive Director, Bongaigaon Refinery; Dr Rejaul Karim, Joint Director of Health Services, Chirang; and Dr Raju Kumar Das, District Nodal Officer, along with senior officials from Bongaigaon Refinery and NHM Chirang.

The initiative initiated by the Bongaigaon Refinery towards the combating of the TB in the district.

No. SEKI/NIT-19/2024-25/1101 Date: -09/04/2025

**SHORT TENDER NOTICE**

Sealed tender in prescribed format Eventually to be drawn in APWD "F2" Form affixing nonrefundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only are here by invited from the eligible registered contractors of Irrigation Department of Assam for the following works under Udalguri Mazbat Division, (Irrigation), Udalguri, BTC, Assam and will be received up to 1.00 PM on 02/05/2025 in the office of the undersigned which will be opened on the same date and place at 2.00 PM in presence of the intending tenderers or their authorized agents which may like to be present.

However, in the event of closure of opening / receiving of tender due to some unavoidable reason the next office working day will be considered for the purpose

**Name of the works:** - Construction of Toe Wall & Desiltation of Phuluguri FIS under SDMF for the year 2023-24.

**Approx value:** - Rs. 28,42,487.00 Only in 2 (Two) no's groups as per group allocation.

**Time of Completion:** 30 days from the date of issue of work order

**Earnest money:** 2% of tendered value (1% in case of ST/SC/OBC/UGE)

Detail tender papers with terms and conditions may be obtained in request from the office of the undersigned on payment of Rs.200.00 (Rupees Two hundred) only in the form of IPO/ Demand draft duly pledge to the Superintending Engineer, Kokrajhar Circle (Irrigation), Kokrajhar from 12-00 noon on 11/04/2025

Sd/-Superintending Engineer  
Kokrajhar Circle (Irrigation),  
Kokrajhar, BTC

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

All change is not growth, as all movement is not forward  
- Ellen Glasgow

## Merz at helm of affairs

The German conservatives under the leadership of Friedrich Merz finally clinched a deal with the ruling Social Democrats (SPD) for forming a coalition which will run Europe's largest economy for the next four years amidst new global scenario following Donald Trump taking over as the U.S. President for the second time. The deal concluded on Wednesday was preceded by weeks of bargaining by the two traditional parties of governance in Germany. The agreement was signed after both sides agreed for a flexible approach diluting some of the demands made earlier. The national elections were held on February 23 this year giving the conservative CDU/CSU 208 seats in the 630 member Parliament as the leading party but much below the majority mark of 316. The SPD got 121 seats, while the Greens got 85 seats. Already Herz concluded a deal with the Greens on March 14, now with the latest deal with the SPD, the three party coalition will have total voting strength of 414 out of 630- a highly comfortable position for a coalition government in such trying times. The two other parties include the far right AFD with 151 seats and the Leftwing De Linke with 64 seats. The 69-year-old said the coalition pact provided a "strong and clear signal" both to its own citizens and other European countries, adding, "Germany is getting a government that is capable of action and strong."

The deal stressed the importance of Germany's relations with the United States, its largest trading partner, and aims for a free trade deal in the medium term. But Merz also emphasised that the European Union needed a common response to the escalating global tariff war that has put the US and China, in particular, at loggerheads. At the same time, economic uncertainty is increasing enormously. This week in particular, decisions by the American government have triggered new turmoil. Outlining a number of policies, the coalition agreed to cut taxes for middle and lower incomes, to reduce corporate tax, lower energy prices, support the electric car industry and scrap a disputed supply chain law.

It also plans a commission on further reforming Germany's constitutionally enshrined spending limits known as the "debt brake", long seen by critics as hobbling economic growth. With the AFD breathing down its neck, the coalition signalled a tougher stance on migration, planning to turn away asylum seekers at Germany's borders and scrap fast-tracked naturalisation, among other measures. The coalition also announced a voluntary military service and the creation of a national security council, as well as moves to speed up defence procurement and backing Ukraine's bid to join the NATO alliance. Merz, who had previously called Trump's US an unreliable ally, has already pledged to build up defence spending as Europe faces a hostile Russia, and to support businesses struggling with high costs and weak demand. This welcome development for the German politics has been possible due to Europe's running battle with the U.S. president Donald Trump in which Germany faced big attacks from the U.S. Chancellor designate Merz was also personally attacked by the MAGA leaders in USA.

# CDU Chief Friedrich Merz is taking over as Chancellor of Germany

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## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyaki Chakraborty

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This welcome development for the German politics has been possible due to Europe's running battle with the U.S. president Donald Trump in which Germany faced big attacks from the U.S. Chancellor designate Merz was also personally attacked by the MAGA leaders in USA. Now Merz seems to have decided to opt for a make Germany strong policy by proposing to present a enhanced budget which will help the economy to be stronger and meet the challenges of the present ailments faced by the industries. Merz said after the agreement with Greens "Germany is making its large contribution to the de-

fence of freedom and peace in Europe. Germany is back"

In Europe, the major countries are having coalition governments. The budgetary policies emerge as big issues between the parties inside the coalition. This is true for other countries like France, Portugal, Spain where the coalitions are ruling and there are both Right and Left combinations with opposing approaches to the budget issues. That way, the agreement of the new German coalition on the coming budget with the support of nearly two-third is a personal victory of the Chancellor designate Merz and his political skill in negotiations.

Greens were earlier opposed to the contents of the new budget proposals but after prolonged negotiations, their leaders finally agreed when Merz explained how this package was the answer of Germany to the Trump's rantings against the U.S.'s European allies. He explained to the Greens that the hike in defence spending was needed to be independent of the U.S. at the present stage of Trump's

unilateral actions globally.

As regards the far right AFD, the party is happy that every failure of the coalition govt will be capitalized by the party. The AFD is targeting the right wing elements within CDU and the CSU as also some disgruntled elements of SPD. The latest opinion poll has put the AFD at the top with 26 per cent followed by CDU/CSU at 24 per cent. However, the AFD leadership knows like this time, the two main national combinations will join hands in future to keep out of power. That is why it is important for AFD to gain many more seats in Bundestag in future elections.

At the other end, the Left wing De Linke is rejuvenated after its unexpected win of 64 seats, more than 10 per cent in new Bundestag as against its tally of 38 in the earlier elections. For De Linke, the advantage is that that it can act as a real opposition from the Left side focusing on all the slippages in relation to the measures for the workers and other sections of the common people. The Social Democrats are now part of coalition, so the Left may target the section of SPD base who will be disenchanted with the working of the new coalition.

The other wing of Left BSW has no seat in new Parliament though in the outgoing Bundestag, the BSW had 10 members who left De Linke. BSW has got highly popular leaders. Both De Linke and BSW will be working to improve their respective support base as the new coalition starts functioning. A mood of optimism is back in Germany. There is no threat of right take over as was feared late last year. The country's politics has gone back to normal. Both the AFD and the Left will be acting as opposition from their respective end. The country will be ruled by the coalition of two parties which are known as normal parties of governance. (IPA Service)

## India and Sri Lanka in the shadow of history

By: Dipak Kurmi

In the heart of South Asia, India and Sri Lanka share a complex relationship shaped by history, mythology, and geopolitics. Despite their deep cultural and religious ties, their diplomatic journey has been fraught with conflict, strategic maneuvering, and moments of both camaraderie and discord. A visit to the largely forgotten Ravan Mandir in Uttar Pradesh, believed to mark the birthplace of Ravana, serves as a striking metaphor for the dissonance in Indo-Sri Lankan ties. While India vilifies Ravana as the antagonist of the Ramayana, Sri Lanka venerates him as a heroic and wise ruler. This symbolic contrast reflects broader tensions in their relationship—where shared history is often overshadowed by political realities.

Sri Lanka has played a significant role in India's spiritual and nationalist movements, and the goodwill extended by its people to Indian leaders is often overlooked in contemporary narratives. In the late 19th century, Sri Lankan Buddhist leader Anagarika Dharmapala gave speaking time to Swami Vivekananda in Colombo, which paved the way for his historic speech at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. Decades later, Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Sri Lanka in 1927 saw widespread support for India's freedom struggle, both morally and financially. Subhas Chandra Bose also sought backing for the Indian National Army during World War II. Even Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a champion of Dalit rights in India, visited Sri Lanka in 1954 to study the Buddhist social order before his conversion to Buddhism in 1956.

However, these moments of solidarity have often been eclipsed by the harsh realities of geopolitics. As J.N. Dixit astutely observed in his book Assignment Colombo,

"Inter-state relations are not governed by the logic of morality. They were and remain an amoral phenomenon." This sentiment was starkly evident in the 1970s when India became deeply entangled in Sri Lanka's internal affairs. Declassified CIA documents reveal that India's support for Tamil insurgents began well before its official intervention in the late 1980s. Driven by a mix of regional ambitions and security concerns, Indira Gandhi's government provided clandestine aid to Tamil militant groups, viewing it as a means to counter Sri Lanka's growing alignment with Western powers.

This intervention, however, backfired spectacularly. The Tamil insurgency spiraled out of control, leading to Sri Lanka's descent into civil war. Rajiv Gandhi's decision to send the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) in 1987, under the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, was intended to enforce peace but ultimately proved disastrous. Instead of stabilizing the region, the IPKF became embroiled in direct conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), leading to allegations of human rights violations by Indian troops. The intervention ended in tragedy when Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in 1991 by an LTTE suicide bomber—a grim testament to the unintended consequences of India's foreign policy.

Sixteen years after the end of Sri Lanka's civil war

in 2009, the island nation continues to grapple with economic instability, regional security concerns, and political upheaval. India, as Sri Lanka's closest neighbor, remains a crucial player in its recovery. Yet, historical mistrust and geopolitical rivalries complicate their relationship. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Sri Lanka, while symbolic, underscores a deeper strategic realignment. His administration has sought to assert a more active role in South Asia, strengthening economic and security ties with Sri Lanka while simultaneously countering China's growing influence in the region.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly altered the dynamics of South Asian geopolitics. Sri Lanka, facing an economic crisis, has leaned heavily on Chinese investments, particularly in infrastructure projects like the Hambantota Port. However, concerns over China's "debt-trap diplomacy" have raised alarms in New Delhi. India fears that excessive Chinese influence could undermine regional stability and limit its strategic options. Thus, Modi's outreach to Sri Lanka is not merely a diplomatic exercise but a calculated effort to maintain India's foothold in the region.

Despite these economic opportunities, Sri Lanka remains wary of becoming overly dependent on India. The Tamil question continues to cast a long shadow

over bilateral relations. While India has consistently advocated for the rights of Sri Lanka's Tamil population, successive Sri Lankan governments have been reluctant to fully implement devolution measures promised under the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. This unresolved issue continues to fuel tensions, making trust-building a slow and challenging process.

As Sri Lanka seeks to navigate its economic and political challenges, its relationship with India will play a defining role in shaping its future. The opportunities for collaboration are vast—trade, tourism, technology, and defense cooperation all offer avenues for strengthening ties. However, the ghosts of the past linger. The legacy of intervention, the unhealed wounds of civil war, and competing strategic interests ensure that Indo-Sri Lankan relations remain a delicate balancing act.

For Sri Lanka, the path forward lies in strategic diversification—engaging with India while maintaining diplomatic flexibility with other global players. It must also overcome internal divisions and build resilience against external influences. For India, a more nuanced approach is required—one that goes beyond geopolitical calculations and acknowledges the cultural and historical intricacies that define this relationship.

History has shown that the Indo-Sri Lankan relationship is neither simple nor linear. It is a narrative of forgotten bonds, political missteps, and strategic recalibrations. As the two nations move forward, they must learn from the past and redefine their partnership in ways that serve their mutual interests without repeating the mistakes of history. If Sri Lanka is to reclaim its agency in the region, it must seize new opportunities beyond its shores with bold strategies—before the market and geopolitical realities consume it. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)



## Reserve Bank signals support for Indian economy in cloudy times

By: Anjan Roy

As the global economy has been riven apart by Donald Trump's wide-ranging tariffs, the Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday announced a cut in its basic policy interest rate by 25 basis points. In the prevailing environment of deep uncertainty, a marginal cut in the policy rate is neither here, nor there. It cannot have any significant impact.

But the move has a signalling value. This little cut in the repo rate introduces a phase of softening of interest rates from now on. That is important. The Reserve Bank's new governor, Sanjay Malhotra, has observed in his policy statement that the RBI now moves on from a "neutral" stance in its monetary policy to an "accommodative" stance. There lies the crux. The major players can now expect that RBI's policy state should now be more encouraging growth of the Indian economy than its primary concern as a vigil over the price front. Maybe, that is a reasonable stance in the current context when Indian growth rate has just recovered from what the governor described as "underwhelming". RBI is seeking to encourage growth over inflation management in the current context.

The monetary policy committee, which is tasked with the formulation of the monetary policy, unanimously agreed on the rate cut. It felt comfortable about such a decision when the inflation rate has shown falling trend. The RBI has enough reasons to maintain that inflation rate should converge on the target level of 4% in course of the current year.

RBI always says, its decisions are always data driven. More particularly, for the critical indicator of price, the RBI follows the trends in CPI closely. The figures speak for RBI confidence in inflation management.

CPI headline inflation declined by a cumulative 1.6 percentage points during January-February 2025, from 5.2% in December 2024 to a low of 3.6% in February 2025. This could happen primarily because two major component of CPI—food and fuel—prices have traced lower levels.

RBI has cited "with a strong seasonal correction in vegetable prices this year, food inflation dropped to a 21-month low of 3.8 per cent in February from 5.7 per cent in January 2025." Additionally, "deflation in fuel group, year-on-year, was at (-) 1.3 per cent in December 2024, (-) 1.5 per cent in January 2025 and (-) 1.3 per cent in February 2025."

Thus with that headache over CPI trends now seemingly under control, the RBI chose to concentrate on encouraging growth. This is particularly impotent in the present geo-political situation. The global economy is melting down under the heat of Trump's unpredictably harsh and unreasonable steps. Global growth is feared to go down several notches, according to a computation of the OECD.

Against this background of uncertainty, the RBI worked out the implications of the recent global trade and related policy uncertainties in the fate of the Indian economy. Governor Malhotra has summarised these threats: "First and foremost, uncertainty in itself dampens growth



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by affecting investment and spending decisions of businesses and households. Second, the dent on global growth due to trade frictions will impede domestic growth. Third, higher tariffs shall have a negative impact on net exports."

In this context, in RBI's assessment, "the domestic growth-inflation trajectory demands monetary policy to be growth supportive, while being watchful on the inflation front. We are aiming for a non-inflationary growth that is built on the foundations of an improved demand and supply response and sustained macroeconomic balance."

So far, so good. There are at least two vulnerabilities which RBI seems to have accepted as fairly stable and comfortable. First, India's services exports and, secondly, the possibilities of financial instability triggered by the global financial markets gyrations.

The Trump tariffs have not taken into consideration the services sector and the tariffs have been placed on merchandise goods exports largely. In case, Trump suddenly veers around on services exports, India could be ex-

tremely severely hit. Our physical goods exports account for just 2% of GDP. Services exports constitute a far larger proportion.

Any moves crimping on services exports can paralyse the Indian economy. Even otherwise, India's services exports are facing an existential threat from the advances in artificial intelligence (AI). Many of the services exports constitute of repetitive and a predictable services. These services could very well be done by AI tools and thereby make the work done by the lower software developers and coders.

On top of it, if Trump looks at the services sector and decides to come down on these, they of all countries India would be worst hit. From this viewpoint India is doing right adopting a low key stance ad even accommodating some of Trump whimsical demands. Until now, as China and the European Union fight it out with Trump and settle scores. However obnoxious it is, there is little point in seeking to fight with Trump's stance at this stage.

The second weak point is the financial markets upheaval. As witnessed last time in 2008 during the global financial meltdown, a seriously disturbed financial markets could quickly be transmitted to the real economy and bring in its train economy wide melt down. What we need thus is fire-walling the Indian financial sector from the severe gale force of the global financial markets.

Any financial markets instability globally results in withdrawal of investments of foreign institutional investors. There hit, back to back, the foreign exchange market and exchange rates. Will fluctuations in exchange rates, and as has been witnessed earlier, progressive depreciation, send shock waves throughout the economy.

As in case of 2008 meltdown, RBI had effectively insulated the Indian financial sector from these global transmission. Maybe, RBI should have begun these exercises right from now. At least some indications of RBI's thoughts on these broader aspects could have been timely ad reassuring. (IPA Service)

# Unemployment crisis & Indian graduates

By: Kaustov Kashyap

According to a report by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), India's unemployment rate among graduates is alarmingly high. A study by the India's Graduate Skill Index found that only 54.81% of graduates are employable, indicating a major gap between education and job market requirements. States like Maharashtra stand at the highest with 84% followed by other states like Delhi, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. And while India has made significant strides in increasing access to higher education, quality and relevance remain major concerns. The main reason for this according to many is the need for skilled individuals as education provided in Indian institutes are mainly from textbooks and not practical or something that can be applicable at the future stage. A data showed that around 2.2% received formal vocational training and 8.6% received non-formal vocational training. (source: India today). While lack of skill development may seem as the main issue, there are many other reasons that are leading to Indian graduates are struggling to secure a job.

Why Are Indian Graduates Struggling in the Job Market?

Mismatch Between Education and Industry Requirements

One of the biggest challenges Indian graduates face is the disconnect between what is taught in colleges and what industries demand. Many university curriculums focus on theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills. For instance, engineering

students often graduate with strong academic credentials but lack hands-on experience with modern tools and technologies used in the industry. Employers increasingly seek candidates with skills in AI, data analytics, cybersecurity, and digital marketing, but most colleges fail to incorporate these subjects into their mainstream curricula. As a result, graduates must often seek additional certifications or training before they become job-ready.

**Lack of Soft Skills and Communication Proficiency**

Technical knowledge alone does not make a candidate employable. Employers look for strong communication, problem-solving, and critical-thinking abilities—skills that are often lacking among Indian graduates. The focus on rote learning in schools and colleges leaves little room for creativity, teamwork, and adaptability.

For instance, many engineering and management graduates struggle with English proficiency and interpersonal communication, which limits their ability to perform well in interviews and workplace settings. This is particularly evident in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, where access to high-quality English education is limited.

**Outdated Curriculum and Teaching Methods**

Despite rapid technological advancements, many Indian universities continue to teach outdated syllabi that have little relevance in the modern job market. While industries evolve quickly, educational institutions lag behind, producing graduates with obsolete knowledge.

Additionally, the traditional

lecture-based teaching method does little to foster innovation or hands-on learning. There is a lack of industry-academia collaboration, leading to a scenario where graduates are not prepared for real-world job roles.

**Limited Internship and Practical Exposure**

Internships and practical experience play a crucial role in making graduates job-ready. However, many Indian students graduate without any industry exposure. While some universities mandate internships, they are often unstructured or treated as a formality rather than a genuine learning opportunity.

Countries like Germany and Switzerland integrate apprenticeship models into their education systems, ensuring that students gain hands-on experience before they enter the workforce. In India, however, such structured programs are rare, leaving students to fend for themselves in a competitive job market.

**Preference for Degrees Over Skills**

In India, there is an overemphasis on acquiring degrees rather than developing skills. Many students pursue higher education not because they are passionate about a subject but because of societal and parental pressure. Many are often forced to follow the career paths that their parents pursue be it a doctor, engineer, teachers, etc leaving them with no freedom to choose their own passions. As a result, they graduate with high qualifications and degrees but lack genuine commitment to their chosen field. This leads to lack of attention to practical skills and no interest in working in committing to any goals.

Additionally, the preference for government jobs and traditional career paths discourages students from exploring alternative career options such as entrepreneurship or vocational training. This mindset contributes to a growing pool of degree-holders who are not adequately skilled for the evolving job market.

**Unemployment Due to Automation and Changing Job Roles**

The rise of automation and artificial intelligence has led to a shift in job roles, rendering some traditional jobs obsolete. Many graduates are trained for roles that are disappearing, while new-age jobs in areas like data science, AI, and digital marketing require skills that universities fail to teach. Without continuous learning and upskilling, graduates find themselves ill-equipped to compete in a rapidly changing job market.

**Solutions to Improve Employability**

**Reforming the Education System**

To bridge the gap between education and employability, universities must update their curricula to include industry-relevant subjects. Collaboration between educational institutions and industries can ensure that students are trained in areas where job demand is high. For example, introducing courses on AI, blockchain, data analytics, and digital marketing can help graduates develop skills that align with market needs.

**Emphasizing Skill-Based Learning**

Encouraging vocational training and skill-based education



can help students gain practical experience. Institutions should offer programs in coding, entrepreneurship, and design thinking to make students more adaptable to industry needs. Government initiatives like the Skill India program have started addressing this issue, but more effort is needed to integrate skill-based learning into mainstream education.

**Promoting Soft Skills Development**

To improve employability, colleges should include courses on communication, leadership, and problem-solving. Training in spoken English, teamwork, and business etiquette can go a long way in enhancing a graduate's job prospects. Workshops, group discussions, and real-world projects should be encouraged to build confidence and interpersonal skills.

Strengthening Internship and Apprenticeship Programs

Mandatory and structured internship programs should be introduced to ensure students gain hands-on experience. Universities should collaborate with industries to provide internship opportunities that give real-world exposure.

**Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Startups**

Rather than solely focusing on job-seeking, universities should promote entrepreneurial mindsets. Startup incubation centres, mentorship programs, and funding opportunities can encourage graduates to explore business ventures, thereby creating jobs rather than just seeking them.

**Government and Corporate Initiatives**

The government and private sector must work together to address the employability crisis. Initiatives such as the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) and the Atal In-

novation Mission can play a vital role in upskilling graduates and making them industry-ready. Companies can also invest in training programs to equip fresh graduates with necessary skills rather than expecting them to be job-ready from day one.

India's education system needs a paradigm shift from degree-oriented learning to skill-based training. Graduates must adapt to the evolving job market by upskilling, while universities and industries must collaborate to ensure that education aligns with employment needs. By focusing on practical skills, soft skills, and continuous learning, Indian graduates can bridge the gap between education and employability, securing better career opportunities in the future. (The author is an HR Consultant, Pragatee HR & Career Consultancy. He can be reached at 9957663224 or pragatigroup08@gmail.com)

## Atal Amrit Abhiyan Recruitment 2025 – 8 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 15/04/2025

Atal Amrit Abhiyan, Assam has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 8 Hospital Administrator and IEC Executive posts under Atal Amrit Abhiyan Society (AAAS), Assam on purely Contractual Basis. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. Hospital Administrator  
No of posts: 7

Place of Duty: District Hospital/Government Medical College Hospitals. However the Hospital Administrator will be responsible for the smooth functioning of the Schemes in all the EHCs located in the allocated zone/area.

Compensation: The compensation for the post will be ₹ 40,000/- per month consolidated.

Educational Qualification: Master Degree / Post Graduate Degree in Hospital Administration from a government recognized University/Institution.  
Experience: Minimum 5 years in medical/insurance sector .

2. IEC Executive  
No of posts: 1

Place of Duty: The normal place of work for the candidate will be the office of the State Health Agency (SHA), Assam.

Compensation: The compensation for the post will be ₹ 40,000/- per month consolidated.

Educational Qualification: Graduate or above from a recognized Institute/University.

Experience: Minimum 3-5 years in related sector.

How to Apply for Atal Amrit Abhiyan Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancies by visiting the official Atal Amrit Abhiyan Society Recruitment Portal at <https://atalamritabhiyan.assam.gov.in>. They may follow below mentioned steps to apply online.

# Enter Name, Email and Mobile Number and Experience.  
# Please make sure that your email and mobile number is active.  
# Next upload your CV.  
# CV to be uploaded will be in PDF format only and should be less than 2MB.

Important Dates of Atal Amrit Abhiyan Recruitment 2025

# Starting date of submission of online application: 01st April, 2025

# Last date of submission of online application: 15th April, 2025

## Seven Sisters Hospital Goalpara Recruitment – 9 Posts

Last Date: 15/04/2025

Seven Sisters Hospital & R.C, Goalpara has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 9 ICU Technician, ICU Staff Nurse and ICU Incharge posts. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. ICU Technician  
No of posts: 3  
Age Limit: 25- 35

Educational Qualification: Diploma in ICU Technician  
Experience: 1-5 years

2. ICU Incharge  
No of posts: 1  
Age Limit: 25- 35

Educational Qualification: B.Sc/GNM  
Experience: 5-15 years in ICU

3. ICU Staff Nurse  
No of posts: 5  
Age Limit: 25- 35

Educational Qualification: B.Sc/GNM  
Experience: 2-5 years in ICU

How to Apply for Seven Sisters Hospital Goalpara Recruitment ?

# Applicants can share their updated CV to the following E-Mail Address: [hr@sevensistershospital.com](mailto:hr@sevensistershospital.com) .

# Last date of submission of application: 15th April 2025 .

# For more details contact: +91- 8638097957, 7002843122, 9864173967.

Address: Seven Sisters Hospital & Research Centre, Bapujinagar, Baladmari, In-front of S.P. Office Golapara, Pin: 783121.

About Seven Sisters Hospital Goalpara

Seven Sisters Hospital & Research Centre is a maternity & surgical specialty hospital in Goalpara. Some of the services provided by the hospital are: Adolescent problem, Implanon (Contraceptive Implant), D& C (Dilation and Curettage), Hormonal Therapy, General Surgery etc.

## Gyanmarg Academy Numaligarh Recruitment – PGT Posts

Last Date: 15/04/2025

Gyanmarg Academy Senior Secondary School, Numaligarh, Golaghat has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 3 Faculty posts. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: PGT  
No of posts: 3  
Subject-wise vacancy:

# English (1 Nos)  
# Mathematics (1 Nos)  
# Education (1 Nos)

Pay: Negotiable  
Age Limit: N/A

Educational Qualification: Master Degree in related field. Experienced candidates with B.Ed. degree will be preferred.

Application fee if any: N/A

How to Apply for Gyanmarg Academy Numaligarh Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may send your resume through mail to ([gyanmarga2018@gmail.com](mailto:gyanmarga2018@gmail.com)).

Last date of submission of application: 15th April 2025.

## Agriculture Department recruitment 2025 – 195 Agricultural Development Officer Posts

Last Date: 17/04/2025

Assam Public Service Commission has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 195 Agricultural Development Officer Posts under Agriculture Department, Assam. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Agricultural Development Officer (ADO)  
No of posts: 195 posts  
Category-wise vacancy:

# UR: 112  
# OBC/ MOBC: 37  
# SC: 14  
# STP: 23  
# STH: 9

Scale of pay: Pay Band - 4, ₹ 30,000 to ₹ 1,10,000, GP: ₹ 12,700

Name of department: Agriculture Department, Govt. of Assam

Eligibility Criteria of Agriculture Department Recruitment

Citizenship: Candidates must be Indian Citizens as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India.

Residency:

(i) The candidate must be a permanent resident of Assam.

(ii) The candidate must produce PRC issued in Assam for educational purpose/ Employment Exchange Registration certificate as proof of residency along with the online application form.

Age Limit: The candidates should not be less than 21 years of age and not more than 38 years of age as on 01/01/2025.

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

# SC: 5 years  
# ST: 5 years  
# OBC/ MOBC: 3 years  
# PwBD: 10 years  
# For more details pl read the official notification/s.

Educational Qualification: A candidate must pass B.Sc (Agriculture) or a degree declared equivalent to B.Sc.(Agriculture) from a recognized University and also recognized by the Government of Assam.

Employment Exchange Registration: Candidates must be registered themselves in any of the employment exchanges of Assam.

Small Family Norms: The candidates have to submit a declaration regarding "The Small Family Norms" in Form-A at the time of applying for the post.

Application Fee: Category-wise application fee is as under.

Category	Fee (in Rs.)
General	₹ 297.20
OBC/MOBC	₹ 197.20
SC/ST/BPL/ PwBD	₹ 47.20

How to Apply for Agriculture Department Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these posts by visiting at official recruitment portal of Assam Public Service Commission. They may follow below mentioned steps .

# Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .  
# Click on Online Application Form link .  
# A new webpage will be opened.  
# Enter all your personal and educational details as required .  
# Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.  
# Pay the application fee as per your category and at the end click on submit button.  
# Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form .

Important Dates of Assam Agriculture Department Recruitment 2025

# Starting date of submission of online application: 18th March 2025

# Last date of submission of online application: 17th April 2025

## Gauhati University Faculty Recruitment 2025 – 43 Vacancy, Online Apply

Last Date: 18/04/2025

Gauhati University has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 43 Professor, Associate Professor & Assistant Professor posts in various Departments of Gauhati University. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Professor  
No of posts: 5 posts

2. Associate Professor  
No of posts: 7 posts

3. Assistant Professor  
No of posts: 31 posts

# Category-wise vacancy may be checked from official notification.

Essential Qualification: As per the existing UGC norms (UGC Regulation - 2018). UGC Regulation (additional) issued in continuation of 2018 Regulation, if any will be applicable.

Pay Scale (as per latest UGC revision):

# Professor (Academic Level-14): ₹ 1,44,200/- to 2,18,200/-

# Associate Professor (Academic Level-13A): ₹ 1,31,400/- to 2,17,100/-

# Assistant Professor (Academic Level-10): ₹ 57,700/- to 1,82,400/-

Application Fee of Gauhati University Faculty Vacancy

Candidates have to pay an application fee as mentioned below:

Category	Fee
UR/ Others	₹ 1500/-
SC/ST/PWD	₹ 750/-

Mode of Payment: Application fee has to be made through online mode using Internet banking, Credit Cards or Debit cards etc.

How to Apply for Gauhati University Faculty Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy by visiting the official portal of Gauhati University. They may follow below mentioned steps .

# Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .  
# Click on Online Application Form link .  
# A new webpage will be opened.  
# Enter all your personal and educational details as required .  
# Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.  
# Pay the examination fee as per your category and at the end click on submit button .  
# Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form .

After submission of the ONLINE application in the portal a duly signed hard copy (pdf) of the completed application(s) must be submitted to "The Registrar, Gauhati University, Guwahati-781014, Assam" along with all necessary enclosures including the proof of submission of application fee and "No Objection Certificate (NOC)", wherever applicable, by the last date.

The envelope containing the application should be super scribed

"Application for the post of \_\_\_\_\_, Gauhati University, Advt. No. T/2025/1".

Applicants must submit a copy of the e-generated receipt of the payment along with the hard copy of the application.

Important Dates of Gauhati University Recruitment 2025

# Starting date of submission of online application: 27th March 2025

# Last date of submission of online application: 18th April 2025

# Last Date of submission of hard copy of application: 25th April 2025

# China retaliates with 125 per cent tariffs against US imports

## More tariffs by Trump will be a joke

**BEIJING, April 11:** China on Friday continued its tit-for-tat move against the Trump administration's tariffs by hiking its additional levies on imports from the US to 125 per cent against duties of 145 per cent by America even as it evinced interest in dialogue with Washington to resolve the impasse.

Announcing an additional 125 per cent tariff, China's Customs Tariff Commission said, "Even if the US imposes higher tariffs, it would no longer make economic sense and ultimately go down as a joke in world economic history."

"Given that it's already impossible for the Chinese market to accept US imports at the current tariff level if the United States imposes further tariffs on Chinese products, China will ignore it," it said.

However, should the US persist in substantially undermining China's interests, Beijing will take firm countermeasures and fight to the end, the commission added.

China's new tariffs of 125 per cent against US imports will be ef-



China's heavy tariffs left China

fective from Saturday, it said. The announcement follows the US move to raise the "reciprocal tariffs" on Chinese imports to 125 per cent. The US later confirmed the total tariff on Chinese products was 145 per cent with the inclusion of 20 per cent levies announced by Trump soon after he took over power in January this year.

Trump's heavy tariffs left China

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian on Friday said if the US truly wanted to resolve issues through dialogue and negotiation, it must cease its maximum pressure tactics and reckless actions.

China has made clear its position on the issue of tariffs multiple times. "There are no winners in tariff wars or trade wars. China does not want to engage in such wars, but we are not afraid to do so," Lin told a media briefing here.

Any dialogue must be based on equality, mutual respect and benefit, he said, adding that if the US insisted on escalating tariff wars, China would resolutely respond to the challenge all the way.

"In the face of US hegemony and coercion, compromise and concession are not viable options," Lin added.

Separately, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday held a meeting of the country's envoys in different countries outlining Beijing's diplomatic priorities in the light of US tariff war against China. (PTI)

While slapping additional measures, China, however, kept its door open for talks to resolve the issue.

# Israel releases Palestinian who took part in attack at 13



**JERUSALEM, April 11:** Israel has released a Palestinian who took part in an attack when he was 13 and developed schizophrenia in prison as requests for early release were denied.

Israel says Ahmad Manasra is a terrorist who tried to kill Jews his own age. Palestinians accuse Israel of subjecting a child to harsh incarceration that led to serious and potentially permanent mental illness. His lawyer, Khaled Zabarqa, said he was released Thursday after completing his nine-and-a-half-year sentence.

In 2015, Manasra, then 13, and his 15-year-old cousin rampaged through a Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem with knives. His cousin, Hassan, critically wounded a 13-year-old Israeli boy who was leaving a candy store and stabbed an Israeli man before being shot dead by police.

Ahmad was run over by a car, beaten and taunted by Israeli passers-by. A graphic video of Ahmad lying in the street, bleeding from the head while Israelis taunted him, garnered millions of views.

He was later convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to nine and a half years in prison. Doctors said he developed schizophrenia in solitary confinement and tried to harm himself and others.

Appeals to Israel's Supreme Court for his early release were repeatedly denied. The courts ruled that he was in-

eligible, regardless of age or mental condition, because he was convicted of terrorism.

Zabarqa said he did not have immediate information about Manasra's condition after his release, but said he was with his parents.

"We know in jail he's been very ill. We're waiting to know his health situation now," Zabarqa said.

Authorities first moved Manasra to isolation in November 2021, following a scuffle with another inmate. In interviews the following year, his family and lawyers said he was locked in a small cell for 23 hours a day and suffered from paranoia and delusions that kept him from sleeping. His lawyer said Manasra had tried to slit his wrists.

His family said he was transferred to the psychiatric wing of another prison every few months, where doctors gave him injections to stabilize him. A physician who was allowed to visit him when he was 18 diagnosed him with schizophrenia and attributed it to the toll of being in prison, warning that continued incarceration could lead to permanent disability.

The Prisons Authority on Thursday declined to comment on the specific conditions under which he had been held, saying all prisoners are held in accordance with Israeli and international law and that any allegations of abuse are investigated.

Rights groups say conditions inside Israeli prisons have become far more harsh since Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attack ignited the war in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian prisoners released during a recent ceasefire often appeared gaunt and ill, and many went straight to local hospitals for treatment.

The Israeli ministry in charge of prisons has boasted that it has reduced the conditions of security prisoners to the bare minimum required by Israeli law.

A teenager from the occupied West Bank who was held in an Israeli prison for six months without being charged died last month after collapsing in unclear circumstances, becoming the first Palestinian under 18 to die in Israeli detention. (AP)

# Ousted South Korean President Yoon embraces supporters after leaving presidential residence

**SEOUL, April 11:** Former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol left the presidential residence in Seoul on Friday for his private home, a week after the Constitutional Court removed him from office over his ill-fated imposition of martial law in December.

In recent days, moving trucks were seen driving in and out of the walled presidential compound in the Hannam-dong district, the site of a massive law enforcement operation in January that led to Yoon's de facto removal. Yoon, who is facing a criminal trial on rebellion charges, was released from custody in March after a Seoul court canceled his arrest.

Yoon and his wife, Kim Keon Hee, along with their 11 dogs and cats, returned to their private apartment in affluent southern Seoul. As his black van arrived at the gate of the presidential compound, Yoon stepped out, smiling and waving to his supporters, shaking hands and embracing dozens of them, before getting back into the vehicle and leaving the site.

Arriving at the apartment complex where his private residence is located, Yoon stepped out of the van again and walked slowly through a crowd of supporters, shaking their hands as they chanted his name, as his wife closely followed.

Dozens of both supporters and critics of Yoon rallied in nearby streets amid a heavy police presence, holding signs that ran from "Your excellency Yoon, we will carry on with your spirit!" to "Give Yoon Suk Yeol the death penalty!"

In a separate public message, Yoon expressed grat-

itude to his supporters who had protested for months calling for his reinstatement, and stressed that he will "continue to do my utmost" to build the "free and prosperous Republic of Korea that we have dreamed of together," invoking South Korea's formal name.

Yoon, a conservative who narrowly won the 2022 election, declared martial law on late-night television on Dec 3, vowing to eradicate "anti-state" liberals whom he accused of abusing their legislative majority to obstruct his agenda. Yoon also declared a suspension of legislative activities and sent hundreds of troops to surround the National Assembly, but lawmakers still managed to form a quorum and voted to lift martial law just hours after it was imposed.

Yoon's powers were suspended after the Assembly impeached him on Dec 14. The Constitutional Court upheld impeachment and formally removed him from office last week, triggering a presidential election the government set for June 3.

Despite his self-inflicted downfall, it's unlikely that Yoon will fade into the background, experts say. With the country entering election mode, he may try to rally his supporters while seeking to tighten his grip on the conservative People Power Party, whose leadership is stacked with loyalists.

Facing a separate criminal trial on rebellion charges, which are punishable by death or life in prison, Yoon would strongly prefer a conservative president who could pardon him if convicted and is likely to push to ensure the party's primaries are won by a candidate he supports, experts say. (AP)

# Xi Jinping to visit three Southeast Asian countries in his first foreign tour after Trump's tariffs

**BEIJING, April 11:** Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit three Southeast Asian countries early next week to strengthen regional cooperation in his first tour abroad after US President Donald Trump slapped 145 per cent tariffs against China's exports intensifying the trade war with Beijing.

Xi will pay state visits to Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia from April 14 to 18, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced on Friday.

All three countries are part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) grouping with which China had the largest trade amounting to USD 962.28 billion last year, with China's exports totalling USD 575 billion.

Many Chinese observers warned the competitive trade nature between China and its Asian neighbours — since they are all export-driven economies with the US being one of their key markets — could hinder Beijing's efforts to rally them, a dilemma further compounded by territorial disputes on both land and sea.

Though Xi's visits to these countries were on the cards for a while, the timing of the visits coincides with Trump's tariffs against Chinese goods while pausing levies against the rest of the countries.

According to the latest US notification, the overall trade tariffs on China amounted to 145 per cent.

China retaliated with 84 per cent tariffs, imposed some re-

strictions on imports of some US films and expressed interest in holding a dialogue with Washington to resolve the issue.

China remained the only country which retaliated against Trump's tariffs.

Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia were too hit hard by US tariffs but sought time to work out bilateral trade tariffs.

As Trump's tariffs loomed large on China, Xi earlier this week sought to strengthen China's strategic relationships with neighbouring countries by appropriately managing differences and enhancing supply chains.

In his first public speech after Trump's steep global hike of tariffs, Xi called for building a community with a shared future with neighbouring countries and striving to open new ground for China's neighbourhood work, state media reported.

Xi made the remarks at the high-level central conference on work related to neighbouring countries.

The two-day conference on Tuesday and Wednesday was attended by top officials from the ruling Communist Party.

China has been steadily recasting its neighbourhood policies as its relations with the US become increasingly strained.

China recently scaled down border tensions with India and sought to improve its relations with other neighbours like Japan and South Korea, bracing for tough times under Trump's presidency on trade and strategic fronts. (PTI)

# TTP's most wanted terrorist among two militants killed in Pakistan's KPK

**PESHAWAR, April 11:** One of the most wanted terrorist commanders of the Tehreek e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) group was among the two militants killed during an intelligence-based operation in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said on Friday.

The police said it challenged the bike riding terrorists on main Timergara road in Lower Dir district on Thursday after receiving intelligence about the presence of TTP fighters in the vicinity and killed two militants, including Hafeezullah alias "Kochwan".

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), Hafeezullah was the most wanted TTP terrorist and was involved in major terror attacks.

He carried a bounty of PKR 10 million on his head, the ISPR said in a statement.

Earlier, a counter terrorism department (CTD) official said Hafeezullah carried a bounty of PKR 5 million on his head.

"Hafeezullah's body has been confirmed, and efforts are underway to identify the other militant," the CTD official said.

The security forces have cordoned off the area and launched an operation to search for the presence of any other terrorist, the official said.

Hafeezullah, a trained militant with a degree in computer science, belonged to Kohan village of Dir district.

He was earlier associated with Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) organisation before joining the TTP where he operated under the command of former TTP chief Maulana Fazlullah. He was also the member of the Shura of TTP.

He was also TTP's shadow governor of Mardan and believed to have orchestrated several deadly attacks against security forces between 2009 and 2014, particularly in the volatile regions of Lower Dir and Chitral.

One of the most high-profile assaults attributed to Hafeezullah was in 2010 when a suicide bomber targeted a convoy of American soldiers training with the Frontier Corps' Dir Scouts in counter-terrorism operations. The suicide bombing left three US troops dead. (PTI)

# Israel's army says will fire air force reservists who condemned war

**TEL AVIV, April 11:** Israel's military said Friday it will fire air force reservists who signed a letter condemning the war in Gaza and accusing it of only serving political interests and not bringing the hostages home.

In a statement to The Associated Press, an army official said there was no room for anybody or individual, including reservists in active duty, "to exploit their military status while simultaneously participating in the fighting," calling it a breach of trust between commanders and subordinates.

The army said it decided that any active reservist who signed the letter will not be able to continue serving. It did not specify how many people that included or if the firings had begun.

Nearly 1,000 Israeli Air Force reservists and retirees signed a letter, published in Israeli media Thursday, demanding the immediate return of the hostages, even at the cost of ending the fighting.

The letter comes as Israel ramps up its offensive in Gaza, trying to pressure Hamas to agree to free hostages, 59 of whom are still being held, more than half of which are dead.

Israel's imposed a blockade on food, fuel and humanitarian aid that has left civilians facing acute shortages as supplies dwindle. It has pledged to seize large parts of the Palestinian territory and establish a new security corridor through it.

While the soldiers who signed the letter didn't refuse to keep serving, it's part of a growing number of Israeli soldiers speaking out against the 18-month conflict, some saying they saw or did things that crossed ethical lines.

"It's completely illogical and irresponsible on behalf of the Israeli policy makers ... risking the lives of the hostages, risking the lives of more soldiers and risking lives of many many more innocent Palestinians, while it had a very clear alternative," Guy Poran, a retired Israeli Air Force pilot who spearheaded the letter told The AP.

He said he's not aware of anyone who signed the letter being fired, and since it was published, it has gained dozens more signatures.

Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu downplayed the letter on Friday, say-

ing it was written by a "small handful of weeds, operated by foreign-funded NGOs whose sole goal is to overthrow the right-wing government." He said anyone who encourages refusal will be immediately dismissed.

Soldiers are required to steer clear of politics, and they rarely speak out against the army. After Hamas stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, Israel quickly united behind the war launched against the militant group. Divisions here have grown as the war progresses, but most criticism has focused on the mounting number of soldiers killed and the failure to bring home hostages, not actions in Gaza.

Freed hostages and their families are doing what they can to keep attention on their plight, and urge the government to get everyone out.

For Holocaust Remembrance Day this year, Agam Berger, a military spotter who was taken hostage and freed in January, will perform at a March of the Living Ceremony in Poland — a yearly memorial march at the site of Auschwitz that honours the 6 million Jews killed by Nazi Germany and celebrates the state of Israel. (AP)

# NYC sightseeing helicopter plunges into river, killing 6, including family of Spanish tourists

**NEW YORK, April 11:** A New York City sightseeing helicopter broke apart in midair Thursday and crashed upside-down into the Hudson River, killing the pilot and a family of five Spanish tourists in the latest US aviation disaster, officials said.

The victims included Siemens executive Agustín Escobar, his wife, Merce Campubri Montal, and three children, in addition to the pilot, a person briefed on the investigation told The Associated Press. The person could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Photos posted on the helicopter company's website showed the couple and their children smiling as they boarded just before the flight took off.

Mayor Eric Adams said the flight began at a downtown heliport around 3 pm and the bodies — had been recovered and removed from the water. The flight north along the Manhattan skyline and then back south toward the Statue of Liberty lasted less than 18 minutes.

Video of the crash showed parts of the aircraft tumbling through the air into the water near the shoreline of Jersey City, New Jersey. A witness there, Bruce Wall, said he saw it

"falling apart" in midair, with the tail and propeller coming off. The propeller was still spinning without the helicopter as it fell.

Dani Horbiak was at her Jersey City home when she heard what sounded like "several gunshots in a row, almost, in the air." She looked out her window and saw the chopper "splash in several pieces into the river."

The helicopter was spinning uncontrollably with "a bunch of smoke coming out" before it slammed into the water, said Lesly Camacho, a hostess at a restaurant along the river in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Rescue boats circled the submerged aircraft within minutes of impact near the end of a long maintenance pier for a ventilation tower serving the Holland Tunnel. Recovery crews hoisted the mangled helicopter out of the water just after 8 p.m. using a floating crane.

The flight was operated by New York Helicopters, officials said. No one answered the phones at the company's offices in New York and New Jersey.

A person who answered the phone at the home of the company's owner, Michael Roth, declined to comment. Roth told the New York Post he was devastated and had "no clue" why the crash happened.



"The only thing I know by watching a video of the helicopter falling down, that the main rotor blades weren't on the helicopter," the Post quoted him as saying. He added that he had not seen such a thing happen during his 30 years in the helicopter business, but noted: "These are machines, and they break."

Emails seeking comment were sent to at-

torneys who have represented Roth in the past.

The Federal Aviation Administration identified the helicopter as a Bell 206, a model widely used in commercial and government aviation, including by sightseeing companies, TV news stations and police. It was initially developed for the U.S. Army before being adapted for other uses. Thousands

have been manufactured over the years.

The National Transportation Safety Board said it would investigate.

Video of the crash suggested that a "catastrophic mechanical failure" left the pilot with no chance to save the helicopter, said Justin Green, an aviation lawyer who was a helicopter pilot in the Marine Corps.

It is possible the helicopter's main rotors struck the tail boom, breaking it apart and causing the cabin to free fall, Green said.

"They were dead as soon as whatever happened happened," Green said. "There's no indication they had any control over the craft. No pilot could have prevented that accident once they lost the lifts. It's like a rock falling to the ground. It's heartbreaking."

The skies over Manhattan are routinely filled with planes and helicopters, both private recreational aircraft and commercial and tourist flights. Manhattan has several helipads from which business executives and others are whisked to destinations throughout the metropolitan area.

At least 38 people have died in helicopter accidents in New York City since 1977. A collision between a plane and a tourist helicopter over the Hudson in 2009 killed nine people, and five died in 2018 when a charter

helicopter offering "open door" flights went down into the East River.

New York Helicopters also owned a Bell 206 that lost power and made an emergency landing on the Hudson during a sightseeing tour in June 2013. The pilot managed to land safely, and he and the passengers — a family of four Swedes — were uninjured.

The National Transportation Safety Board found that a maintenance flub and an engine lubrication anomaly led to the power cutoff.

Thursday's crash was the first for a helicopter in the city since one hit the roof of a skyscraper in 2019, killing the pilot.

The accidents — and the noise caused by helicopters — have repeatedly led some community activists and officials to propose banning or restricting traffic at Manhattan heliports.

Other recent crashes and close calls have already left some people worried about the safety of flying in the US.

Seven people were killed when a medical transport plane plummeted into a Philadelphia neighbourhood in January. That happened two days after an American Airlines jet and an Army helicopter collided in midair in Washington in the deadliest US air disaster in a generation. (AP)

# KSU urges for LS MP's intervention into NEIGRIHMS recruitment rules

**SHILLONG, April 11:** The Khasi Students' Union (KSU) has requested the intervention of the Lok Sabha MP from Shillong, Dr Ricky AJ Syngkon into the need for the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS) to review the roster register and recruitment rules through its governing council.

"We humbly seek your intervention in the said matter for the growth of the medical institute. The institute needs to review its roster register and its recruitment rules through its Governing Council. If nothing is being done NEIGRIHMS will be set for depriving conditions and lower standards in the upcoming years," KSU president Lambokstarwell Marggar said in a letter handed over to Syngkon during a meeting held here today.

Referring to the ongoing recruitment in NEIGRIHMS, which was advertised on March 22, Marggar said, "Various posts were advertised which include Nursing Officer, Store Keeper and others in Grade/Group B and C and the Union found various anomalies which are detrimental to the growth and welfare of the Medical Institute and as well as to the interest of the indigenous people of the State."

Earlier, the KSU delegation had also met the NEIGRIHMS Director on March 24, seeking for clarification and also inspected the Roster Register of NEIGRIHMS on March 27, in regard to the reservation issues where the Union discovered that there were various irregularities in the plotting of the roster register.

A memorandum was accordingly submitted to the Director of NEIGRIHMS on April 1, citing the Union observations and demanding several other modifications for smooth functioning of the Medical Institute. "But to the utter dismay of the Union, none of the suggestions were taken for consideration and a reply to the Union memorandum was given on April 4, 2025, stating unjustified and irrelevant context," Marggar stated.

In regard to the age limit, he said based on the advertise-



ment the age limit for nursing officers and other posts has been reduced to 30 years and the Pharmacist to 27 years. In the previous years of recruitment in NEIGRIHMS, the age limit was always set at 35 years and all of sudden it was brought down to 30 years which has impacted the aspiring candidates drastically. "This was done by the Director and the Deputy Director with malicious intent."

"Therefore, the Union is of the view that the amendment made in the Recruitment Rules for limiting the upper age limit to 30 years must be scrapped and original age limit of 35 years must be put into place with other relaxation for reserved categories," Marggar said.

On the male and female nursing officer ratio, the KSU president said the previous nursing officer recruitment done in the year 2023 through NORCET was a huge blunder on the path of the NEIGRIHMS administration whereby a huge number of untrained unqualified male nurses were recruited. Even the administration of NEIGRIHMS themselves stated that these male nurses are 'leftovers' who have not been se-

lected in other institutes and have been dumped in NEIGRIHMS all because the administration was short-sighted for not having male female ratio of 20:80. These male nurses are mostly from Rajasthan and have no experience whatsoever and are a nuisance in the medical sector.

"Countless complaints have been received by the Union against these male nurses who are incompetent in delivering their work and are also a threat to the lives of the patients. The Union would like to state that all the other institutions such as AIIMS, JIPMER, etc, have a ratio of 20:80 male female ratio. If the other institution can have a 20:80 ratio then what is stopping NEIGRIHMS also to follow the same," he said while demanding that 20:80 male female ratio should be made mandatory for smooth functioning of the institute.

Further, the KSU leader said that in the present advertisement for nursing officers, one of the criteria mentioned for those with GNM is that a candidate who is eligible to apply must have 2 (two) years' experience from a 50 bedded hospital. This is the first time that NEIGRIHMS had sought for experience from a candidate.

"The union does not have any objection for seeking 2 (two) years' experience but the clause from 50 bedded hospitals must be removed. The reason being that this will halt or make the local nurses ineligible to apply who have been working for years in PHCs, CHCs and other hospitals in Meghalaya as most of these medical institutions does not have 50 bedded but that does not conclude that nurses who work in such small hospitals are incapable."

Stating that the union is not in favour of Computer Based Test (CBT) mode, Marggar said, "Such exams will be biased because with lack of computer centres, there will be different shifts for exams. The questions from one shift may be easier or tougher to the other shifts or if the questions are repeated, it may give unnecessary advantage to other candidates. It is also seen in the previous recruitment that candidates from

the State have to give their examinations in other States because there is a lack of computer centres, and this is a major hurdle especially to those coming from a financially weaker section of the society. So, the Union humbly demands for offline examination through OMR for recruitment."

Expressing concern over the inadequate reservation of STs, Marggar said there is a 27% reservation for OBCs and 15% reservation for SCs in the recruitment of central government. According to him, in the State of Meghalaya, we have a Scheduled Tribe list and a Schedule Caste List but there is no list for OBC. Meghalaya does not recognise any OBC in the State. Whereas there is only 7.5% reservation for the STs in Group B. Meghalaya where 90% of the population is a tribal population. Such a small amount of representation for STs is inadequate. Also, with excess reservation for other tribes which do not include in the list of Meghalaya further leads to influx.

"Thus, it is appropriate that reservation for the STs in Group B be increased for STs. The North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) is a prime example, that although being a Central Institute, through its rules has changed the reservations for the betterment of the University and the indigenous people of Meghalaya," he stated in the letter.

Further, Marggar pointed out that the Institute since its inception has been conducting its own examination for recruitment but under the regime of the present Director and Deputy Director has previously conducted examination for nursing officer through NORCET which was disastrous and now it is stated that for the next recruitment NEIGRIHMS will not be conducting any more recruitments for Group B & C. NEIGRIHMS is an autonomous institution and should remain autonomous.

"It is the anti-tribal motivation of the Director and the Deputy Director which is causing all such problems. They have a bigger malicious motive which needs to be intervened immediately," he alleged. (NNV)

## Thousands take part in protest rallies in Manipur against Waqf Act

Displayed placards and raised slogans denouncing the legislation



**IMPHAL, April 11:** Thousands of Muslim protesters on Friday took out rallies in parts of Manipur's Imphal against the Waqf (Amendment) Act, demanding immediate repeal of the law.

### Nagas will not allow what is not right: NSCN-IM

**DIMAPUR, April 11:** In its latest news bulletin 'Nagalim Voice', the NSCN-IM said that Nagas have had enough of the Government of India imposing deplorable and barbarous acts to suppress and oppress the legitimate rights of the Nagas. "What is not right, Nagas will not allow, come what may", the NSCN-IM asserted.

The NSCN-IM bulletin said that it was during the time of the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, who introduced the Armed Forces Special Powers' Act (AFSPA) when he empowered India's armed forces to "crush the Nagas' resistance movement with brute force". Going by India's version, said the NSCN-IM mouthpiece, it is a tall claim to justify the abrupt scrapping of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) and border fencing, "but one that is by no means outrageous and offensive to

strengthen its hands of oppression". The bulletin then said, "What has really triggered a mass of peaceful protests is the flattering policy of India targeted to kill Naga historical and political identity under the pretext of national security". It added that this has stoked the flames of Naga people's fury that will not die till India listens.

The NSCN-IM bulletin also said the collective voice of the Nagas is to reclaim "our cultural heritage" that defines the Nagas as one people and one nation. The bulletin added that the changing world does not give India the right to go on "playing nuisance with our rights and dignity".

Bulletin concluded that it is a defining moment for the Nagas to stand by "our inalienable rights and reject the hegemony of the Indian government". (NNV)

### SJVN releases ₹ 269.98 cr land compensation for Etalin project in Arunachal

**ITANAGAR, April 11:** In a significant development for hydro-power development in Arunachal Pradesh, Satluj Jal Viduyt Nigam (SJVN) Limited has released Rs 269.98 crore as land compensation for the 3,097 MW Etalin hydro-electric project (HEP) in Dibang Valley. The amount was deposited into the joint account of the deputy commissioner and district land revenue and settlement officer (DLRSO) on March 26.

This was confirmed during a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pema Khandu in Tawang on Thursday. Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, Chief Secretary Manish Gupta, Power Commissioner Sonam Chombay, and other senior officials were present, according to an official communiqué issued on Friday.

Etalin hydro-electric project head Shiraj Swan formally handed over the compensation cheque to Dibang Valley

deputy commissioner Pagli Sora.

The Etalin project, along with four other hydro-electric projects in the district with a total installed capacity of 5,097 MW, was handed over to SJVN by the state government after signing a memorandum of agreement (MoA) on August 12, 2023.

Together, these projects are expected to draw a combined investment of Rs 60,000 crore. SJVN chairman and managing director Raj Kumar Chaudhary reaffirmed the company's commitment to development while safeguarding the rights of local communities.

"SJVN is committed to responsible and inclusive development of Arunachal Pradesh. The release of the compensation amount is a major step in honouring the rights of the local communities while ensuring the progress of vital infrastructure projects for the nation," he said. (PTI)

## Pongtu Kuh is the traditional festival of the Tutsa community

### Arunachal Pradesh minister calls for upholding rich tradition and culture of state

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, April 11:** Arunachal Pradesh home minister Mama Natung on Friday called upon the younger generation of the state to follow their rich culture and unique customs.

The minister made his appeal while speaking as the chief guest of the Pongtu Kuh festival organised at the Pongtu ground in Changlang of Arunachal Pradesh.

While mentioning about the rich ethnicity, culture and tradition of various ethnic groups of the state, Natung stated that it was very much necessary to preserve the rich ethnicity of Arunachal Pradesh.

In a significant statement, the home minister allayed all misgivings related to the government's move to frame rules under the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (APFRA), 1978 following an order issued by the Gauhati High Court.

Nating came down heavily on certain quarters who according to him are trying to create misbeliefs and confusion among the society of the state.

He assured that the government both at the centre and the state would never take up any such step which was detrimental to the society.

The minister also assured to set up a modern fire station and women police station in Changlang in days to come.

In his speech as the guest of honour, Arunachal Lok Sabha MP Tapir Gao dwelled upon the dual initiative of the centre and the state government to build up modern infrastructure like road, railways and airport for the state which according to him remained a neglected part of the country before the Modi government came to power.



While delivering his welcome address, Arunachal Assembly speaker Tesam Pongte welcomed all present at the festival venue and wished a happy Pongtu Kuh for all.

Pongtu Kuh is the traditional festival of the Tutsa community of Arunachal Pradesh during which people from the community offer prayers to their deities and forefathers for a good agri season and good health of their near and dear ones.

The "Pongtu Kuh" festival is an integral part of the socio cultural life of the Tutsa's which is celebrated every year in the month of April to get blessings for the tender millet plants in the Jhoom field.

One of the major festivals of Tutsa tribe is Pongtu which is being celebrated every year on 11th of April. Pongtu is an important and oldest agricultural festival celebrated by the Tutsas on the eve of rainy season.

The festival witnessed various cultural performances from different troupes from their community.

No. SEKI/NIT-1/8/2024-25/1102

Date: -09/04/2025

#### SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender in prescribed format Eventually to be drawn in APWD "F2" Form affixing nonrefundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only are here by invited from the eligible registered contractors of Irrigation Department of Assam for the following works under Udalguri Mazbat Division, (Irrigation), Udalguri, BTC, Assam and will be received up to 1.00 PM on 02/05/2025 in the office of the undersigned which will be opened on the same date and place at 2.00 PM in presence of the intending tenderers or their authorized agents which may like to be present.

However, in the event of closure of opening / receiving of tender due to some unavoidable reason the next office working day will be considered for the purpose

**Name of the works:** - Erosion Protection of Guide Bund, Afflux Bund & Construction of Toe Wall at Pagla FIS under SDMF for the year 2023-24.

**Approx value:** - Rs. 68,04,782.00 Only in 4 (Four) no's groups as per group allocation.

**Time of Completion:** 30 days from the date of issue of work order

**Earnest money:** 2% of tendered value (1% in case of ST/SC/OBC/UGE)

Detail tender papers with terms and conditions may be obtained in request from the office of the undersigned on payment of Rs.300.00 (Rupees Three hundred) only in the form of IPO/Demand draft duly pledge to the Superintending Engineer, Kokrajhar Circle (Irrigation), Kokrajhar from 12-00 noon on 11/04/2025

Sd/- Superintending Engineer  
Kokrajhar Circle (Irrigation),  
Kokrajhar, BTC

## Tripura to replace paper ration cards with PVC ones: Official

Know Your Customer (KYC) process has been extended from March 31 to April 30



**AGARTALA, April 11:** The Tripura government has decided to replace all paper ration cards with new polyvinyl chloride (PVC) ones, an official said on Friday.

Printing of 4 lakh PVC cards has already started, Sumit Lodh, Additional Secretary of the Food and Civil Supplies Department, said.

"We have decided to distribute PVC ration cards replacing paper-made ration ones", Lodh told PTI. The deadline for completing the Know Your Customer (KYC) process has been extended from March 31 to April 30.

Families listed in the paper ration cards must visit their local government fair price shops to com-

plete the KYC, he added.

Lodh added that those who have already submitted their KYC will receive their PVC cards in the first phase.

Distribution will cover not just Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC), but all subdivisions and blocks, in a phased manner.

Out of 9.85 lakh ration card holders, around 4 lakh families have completed KYC and will receive their new PVC cards soon, he added.

"We have requested the National Informatics Centre (NIC) to prepare a plan so that the ration card holders who are residing outside the state for various reasons get their KYC enrolled", he added. (PTI)

"ONE MAN INQUIRY COMMISSION HEADED BY JUSTICE ANIMA HAZARIKA, FORMER JUDGE OF GAUHATI HIGH COURT TO INVESTIGATE INTO THE INCIDENT OF UMRANGSO MINES TRAGEDY AND FIX RESPONSIBILITY ON CONCERNED OFFICERS, INDIVIDUALS MINING COMPANIES AND INSTITUTIONS IF ANY"

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas a One Man Inquiry Commission headed by Justice Anima Hazarika, former Judge of the Gauhati High Court, has been constituted by the Governor of Assam to investigate into the incident of Umrangso Mines Tragedy and fix responsibility on concerned officers, individuals, mining companies and institutions if any and the Notification in respect of the same has been issued by the Government of Assam, Political (A) Department, Dispur, Guwahati-6 being Memo No. ECF-606737/3 dated 24/01/2025, fixing the following terms of reference of the Commission: -

- To ascertain the facts, circumstances and causes leading to the incident of the tragedy resulting in the reported death of 4 (four) persons and several others missing.
- To ascertain person(s)/organization(s) responsible for the illegal activities if any of rat-hole mining in the area.
- To determine if there were any lapses on the part of any Authority, and, if so, to fix responsibility thereof;
- To suggest measures so that such situations/incidents are dealt with effectively in future.
- Any other matter relevant to the subject matter of the inquiry.

Whereas the One Man Inquiry Commission shall record, the evidences, statements etc. in order to conduct the Inquiry at Conference Room of Head of plant Office Building of North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (Neepec), Umrangso, Dima Hasao on 21-04-2025 from 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Now therefore, if any person(s), organization(s), family members of the victims has any information about the incident or is/are willing/desirous to give oral evidence/material evidence before the Inquiry Commission he/she/they is/are requested to appear before the Commission at **Conference Room of Head of Plant Office Building of North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (Neepec), Umrangso, Dima Hasao on 21-04-2025 from 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.** for recording the same.

Sd/-  
Secretary  
One Man Inquiry Commission headed by  
Justice (Retd.) Anima Hazarika  
"Meenakshi", House No. 41, Ambikagiri  
Nagar, R. G. Baruah Road, Guwahati -24

DIPR /D/HLT/4/12-Apr-25

# PM takes dig at opposition parties, says they only promote family interests

## 'Soul of India resides in its diversity and Kashi is its most beautiful picture



**VARANASI, April 11:** In a swipe at opposition parties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said those hankering for power focus solely on promoting their own families, while his government works on the theme of inclusive development.

Addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone of 44 projects worth ₹ 3,880 crore here, he said, "Our guiding mantra in serving the

nation has always been 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'. With this spirit, we continue to move forward for the betterment of every citizen."

He said in contrast, those who are power hungry play political games day and night, driven not by national interest but by a single-minded focus on family-based support and family-centric development.

"Those who play games day and night only to

grab power, their principle is 'parivar ka saath parivar ka vikas' (family support, family development)," the prime minister said in his Parliamentary constituency.

Elaborating on the development witnessed in his constituency, he said earlier Purvanchal lacked health facilities but today Kashi is becoming the health capital.

"Today India is moving ahead with both development and heritage together and our Kashi is becoming the best model for this," he said, adding, "The soul of India resides in its diversity and Kashi is its most beautiful picture". Modi also said that his government is working to ensure that the 2036 Olympics take place in India.

Among the projects inaugurated by Modi were schemes focused on rural development, including 130 drinking water projects, 100 new anganwadi centres, 356 libraries, a polytechnic college in Pindra, and a government degree college, Varanasi Divisional Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma said.

The prime minister also inaugurated a transit hostel at the police lines and police barracks in Ramnagar and four rural roads, he said.

Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were among those present on the occasion. (PTI)

## BJP distracting public by raising divisive issues, ignoring real concerns: Akhilesh Yadav

**ALIGARH, April 11:** Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Friday launched a scathing attack on the BJP accusing them of deliberately raking up divisive issues to distract the public from real concerns including unemployment, deteriorating law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a private event on Ramghat Road in Aligarh, Yadav said, "Whenever the BJP faces mounting public anger over real issues, it creates unnecessary controversies to divert attention. The only thing the BJP government has to offer is hate politics and divisive agendas."

Yadav alleged that the BJP-led state government had consistently painted a misleading picture of Uttar Pradesh's law and order situation by providing "false figures" but the ground reality was now visible to everyone.

"Whenever opposition leaders raise their voice, they are silenced with fake and fabricated cases," he said. "Issues today are being decided not on merit but on narrow political considerations. The Constitution of India is under serious threat."

Targeting the Centre's economic policies, the former chief minister said the re-

cent economic downturn had exposed how the government had played into the hands of a few corporates at the cost of farmers and the common man.

"The government has failed to ensure fair selling prices for farmers. Wheat is being bought at distress prices by corporates, showing how the system is stacked against the farmer," Yadav said.

In response to questions about the recent controversy surrounding SP MP Ramji Lal Suman's remarks on Rajput icon Rana Sangha, Yadav sought to defuse tensions, saying, "Once a matter has been expunged from the records of Parliament, it should be left alone."

He warned that rather than resolving contentious issues, the state government was "taking the help of private armies and trooper-like groups, much like the Nazis in Germany, to create trouble and intimidate opponents."

Yadav accused the BJP of employing such groups alongside the partisan use of police to "crush dissent, including in the media."

He claimed that the real state of law and order had come to light when, during his recent visit to Varanasi, Prime Minister

## 'Scams, kickbacks and favoritism have become order of the day' in Karnataka: BJP



**NEW DELHI, April 11:** The BJP on Friday said the Congress government in Karnataka may not last long with corruption and appeasement politics becoming the "order of the day" in the state.

This came after the Karnataka State Contractors Association (KSCA) on Thursday claimed that "unseen hands and brokers" were active in the offices of Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and two other senior Cabinet Ministers, alleging that the menace of commission in the state was now more than the previous BJP government.

Responding to the allegations, the deputy chief minister on Friday suggested that if anyone has de-

manded commission from the contractors to pay their bills, then they should file a complaint with the Lokayukta.

"In Karnataka, corruption is at its peak in an organised manner," BJP national spokesperson Pratyush Kanth told a press conference at party headquarters here, reacting to the development.

"You have institutionalised corruption. Only big contracts are getting their bills cleared. The medium and the small ones are struggling," he said.

Kanth said the Congress had promised "so many things" during the state assembly polls but "scams, kickbacks and favoritism have become order of the day"

under the party's rule in the state. While the crisis of "water and electricity bills" continues in Karnataka, the road taxes on new vehicles and bus fares have gone up, he said.

"The common people are bleeding there... This corrupt government is not going to last long. This project of Rahul Gandhi to ensure corruption all over KA is not going to have the light of the day," he added.

Citing recent remarks reportedly made by Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's Economic Advisor Basavaraj Rayareddy, the BJP spokesperson said people in power, who run the state, are now saying that the state has become number one in corruption.

"Even the revenue minister of Karnataka had (earlier) gone on record to say that there is a lot of corruption in his department... This is very disturbing because Karnataka has to be the 'khatka khat model' of Rahul Gandhi," he said, taking a swipe at the Congress leader.

Rayareddy, who was reported to have recently said at an event that Karnataka is number one in corruption, later clarified that his remarks were misquoted and taken out of context. (PTI)

## Congratulate Centre on bringing back Rana but what happened to black money: Farooq

**SRINAGAR, April 11:** National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah on Friday congratulated the central government over the extradition of 26/11 Mumbai attacks accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana but simultaneously took a dig at the BJP over its promise of bringing back black money.

"I congratulate them that they at least brought someone back. They were also going to bring back the black money and give ₹ 15 lakh to everyone, what happened to that?" Abdullah told reporters here when asked about Rana's extradition to India from the US.

Referring to a 'fatwa' (Islamic decree) issued by Saudi Arabia's Fatwa Board last year, Abdullah said no one should support the enemies of Islam.

"Attempts were being made to create a single book out of Torah, Bible and Quran, attempts were being made to have mosques, churches and those of Jews (syn-

agogue).

"But, it has been clearly written in the fatwa that Islam is the final religion, Quran is the final book and Prophet Mohammad is the last messenger. No one should support the enemies of Islam who are going towards hell and those who go with them will also go to hell," he said.

He was talking about the fatwa issued by the Permanent Committee for Fatwa in Saudi Arabia in September last year on the controversy regarding the unity of religions or what is called the Abrahamic House.

To a question about the PDP protest against the Waqf Amendment Act earlier in the day, the NC chief said, "It is a good thing. Let them protest. This is a free country."

Asked about the party's stand on the Waqf Amendment Act, Abdullah said the party is going to the Supreme Court to fight it. (PTI)

## Move against CM's daughter politically motivated: CPI(M)

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, April 11:** The Serious Fraud Investigation Office's move against Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan's daughter Veena in an "illegal payment" case was another example of the Union government targeting opposition leaders using central agencies, CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan alleged on Friday.

"This is a political conspiracy by the Centre, right-wing media and parties opposed to the CPI(M)," Govindan said, addressing reporters here. He said the issue was between Veena's company, Exalogue, and Cochlin Minerals and Rutile Ltd (CMRL), who made monthly payment to the former for services provided by her company. The payment mode was transparent through bank transactions, he said.

The Chief Minister's name was dragged into the issue as part of a political conspiracy to tarnish the image of the CPI(M) and its prominent leader ahead of the coming elections to local bodies and next year's assembly poll, he charged. The SPIO hurriedly took up the issue pending before the court and filed a chargesheet as part of the political agenda against the CPI(M), Govindan said. (PTI)

## Delhi govt to bring new transparent excise policy: CM Rekha Gupta



**NEW DELHI, April 11:** The BJP government in Delhi will come up with a new "foolproof" excise policy, adopting best practices of other states to boost revenue, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said.

In an interview with PTI, she said the policy will be transparent and tailored to ensure it does not create any issue in society.

The BJP came to power in Delhi in February this year, unseating the Aam Aadmi Party. The alleged irregularities and corruption in the excise policy 2021-22 brought by the previous AAP government was one of the major poll planks for the BJP. This policy was scrapped after the charges surfaced.

During her interview with PTI on Thursday, Gupta said, "We will bring a new, foolproof policy that is transparent and generates revenue for the government."

The policy will be such that it does not cause any problems to the people and society at large, she said. "In some states, excise policies are doing fine. We will follow these best excise policies of different states."

The AAP replaced old excise policy in November 2021, implementing the new policy (2021-22) aimed at reforming liquor trade in Delhi. The policy, however, fell prey to allegations of irregularities and corruption.

A CBI probe was recommended by Lt Governor V K Saxena in July 2022 to look into the charges of irregularities and violation of rules in the formulation and implementation of the policy, soon after which the AAP government scrapped it.

Under the policy, private players were allowed to operate wholesale and retail liquor operations. The liquor vends were handed over to private companies and the government quit the business.

Eventually, the policy was scrapped on August 31, 2022 with private liquor shops shutting doors.

The old policy, under which the wholesale and retail liquor sales were handled by the Delhi government was implemented again and it continues.

Delhi at present has around 700 liquor stores operated by four Corporations of the government.

The Delhi Chief Minister on Wednesday held a review meeting with senior officials of the Excise Department in which formulation of the new policy was discussed.

In a post on X, the Chief Minister's Office said the government is committed to a "transparent and effective" excise policy. (PTI)

## BJP should fight TMC politically: TMC leader on MGNREGS dues on Bengal

**NEW DELHI, April 11:** A day after the Calcutta High Court questioned the Centre over the suspension of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in West Bengal, Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Saket Gokhale slammed the BJP-led government, saying it should fight them politically instead of targeting the people.

On Thursday, the Calcutta High Court directed the central government to explain why the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme should not be prospectively implemented in West Bengal, excluding four districts.

In a post on X, Gokhale said the Union government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has withheld over ₹ 7,500 crore of West Bengal's dues under the rural employment guarantee scheme, adding that the Centre's own data does not show any irregularity.

"After BJP lost the Assembly

elections in Bengal in 2021, the Modi Govt has withheld over 7500 crores of our state's dues under MGNREGS. What's shameful is that none of the 12 MPs and 2 Union Ministers of BJP from Bengal have asked the Union Govt to release these dues," Gokhale said in a post on X. He claimed this money belongs to the poor who have worked but have not been paid because the funds were withheld.

"The BJP has deprived the people of Bengal because they cannot defeat our leader Mamata Banerjee. It is important to note that there is not a single irregularity (according to the Union Govt's own data) in MGNREGS in Bengal," Gokhale claimed.

"Now, the Calcutta High Court has observed that it is ILLEGAL for the Modi Govt to suspend MGNREGS indefinitely. Why doesn't the BJP understand that depriving the people of Bengal will only make them lose elections? Why can't the BJP fight us politically fair and square instead of targeting the peo-

ple of Bengal?" he said.

While hearing petitions which demanded that beneficiaries be paid for work already completed under the scheme, the court observed that the MGNREGA does not allow for indefinite suspension of the scheme's implementation due to complaints.

It emphasised that appropriate remedial measures must be undertaken within a reasonable time frame. The state government's contribution, according to the apportionment under the MGNREGA, should also flow into the exchequer.

Directing the central government to submit a report addressing these issues within three weeks, the court scheduled the next hearing for May 15. According to the Rural Development Ministry, the release of funds to West Bengal under MGNREGS has been stopped since March 9, 2022 according to the provisions under section 27 of the MGNREGA, 2005 due to non-compliance with directions from the central government. (PTI)

## Nainar Nagendran all set to become next TN BJP prez, party picks Annamalai for national role

**CHENNAI, April 11:** BJP legislator from Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli constituency, Nainar Nagendran is all set to become the next state chief of the BJP, succeeding K Annamalai, who is now all set for a national role that seems to be an apparent reward for his work in the Dravidian heartland. BJP senior and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in the city to review the party's functioning and also discuss alliance related matters ahead of 2026 state polls, said Annamalai had made "commendable accomplishments."

"The Tamil Nadu BJP has received a nomination for the post of state president only from Shri @NainarBJP Ji. As the President of the Tamil Nadu BJP unit, Shri @annamalai\_k Ji has made commendable accomplishments. Whether it is carrying the policies of PM Shri @naren-

dramodi Ji to people or the programs of the party from village to village, Annamalai Ji's contribution has been unprecedented."

"The BJP will leverage Annamalai Ji's organizational skills in the party's national framework," Shah said in a social media update. Nagendran was the lone contestant in the fray with the backing of BJP leadership.

Nagendran, currently the state vice president, was formerly with the AIADMK. He was the first aspirant to arrive at the BJP state headquarters, Kamalalayam, in T Nagar, and file the nomination.

His name was proposed by the current party chief K Annamalai, Union Minister L Murugan, former Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan, and BJP legislator and Mahila Morcha President Vanathi Srinivasan. (PTI)

## Nadda launches Ayushman Bharat scheme in Odisha, sets Bengal as next target

**CUTTACK (ODISHA), April 11:** Union Health Minister J P Nadda on Friday launched the Ayushman Bharat Yojana in Odisha, and expressed hope that the central health insurance scheme will soon be implemented in neighbouring West Bengal - the only state where it is still not in use.

The Ayushman Bharat scheme was implemented in Odisha 10 months after the BJP came to power in the state, while assembly elections are due in West Bengal, currently ruled by the Trinamool Congress, in 2026.

Asserting that the BJP government has fulfilled its promises given to the people of Odisha, Nadda said the TMC government in West Bengal continued to reject the Centre's appeal to implement Ayushman Bharat scheme.

"There were three states - Odisha, Delhi and West Bengal - where the Ayushman Bharat scheme was not implemented. However, the scheme came into operation in Odisha and Delhi after the change of government in these states. The people of Bengal will also get the facility and the BJP is committed to provide this health scheme to all the citizens of India," he said.

Nadda claimed that the state govern-



ments which put hurdles before implementation of the Narendra Modi government's welfare schemes have paid a price.

"The people have rejected the governments in Odisha and also in Delhi," he said.

The BJP in February returned to power in Delhi after more than 26 years defeating the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party with a two-thirds majority.

Nadda recalled how he, as a Union health minister, had appealed to both

Naveen Patnaik and Aravind Kejriwal, erstwhile CMs of Odisha and Delhi respectively, to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme but got rejected.

"We have requested Naveen Babu several times, but he claimed that his BJD government's health scheme was better than Ayushman Bharat. Similar was the case of Kejriwal," he said.

He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the Ayushman Bharat Scheme at Ranchi in September 2018.

However, three states refused to implement it and two of them have been ousted from power by the people.

Billed as the world's largest government healthcare programme, the scheme aims to provide a coverage of ₹ 5 lakh per family annually.

Nadda said that as many as 61 crore people in the country are availing benefits from the scheme and the Union government in the last six years has spent ₹ 1.26 lakh crore towards the treatment of poor people.

Calling it a "historic day" for Odisha, Nadda said as many as 3.51 crore people of 1.03 lakh families of the state will get the benefit from the schemes like Ayushman Bharat, Ayushman Vaya-Vandana Yojana, and the state-run Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY).

The Union minister said each member of a family will get separate cards and they can avail the health service facility in 30,000 government and private hospitals across the country.

"I understand that many people from Odisha work in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and other places. They all can avail of this facility," Nadda said.

Nadda launched the scheme in the pres-

ence of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and others.

Addressing the gathering, Majhi said that the previous BJD government did not implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme due to political reasons, because of which the people suffered.

"However, after installation of the double engine government (in Odisha), the people are getting benefits earlier denied to them," he said.

The chief minister said the BJP government has been filling vacant posts of doctors and para-medical staff.

"Today our government completes 10 months and during this period, we have filled up 4000 posts including doctors in the healthcare facilities," he said adding that 5,374 doctors and dentists will be recruited very soon.

Majhi said the Odisha government is emphasising opening medical colleges.

At present the state has 12 medical colleges and two others will start functioning soon, he said.

Budgetary allocations have been made for setting up new medical colleges in Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Nabarangpur and Dhenkanal districts along with four dental colleges. (PTI)

**CONSTRUCTION OF 2 BAY PARCEL SHED AT LUMDING**  
 E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/30 of 2025; Dated: 07-04-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN. 1. Brief Description of Item:** Construction of 2 bay parcel Shed at both ends of each platform for loading & unloading of parcel packages at Lumding under jurisdiction of ADEN/IL/Lumding. **Tender Value:** ₹ 2,26,34,834.25. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 63,200.00. E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 01-05-2025 and opened at 15:00 hrs. on 02-05-2025. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 01-05-2025 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>  
**DRM/Works, Lumding**  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
 Serving Customers with a Smile

### NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from Binod Kumar Bothra & Binod Bothra Jain to Binod Kumar Jain before Notary Nagan Assam, Dtd 9/4/25. From today I will be known as Binod Kumar Jain S/O Lt Punam Chand Bothra for all purpose.



## Teachers who lost jobs hold march demanding release of OMR sheets



**KOLKATA, April 11:** The familiar scenes of mass agitation returned to the streets of Kolkata on Friday — echoes of the protests over the ghastly rape-murder at RG Kar Hospital — this time led by thousands of teachers and non-teaching staff who lost their jobs following a Supreme Court verdict that invalidated their appointments.

Chants of 'We want justice' shattered the sultry afternoon air, accompanied by visible outrage and frustration as demonstrators marched along the Salt Lake route. Their march from Karunamoyee to Acharya Sadan, the office of the West Bengal School Service Commission (SSC), was held in demand for the release of the 22 lakh Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) sheets to identify the genuine candidates who appeared for the 2016 SSC exams and whose entire panel was annulled by the top court after it found the selection process "vitiated and tainted" beyond redemption.

Carrying placards demanding reinstatement, the protesters were joined by members of various civil society organisations in a show of solidarity.

"SSC should release the copies of the OMR sheets to help segregate the eligible teachers," a demonstrator said.

The commission had earlier told both the Calcutta High Court and the Supreme Court that it no longer has the OMR sheets or their digital copies, as they were destroyed.

Protesters squatted on the road and eagerly awaited the outcome of the crucial meeting scheduled to be held between representatives of the teachers who lost their jobs and the state education minister Bratya Basu later in the day.

"We will not leave the streets

until a mutually agreeable solution is found to this impasse," another protester said.

"This agitation will only gain momentum from here on if the state government fails to reinstate the deserving candidates who were put in the same bracket and punished with the tainted ones who gained employment by fraudulent means."

A large contingent of police and RAF personnel were deployed at the SSC office to stop the agitation from spiralling out of control.

Echoing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks earlier this week at a meeting of teachers who lost their jobs, Basu had announced that the Bengal government would soon move a clarification petition before the Supreme Court concerning the fate of the majority of the nearly 26,000 candidates whose appointments have been rendered null and void but against whom no mal-practice has been proved.

Basu said the government would follow this up with a review petition on the top court's judgment for eligible candidates.

The West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, meanwhile, has already moved a prayer for modification of the SC judgment urging the court to permit "untainted" appointees to continue in service till the end of the ongoing academic year, or until the process of fresh appointments to such posts is concluded, whichever is earlier.

Friday's protests gained additional steam on account of police action against protesting teachers at the office of District Inspector of Schools at Kasba in South Kolkata on Wednesday where the men in uniform were seen opening lathi charge on the agitators and even showering them with blows and kicks.

Teachers claimed that the police officer accused of kicking the protesters in Kasba has now been assigned to investigate the cases registered against them.

"What can we expect from such a probe? In no civilised society does an accused investigate the victims," a protester remarked. (PTI)

## Couple held for killing nephew

**BAHRAICH (UP), April 11:** The police here have arrested a man and his wife for allegedly strangling their 22-year-old visiting nephew to death after finding him in an "objectionable condition" with a girl from their family, officials said on Friday. The body of Bhanu Pratap alias Sudhir was found on March 29 near a school outside Dharmanpur village in a sack with a rope tied around his neck. Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Durga Prasad Tiwari told reporters Friday that Bhanu, a resident of Aurahi village in the district, was visiting his maternal uncle, Chetram Gautam, in Dharmanpur when the alleged incident happened. Bhanu's father has accused Chetram and his family of the alleged murder, the ASP said. Tiwari said that police investigation, which involved analysing CCTV footage, mobile records, call details, witness statements, and circumstantial evidence, pointed to Chetram and his wife, Sundari Devi, as the perpetrators. "The couple allegedly took this step after finding Bhanu in an 'objectionable condition' with a young girl from their family," the officer stated. "During interrogation, the accused (couple) confessed to the crime, admitting they stuffed Bhanu's body in a sack, tied a rope around his neck to mislead investigators, and disposed it off near a government school. They carried the body on a motorcycle," the officer added. (PTI)

## Legacy of legendary Gen Zorawar Singh recalled 'Chair of excellence' set up at think-tank CLAWS



**NEW DELHI, April 11:** A courageous warrior with "strategic brilliance" and a "master of high-altitude warfare" who led multiple historic campaigns into the Tibet region is how senior army officers and military historians described the legacy of General Zorawar Singh on Friday.

It was also announced on the occasion that a "chair of excellence" has been established in his honour at Delhi-based think-tank Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS).

The "chair of excellence" has been established by Jammu and Kashmir Rifles regiment.

Jammu and Kashmir Rifles regiment and CLAWS hosted a symposium on the legendary military general's life and legacy at Manekshaw Centre at Delhi Cantonment.

The event got underway with a keynote address by Colonel of the Regiment of Jammu and Kashmir Rifles & Ladakh Scouts, Lieutenant General M P Singh, followed by presentations by a panel of speakers.

Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi attended the event as a chief guest.

Lieutenant General Singh in his keynote address said that General Zorawar's rise was "purely merit based".

He was a "military genius" who is

known for his ability to conduct "high-altitude warfare", the officer said.

General Zorawar's saga is of courage and "strategic brilliance", he added.

The military experts, who addressed the gathering, described his campaigns in Tibet in the 19th century as one of the most "audacious and ambitious" military campaigns in history.

General Zorawar was a "master of high-altitude warfare" was the refrain at the symposium.

The military general was born in 1786 in Kehloor in Bilaspur, which falls in today's Himachal Pradesh.

His campaigns in Tibet took place in the first half of the 19th century.

CLAWS Director General, Lieutenant General Dushyant Singh (retd.), spoke about the establishment of the "chair of excellence".

He described General Zorawar as an "astute strategist" who was driven by an "unwavering will to achieve victory at any cost".

A highlight of the symposium was General Dwivedi unveiling of two books, one being -- 'The Warrior Gurkha' on the life and legacy of Param Vir Chakra awardee, Lieutenant Colonel Dhan Singh Thapa, written by his daughter Madhulika Thapa.

## Rana's extradition a big breakthrough, will reveal real plot of 26/11 attacks: Ajit Pawar

**PUNE, April 11:** Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday termed Tahawwur Husain Rana's extradition a major breakthrough and said it would help unravel the crucial details of the conspiracy behind the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

The 64-year-old Canadian citizen of Pakistani origin, a key accused in the case, landed in Delhi in a special plane from Los Angeles Thursday evening. A special court subsequently remanded him in the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for 18 days.

Rana is accused of conspiring with David Coleman Headley alias Daoud Gilani, and terrorist organisations Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Harkat-ul-Jihadi Islami (HUJI) along with other Pakistan-based co-conspirators, to carry out the three-day terror siege that killed 166 people.

Speaking to reporters in Pune, Pawar recalled being present in Mumbai during the 2008 attacks along with the then chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and home minister RR Patil.

"After the operation, we visited all the attack sites. A probe was



launched to identify the masterminds. Now that this man (Rana) has been extradited to India, it will come to light who were behind the attacks, on whose orders he acted and what their objective was," Pawar said.

Pawar was here to pay tribute to Mahatma Phule at Phule Wada on the birth anniversary of the iconic social reformer.

Asked about the discontent ex-

pressed by senior OBC (Other Backward Class) leader and his NCP colleague Chhagan Bhubhal over the slow pace of Phule Wada's expansion, Pawar said he has directed the Pune civic body to expedite the work and ensure land acquisition for the memorial.

"Bhubhal saheb won't have to go on a hunger strike. The work will be completed," he said.

Bhubhal, who has been vocal

about not being nominated for the Rajya Sabha or given a ministerial berth in the state, had said on Thursday that since he holds no position in the government, he could sit on a fast to push for the expansion of the Phule memorial.

Referring to the death of a pregnant woman after she was allegedly denied admission at Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital in Pune, Pawar said action will be taken once the third report on the matter is received by the state government.

Asked whether he had forgotten the protests he had led against rising fuel and LPG prices while in the opposition, Pawar said, "I haven't forgotten. But global fuel price fluctuations are real. After Donald Trump came to power in the US, his tariff policies have affected the global economy."

Though there has been a hike of ₹ 50 (per LPG cylinder), Prime Minister Narendra Modi has told oil companies not to increase prices and bear the difference themselves, he claimed.

"Since Home Minister Amit Shah is in the state, we will discuss the issue with him," he added. (PTI)

## Surveyor found dead five days after going missing in Rann of Kutch

**GANDHIDHAM (GUJ),**

**April 11:** A surveyor of a private firm, who went missing while at work in the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat five days ago, was found dead in the desert, police said on Friday.

The body of Arbab Pal (55) was found near Bela village in Rapar taluka of Kutch district on Thursday evening, an official said.

As per a preliminary probe, Pal lost his way in the desert during a road survey and eventually died of dehydration. He was last seen on April 6, inspector J B Bubadia said.

"Pal, a resident of West Bengal, must have walked nearly 15 km in these five days after he got lost in the vast desert. According to doctors, he died due to dehydration. To ascertain the exact cause, we have decided to go for a panel post-mortem," he said.

Rann of Kutch is a large area of salt marshes in the Thar Desert in Gujarat's Kutch district.

Pal worked as a surveyor for a private firm and was surveying land for a solar project. He had reached the Bela Border

Outpost (BoP) with his assistant, Chela Ram, and a driver on April 6.

The official said, "After making an entry at Bela BoP, the trio went into the desert for some distance in their vehicle. They then started walking, as there was no road ahead. After some distance, Pal and Chela Ram asked the driver to fetch water from the vehicle as they were not carrying any."

He said that while the driver went back for the water bottle, the duo kept walking, as Pal wanted to carry on with the survey.

Bubadia said while Chela Ram got exhausted and refused to walk further, Pal decided to go on to finish his work. When the driver returned with water, Chela Ram tried looking for Pal, who was nowhere to be seen.

"The driver and assistant arrived at the Border Security Force (BSF) camp at the BoP and sought help to locate Pal. A joint team of the police and BSF used drones in their search but couldn't locate him. The local police reached the body on Thursday evening," he said. (PTI)

## Transshipment cargo from Bangla grew by 46 pc from FY24 to FY25 at Bengal's Petrapole: Official data

**KOLKATA, April 11:**

Transshipment cargo from Bangladesh for re-export through India grew by 46 per cent between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscals at the Petrapole Land Port in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, according to official data.

However, no truck from Bangladesh carrying transshipment cargo for third countries entered through the Petrapole border since April 9, after the Indian government revoked the facility granted to the neighbouring country in 2020, an official said.

In the 2023-24 fiscal, 3,473 trucks carrying 4,733 consignments worth ₹ 2,357.27 crore entered India from Bangladesh through Petrapole, according to data provided by the Petrapole Clearing Agents' Staff Welfare Association (PCASWA).

In the 2024-25 financial year, 4,861 trucks transported 7,772 consignments worth ₹ 3,446.66 crore, reflecting a 36 per cent increase in truck movement and a 46 per cent jump in cargo value over the previ-

ous fiscal, it said.

India had allowed transshipment of export cargo from Bangladesh to third countries via Indian land customs stations, and subsequently through Indian ports and airports since June 29, 2020.

However, on April 8 this year, the Indian government revoked the transshipment facility, leading to the Petrapole customs denying clearance for such third country cargo. Following the decision, Benapole port in Bangladesh returned the first set of four trucks carrying transshipment cargo on April 9.

"No trucks from Bangladesh carrying transshipment cargo for third countries have entered the Petrapole border since April 9, and the situation will remain as such until further orders. However, normal direct import-export activity with Bangladesh continues uninterrupted," Petrapole Land Port Manager Kamlesh Saini told PTI.

According to the data of the PCASWA, of the around 50-60 trucks that

arrived from Bangladesh before April 9, around 15-20 carried containers with finished garments destined for Western markets such as Europe and the United States. Nearly 400 Indian trucks, on the other hand, entered the neighbouring every day through the Petrapole-Benapole border.

"Primarily, finished branded ready-made garments were entering India for air transport to Europe and the US from Delhi and Mumbai airports. Bangladeshi exporters used air freight for high-value cargo to ensure faster delivery to clients. Traditional sea freight often involves delays due to congestion," PCASWA secretary Kartik Chakraborty said.

On India revoking the transshipment facility, an official of the Clearing Agents Staff Association in Bangladesh's Benapole said, "This is not good news for exporters of Bangladesh garment at a time when the industry is reeling under huge stress due to global demand. It will impact border trade." (PTI)

## PCB issues advisory to Pithampur plant for essential works before Union Carbide waste incineration

**INDORE, April 11:** The Pollution Control Board (PCB) has issued an advisory to a private company for essential works at its waste disposal plant in Pithampur, where waste from the defunct Union Carbide factory in Bhopal is to be incinerated, an official said on Friday.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has allowed the state government to dispose of the chemical waste at the unit in Dhar district after it was told that trial incineration did not cause any adverse consequences.

"On the High Court's instructions, the waste left over from the Union Carbide factory is to be disposed of at the waste disposal plant in Pithampur. The PCB has issued an advisory to a private company operating the plant," Indore division commissioner (revenue) Deepak Singh told PTI. According to the advisory, some essential works needed to be carried out at the Pithampur plant, and once these are completed, the process of burning the remaining waste will begin at this unit.

Singh, however, did not give details of the works but said they were expected to be completed in two weeks.

As per the high court's directive on March 27, the remaining Union Carbide waste is to be burned at a maximum rate of 270 kg per hour under the supervision of technical experts of the Central and State pollution control boards.

The state government estimates that the entire waste can be burnt in 72 days.

On February 18, the HC allowed the state government to carry out a trial run at Pithampur in three phases.

On January 2, a total of 337 tonnes of waste was transported to the waste disposal plant operated by a private company in Pithampur, about 250 km from the state capital.

On the intervening night of December 2 and 3, 1984, highly toxic Methyl Isocyanate gas leaked from Union Carbide's pesticide factory in Bhopal.

At least 5,479 people were killed, and thousands of others suffered disabilities and other health problems following the gas leak, considered to be one of the worst industrial disasters in the world.

After the waste from the factory was transported to Pithampur, an industrial town, there were protests, with local leaders apprehending that the disposal would affect people's health and the environment. Some activists approached the high court. The state government, however, assured that the process will be safe.

According to the state government, the waste from the Union Carbide factory includes soil from the premises of this closed unit, reactor residues, Sevin (pesticide) residues, naphthal residues and "semi-processed" residues.

The state pollution control board has stated that according to scientific evidence, the effect of Sevin and naphthal in this waste has now become "almost negligible". (PTI)

## Terrorist killed in encounter in Kishtwar

**JAMMU, April 11:** One terrorist was killed Friday in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, while a separate operation to track down a group of three militants is underway in Udhampur district, Army officials said.

The security agencies have expanded the scope of surveillance to the Baderwah area of Doda district to keep a track on terrorists potentially moving between different locations in the hilly districts of the Jammu region.

The officials said the encounter in Kishtwar broke out during an intelligence-based search-and-seizure operation launched jointly by the Army and the Jammu and Kashmir Police in the Chatru forest area of the district.

During the operation, the forces established contact with the terrorists. "The terrorists were effectively engaged, and a firefight ensued. One terrorist has been neutralised so far," the Army's White Knight Corps, or 16 Corps, said in a post on X.

"Despite hostile terrain and adverse weather, our brave soldiers continue relentless operations," it added. Special forces braved high-snow areas and treacherous terrains to track down one terrorist, while a few others are still on the move under significant pressure from security forces, the officials quoted above said.

A brief exchange of fire with terrorists occurred in the Naidgam area of Chatru on Wednesday resulting in launch of massive combing operation.

The slain terrorist reportedly was a part of the Saifullah module of Pakistan, but it has not been officially confirmed. This is the module that ambushed an army team in Doda on July 15, 2024, resulting in the death of an officer and a rifleman.

Security forces have intensified surveillance in the high-altitude areas of the Baderwah area of Doda district, considering the melting snow in the higher meadows, a major factor contributing to infiltration during summer months.

Supported by helicopters and drones, troops are maintaining a high degree of surveillance in high-altitude areas connecting Kishtwar, Udhampur, and Kathua districts, they said.

There have been five encounters in the past 19 days in the mountainous terrains of Kathua-Udhampur-Kishtwar, in which three terrorists were killed. Four police personnel were also killed, while three other police personnel and a girl sustained injuries.

Search operations resumed Friday in the Jopher-Marta forests in Udhampur district, officials said.

Equipped with sniffer dogs and aerial surveillance, multiple security agencies are combing the entire forest area to track down three terrorists hiding in the area, they added. The areas have been placed under night cordons to prevent terrorists from escaping, the officials said.

On Wednesday, during a search operation by police and other security forces, contact was established with terrorists in the Jopher-Marta belt in the Ramnagar police station area of Udhampur, leading to an encounter. (PTI)

### AFFIDAVIT

I, Nasor Ali, do hereby affirm and declare that I am a permanent resident of the below mentioned address and citizen of India by birth. My actual name is Nasor Ali which is recorded in my PAN Card. But my name has wrongly been recorded in my Voter ID, AADHAR Card and school records as Nasar Ali and Nazir Ali respectively. That this affidavit is required to be produced before the authority concerned as a piece of document.

Sd/-

Nasor Ali  
SO- Hussain Ali  
Vill- No. ½ Baraujhar,  
PO- Galandi, PS- Dalgao,  
Dist- Darrang (Assam)

No.CHD/UDD/2/15<sup>th</sup> FC/Tied/2<sup>nd</sup> Inst./2024/NIT-CS/5108  
Dated Kokrajhar the 10<sup>th</sup> April/2025

**PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

The Council Head of Department, Urban Development Department, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bid for the following scheme under 15th FC (Tied Grant) 2<sup>nd</sup> Installment for the year 2020-21 during 2024-25.

Group No.	Name of Schemes	Bid cost (Rs.)	Tender Value (Rs.)
Group-1	Supply of Stainless steel water filter (capacity 32 ltrs.) & Stainless steel water filter (capacity 40 ltrs.) for BPL/EWS beneficiary in Urban area of Kokrajhar Town.	600.00	19,03,200.00
Group-2	Supply of Dustbin 60 ltrs. For Commercial use in Urban area of Gossaigaon Town.	300.00	8,55,231.00
Group-3	Supply of Dustbin 240 ltrs. Capacity for road side in Urban area of Kajalgaon Town.	400.00	10,47,500.00
Group-4	Supply of Dustbin 20+30 ltrs. Capacity (door to door garbage collection) for BPL/EWS beneficiary and Dustbin 60 ltrs. Capacity for Commercial use in Urban area of Kajalgaon Town.	500.00	16,52,501.00
Group-5	Supply of Dustbin 240 ltrs. Capacity for road side use in Urban area of Bijni Town.	600.00	18,16,000.00
Group-6	Supply of Dustbin 60 ltrs. Capacity for road side use in Urban area of Bijni Town.	600.00	19,99,860.00
Group-7	Supply of Dustbin 20+30 ltrs. Capacity (door to door garbage collection) for BPL/EWS beneficiary in Urban area of Bijni Town.	500.00	13,84,140.00
Group-8	Supply of Dustbin 60 ltrs. Capacity for Commercial use in Urban area of Goreswar Town.	500.00	16,26,710.00

Last date of submission of completed tender is 30.04.2025 (up to 2:00 PM) and will be open on the same day. The detail tender documents may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours till 29.04.2025.

N.B.: The bill of contractor will be paid only after receiving the fund from BTC.

Sd/- CHD  
Urban Development Department,  
BTC, Kokrajhar

# It makes me so angry. Karan Johar on General Dyer's great- granddaughter calling Jallianwala Bagh victim 'a looter'

**MUMBAI, April 11:** Filmmaker Karan Johar found it ridiculous that General Dyer's great-granddaughter chose to describe a survivor of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre "a looter" when she met the family of the victim for a documentary.

A video, which is from a 2019 Channel 4 documentary and has gone viral on social media, shows Caroline Dyer, the great-granddaughter of General Reginald Dyer who led the British troops during the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, meet with Raj Kohli, whose great-uncle Balwant Singh survived the massacre by hiding under the pile of bodies.

Caroline praised her great-grandfather as someone greatly liked by Indians and "who spoke three or four Indian languages which very few people did."

Kohli spoke fondly about his great-uncle and described him as a bit of hellraiser as a young man, to which Caroline quickly added, "Ah, he was a looter, was he a looter", leading Kohli to confront her views that those gathered there on the fateful day of April 13, 1919 were rioters.

She then said, "I think history is history and you've got to accept that and not wallow in it."

At a promotional event for the film, Johar

was asked whether he had seen the video, to which Johar said he was left fuming when he saw the lady's response.

"I don't want to mince my words, be diplomatic in my answer or certainly beat around the bush when I say, how ridiculous she is to say that and how dare she? She was calling those thousands of people looters? They were innocent people who congregated right there for what was meant to be the auspicious day of Baisakhi, thinking something else was going to be the eventuality of the day and look what happened."

"The fact that she has even said those things, makes me so angry on a humanitarian level. Khooon khaulta hai jab maine wo video dekha with the fact that she has such disdain for one of the biggest genocides in the history of our nation and the world. The fact that she was disdainful of it makes me just angry and want to demand an apology even more."

Johar said General Dyer himself had admitted he only stopped shooting when the bullets ran out. He also called out Caroline for harping on her great-grandfather's love for Indian people and describing him as a compassionate person.

"What love can you have in your heart when your actions only spoke of hate? And

the fact that she is living in a la la land of her own and is in some delusion of her own. And I don't know her. I haven't met her and I don't wish to meet her. But the fact that she even said those things just makes me so angry," Johar said.

Akshay said one nation's trauma is other nation's lesson but Dyer's great-granddaughter never understood that.

"That's why she keeps on saying history is history... I don't think she has understood the lesson... And you will see that whole thing, the anger (in the film). By the time the film comes to the climax, you will understand how much anger there was. And I would rather say you watch the film to see the anger," he said.

Based on the book "The Case That Shook the Empire" by Nair's great grandson Raghu Palat and his wife Pushpa Palat, the film details the 1924 defamation trial in which Michael O'Dwyer, former Lieutenant Governor of Punjab and the architect of the massacre on 13 April 1919.

Johar said while everyone knows about the massacre very few people know about the case that Nair fought and the film demands that the British apologise for what happened in Jallianwala Bagh. (PTI)

## 'RRR' gets a nod from Academy in its stunt category announcement, Rajamouli reacts



**NEW DELHI, April 11:** A fight scene from SS Rajamouli's "RRR" is among the three images that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences shared on Instagram to announce their new Oscar category - Achievement in Stunt Design.

The picture from "RRR", which won the Best Original Song Oscar in 2023, depicts Jr NTR flying towards a tiger during a fight sequence.

The other two photographs are from Michelle Yeoh-starrer 2022 multiverse saga "Everything Everywhere All At Once" and the third one is from Tom Cruise-starrer 2011 "Mission Impossible - Ghost Protocol". It shows Cruise's Ethan Hunt climbing Dubai's Burj Khalifa.

"Stunts have always been part of the magic of movies. Now, they're part of the Oscars. The Academy has created a new annual award for Achievement in Stunt Design - beginning with the 100th Oscars in 2028, honoring films released in 2027," the Academy captioned the images on its official Instagram.

Rajamouli reshared the announcement and lauded the addition of the much-awaited category. "At last!! After a 100 year wait!!! Ecstatic for the new Oscars stunt design category for the films releasing in 2027! Huge thanks to David Leitch, Chris O'Hara, and the stunt community for making this historic recognition possible, and to @TheAcademy, CEO Bill Kramer, and President Janet Yang for honoring the power of stunt work," Rajamouli wrote.

"Thrilled to see #RRRMovie's action visual shining in the announcement," he added. Rajamouli's "RRR" released in 2022, starring Ram Charan and Jr NTR. (PTI)

## AR RAHMAN TO REUNITE WITH SHIAMAK DAVAR FOR HIS 'THE WONDERMENT TOUR'



**MUMBAI, April 11:** Music maestro AR Rahman has joined hands with noted choreographer Shiamak Davar for his highly anticipated "The Wonderment Tour", to be held next month.

The "Wonderment Tour" will be a grand celebration of Rahman's musical legacy, taking audiences on a spectacular journey through his timeless hits, while Davar's choreography promises to elevate the experience with his signature style, a press release issued here read. "Our journey together on 'Taal' and 'Kisna' was an unforgettable one, and I've no doubt that in "The Wonderment Tour" he will create something truly magical. The "Wonderment Tour" is in every sense a celebration of music, dance, and the magic that happens when two art forms come together to create something extraordinary and who better than Shiamak for this" Rahman said in a statement.

Davar said he is thrilled to be working with Rahman again. "He has an unparalleled ability to touch hearts through his music, and I'm thrilled to bring his compositions to life through dance. With 'The Wonderment Tour', we are not just showcasing his music — we're taking the audience on a journey of pure emotion, rhythm, and joy. It's a performance that I believe will stay with them forever," the choreographer said. The concert, conceptualized by Rahman in collaboration with Percept Live, and co-produced between Percept Live, Fair Game and Jo Entertainment, will be held on May 3 at the DY Patil Stadium. (PTI)

## Akshay on Jaya Bachchan's criticism of 'Toilet Ek Prem Katha': If she has said it, then it must be right

**MUMBAI, April 11:** Akshay Kumar on Friday said only a fool would criticise his social dramas such as "Padman" and quickly backtracked when informed about Jaya Bachchan's criticism of the title of his film "Toilet Ek Prem Katha".

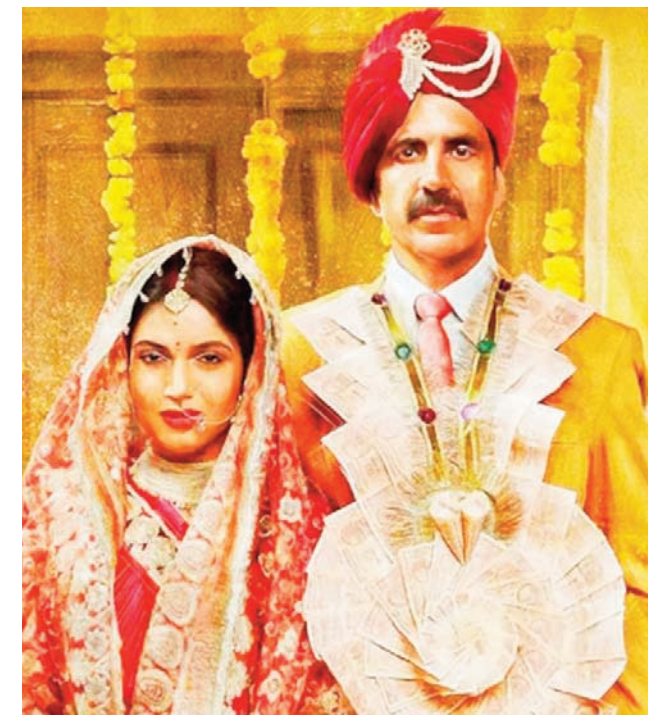
"If she has said it, then it must be right. I don't know. If I have made a mistake by making a film like "Toilet Ek Prem Katha" and then if she says it, then it must be right," the actor said when told about Jaya Bachchan's remarks.

But replying to the journalist's initial question about being at the receiving end of criticism for his social and political films, Akshay said, "I don't think anyone has criticised my films, koi bewakoof hi hoga aisi criticise karega. I have made 'Padman', 'Airlift', and "Toilet -Ek Prem Katha", "Kesari" and "Kesari 2" and there are many such films... I have made these films with all my heart. A film teaches so many things to people. I don't think anyone has criticise it." "Toilet Ek Prem Katha" promoted the government campaign against open defecation.

Jaya Bachchan, in a recent interview with India TV, had said that she would never see a film that had toilet in its title. "I would never go to watch a film with such a name. Is that really a name?"

Akshay spoke about how he will keep trying to bring about a positive change.

"It is always an effort. For example, 'Toilet' was an attempt to build a toilet in every home and the film is shown for free around villages by the government even today. 'Padman' was about sanitary pads so that a daughter could talk to her father about her periods. Somewhere they touch your consciousness and that's the attempt always." (PTI)



## Always wanted to tell stories like this: 'The Last of Us' creator Craig Mazin on moving from comedy to drama

**NEW DELHI, April 11:** Writer-director Craig Mazin says he still sneakily loves comedy, a genre that helped him hone his skills and eventually explore darker stories like the critically-acclaimed "Chernobyl" and "The Last of Us".

Mazin started his career in the entertainment business by writing comedies like "RocketMan", "Scary Movie 3", "Senseless" and "Identity Thief" and the last two movies in the "Hangover" franchise

The writer said it was not easy to take risks in the initial years of his career.

"I always wanted to tell stories like this ('Chernobyl' and 'The Last of Us'). The thing about the entertainment business is, it's very hard to get into, and when

you do get into it, someone says, 'Hey, you seem like a funny guy, you can write this funny thing'. And you do, and they pay you for it, and you have a wife and a baby and you need to keep working, (then) you just kind of keep going down that road," Mazin told PTI in a roundtable interview.

"I think what happens is you get to a place where you're comfortable enough in your career and you feel like, okay, I've got enough security and I've taken care of my family. Let me try to take some risks and show people this other side of what I've always wanted to do."

After years writing comedies, Mazin said he amassed enough security to break the mould and tell stories that were tonally dif-

ferent to his earlier work.

In 2019, Mazin came out with "Chernobyl" (2019), the critically-acclaimed HBO miniseries that revolved around the 1986 Chernobyl disaster and the cleanup efforts that followed. He was praised for turning a historical tragedy into a gripping human drama, which ultimately earned him a Primetime Emmy award.

"I was very fortunate to have HBO show me enough faith to say, 'Yeah, go ahead. Let's, let's show us what you got on 'Chernobyl'. I'll also say as we get older, we kind of change a bit as time goes on."

Mazin credits his time working as a comedy writer for shaping his storytelling instincts.

"I still sneakily love all the

funny parts... And they're very hard. Comedy is technically far more demanding than drama. I think comedy requires more intelligence. The smartest writers I know write things that are funny. Doesn't necessarily mean they're only comic writers, but they understand that funny is.

"Vince Gilligan, who made 'Breaking Bad', famously said he loved hiring comic actors for dramatic parts because they just had a depth of soul to them. And I think you see this more and more. I mean, look what Ben Stiller's doing with 'Severance'."

With "The Last of Us", Mazin, in his role as a writer and co-creator, brought the beloved PlayStation video game to life with emotional depth and character-driven storytelling. (PTI)



# Mohun Bagan, Bengaluru FC face off in blockbuster ISL Cup final



**KOLKATA, April 11:** League winners Mohun Bagan will fancy their chances of completing a double notwithstanding the challenge staring at them in the form of a formidable Bengaluru FC side in the final of the ISL Cup here on Saturday.

The match will be played at MBSG's fortress Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK) with a packed stadium

rooting for them, but BFC remain unperturbed as they head into what is expected to be a blockbuster clash.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant coach Jose Molina spoke about not caring about what happened in the past, while BFC gaffer Gerard Zaragoza and captain Gurpreet Singh Sandhu called Kolkata a second home.

Speaking at the pre-match

press conference, Molina stressed on the importance of looking forward and not worrying about the past.

"I don't care about what happened in the past. I am trying to do my best for Mohun Bagan Super Giant. We did well to win the League Shield and we are motivated to win the ISL Cup too. I don't need extra motivation from the fact that we lost

the final last year. We are already motivated enough."

Bengaluru FC head coach Gerard Zaragoza, who showed exemplary camaraderie by helping translate a question for his counterpart Molina, was chuffed about playing the big final in the mecca of India football.

"We are very motivated for the finals and excited for the

game. Everything is fine. We are confident and Kolkata is almost like our second home, because we were here for the Durand Cup. We had a good playoffs and we are looking forward to the grand finale."

MBSG captain Subhasish Bose, who Molina jokingly referred to as a striker in light of his goal-scoring form in this edition, shed light on the significance of the venue as a local boy.

"I am always thrilled to play in front of our home fans. I wish that the fans support us wholeheartedly against Bengaluru FC tomorrow."

MBSG are the League Shield Winners, whereas Bengaluru FC finished third in the standings and then crossed past the challenges that fronted them in the eliminator and semi-final to make it to the summit clash.

It is a fourth ISL finals appearance for BFC in just eight seasons, while MBSG have become the first team to reach this stage three successive times.

This fixture is an encore of the ISL 2022-23 showdown, when both these sides had clashed in the season finale, with the Kolkata-based team emerging triumphant via penalties in a very tight contest.

They have the chance to repeat that feat in front of a vociferous home crowd this time around, whereas Bengaluru FC will take confidence from their recent form to distort MBSG's record of staying unbeaten at home thus far in the current campaign. (PTI)

# India bids for 2031 AFC Asian Cup, will fight out with six other countries



**NEW DELHI, April 11:** India has submitted Expression of Interest (EoI) to host the 2031 AFC Asian Cup, the continent's showpiece football event, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Friday.

The AIFF was one of the seven national football bodies which submitted the EoI before the deadline of March 31.

"Yes, we have submitted the EoI to host the 2031 AFC Asian Cup. Let us see how it goes," AIFF's deputy secretary general M Satyanarayan told PTI.

India will face tough competition from established football powerhouses such as Australia, South Korea and United Arab Emirates to get the right to host the tournament. Indonesia and Kuwait have also submitted the EoI while there is a joint bid of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The host country, which will be picked in 2026, will get automatic berth in the tournament. India finished runners-up in the 1964 edition and were eliminated in the group stage in 1984, 2011, 2019 and 2023. The tournament began in 1956.

Out of the seven bidding countries, Australia, UAE, South Korea and Kuwait have earlier hosted the tournament.

Chairing the Asian Football Confederation's Executive Committee meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on the eve of the 35th AFC Congress, president Shaikh Salman lauded "the highest ever number of EoIs received in modern history and attributed the exceptional reception to the growing prestige of Asia's crown jewel."

The AFC had sent out invitations on November 27, 2024, for all member associations to ex-

press their interest in hosting Asia's most prestigious men's national team tournament. The deadline to submit the EoI was March 31, 2025.

"The unprecedented level of interest we have witnessed reflects both the high ambitions of the AFC's Member Associations and their increasing confidence in their own capacities and capabilities to host a tournament as significant as the AFC Asian Cup," Salman said.

The AFC will now work with the bidding countries on the delivery of the necessary bid documentation in accordance with the established timelines and processes. A bidding workshop is scheduled to be held later this month.

Thereafter, an overall evaluation of the bids will be undertaken by the AFC administration prior to the selection of the host for the 24-team competition by the AFC Congress in 2026.

India has never hosted the tournament, the continent's equivalent of World Cup. It had submitted bids to host the 2023 and 2027 editions when Praful Patel was the AIFF president.

The bid for the 2023 edition was withdrawn in 2018 and the same happened in case of the 2027 tournament also.

In December 2022, a few months after incumbent Kalyan Chaube took charge as AIFF president, India withdrew its bid to stage the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, declaring that hosting big-ticket events is not among its "strategic priorities" at that juncture.

The AIFF's decision had left Saudi Arabia to be the lone candidate to host the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, the 19th edition of the continent's showpiece event. (PTI)

# Norris warns of challenging F1 track for McLaren at Bahrain Grand Prix

**BAHRAIN, April 11:** After a setback at the Japanese Grand Prix, McLaren is hoping to get back on top of Formula 1 in Bahrain this week.

Oscar Piastri thinks the desert heat could make it a "friendly" track for McLaren — which has never won in Bahrain — but his teammate Lando Norris is predicting a "trickier weekend."

Max Verstappen gave his title defense a big boost with his win in Japan last week but needed a stunning lap in qualifying to take

pole position before holding off Norris and Piastri for the entire race.

Norris said Thursday that low-speed corners in Bahrain could work against McLaren.

"We still know that's one of our weaker areas, so I'm not expecting bad things, I'm just expecting a trickier weekend than the last few," said Norris, who leads Verstappen by one point in the standings.

Piastri predicted the Bahrain desert should suit McLaren's car, whose relatively

low tire wear could give the team an edge, but warned "it doesn't take much to go wrong for us to not be at the front."

"I think it being a little bit more difficult on tires and a bit warmer probably will be more friendly for us than others," said Piastri, who won the Chinese Grand Prix last month.

At Ferrari, seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton is looking to improve on a disappointing seventh place in Japan, while Verstappen's new teammate Yuki Tsunoda

needs a top-10 finish after he missed the points on his Red Bull debut at home.

The president of F1's governing body, the FIA, is pushing a plan which could transform the sport, but his way of running things has stirred up opposition.

The FIA is reportedly meeting in Bahrain with representatives of F1's engine manufacturers after FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem floated the idea of bringing back "the roaring sound of the V10 (engine) running on sustainable fuel." (AP)

# Race for Champions League places promises an intense finish in France

**PARIS, April 11:** The one-sided Ligue 1 title race ended with a whimper, but the chase for Champions League places promises to be an intense sprint finish in France.

With at least six teams still in contention and six games left, this weekend's matches could shake up the standings.

The top three get an automatic spot and the side in fourth enters the qualifying rounds. French champion Paris Saint-Germain has secured one of the spots, leaving three.

Only five points separate second-placed Marseille from Lille in seventh spot, while Monaco can leapfrog Marseille into second place if it wins their encounter on Saturday.

But if Monaco fails to win at Stade Louis II, then Strasbourg will move into third place with a home win on Saturday against Nice, which is sixth and in poor form following three defeats in the last four games.

That has opened the door for resurgent Lyon in fifth place.

Should Monaco and Strasbourg both lose, then seven-time French champion Lyon would move into third with a win at Auxerre on Sunday.

PSG wrapped up a record-extending 13th Ligue 1 title last weekend and is on course to finish the league season unbeaten.

Coach Luis Enrique's side is exempt from playing this weekend so as to better prepare for the second leg of its Champions League quarterfinal against Aston Villa.

PSG won the first leg 3-1 in Paris on Wednesday.

Some Strasbourg fans questioned the appointment of English coach Liam Rosenior at the start of the season, given he had little coaching experience and

none in the French league.

Not any more.

Strasbourg is on a five-game winning run and is unbeaten in eight games. Dutch striker Emanuel Emegha has flourished this season, netting a club-high 12 league goals.

Rosenior needs him to stay injury-free because, after playing Nice, Strasbourg goes to Monaco next weekend and hosts PSG next month.

Since losing to PSG 3-2 in a close-fought game in late February, Lyon has won four out of five games, losing only to Strasbourg.

Midfielder Corentin Tolisso, playmaker Rayan Cherki and forward Alexandre Lacazette — Lyon's key players — are all hitting form at the right time, while skillful Georgia forward Georges Mikautadze has found his scoring touch.

Monaco coach Adi Hütter confirmed that Philipp Köhn remains his No. 1 goalkeeper, despite costly errors last weekend.

Köhn lost his starting spot to Radoslaw Majecki this season, but then gained it back last month. However, Köhn was at fault for both goals in last Saturday's 2-1 loss at Brest.

"It wouldn't make sense to change," Hütter said Thursday. "We believe in Philipp. We win and lose together."

Lille's attack has diminished since Kosovo winger Edon Zhegrova sustained a pelvic injury in mid-December.

Goals have been harder to come by and star striker Jonathan David's form has noticeably dropped without Zhegrova's probing runs opening up space for him. Coach Bruno Genesio hoped to have Zhegrova back for Saturday's trip to Toulouse but said he does not feel ready. (AP)

# Salah set to complete decade-long stay at Liverpool after signing new contract

**LIVERPOOL, April 11:** Mohamed Salah's trophy-laden spell with Liverpool is set to extend to a decade after the prolific Egypt forward signed a new contract with the Premier League leader, ending months of uncertainty over his future.

The 32-year-old Salah was one of three key senior players — with Trent Alexander-Arnold and Virgil van Dijk — who were due to be out of contract at the end of this season.

He is the first to extend his stay, having already established himself as a club great with 243 goals in 394 appearances, placing him third in the list of Liverpool's all-time top scorers.



Liverpool didn't disclose the length of Salah's new deal in an announcement on Friday but manager Arne Slot did, saying in a news conference it was a two-year deal.

"Of course I'm very excited," Salah said. "We have a great team now. Before also we had a great team. But I signed because I think we have a chance to win other trophies and enjoy my football. 'It's great, I had my best years here. I played eight years, hopefully it's going to be 10. Enjoying my life here, enjoying my football. I had the best years in my career.'"

Salah has been either tied or alone as the Premier League's top scorer in three seasons, been voted

as the league's player of the year twice, and has lifted seven major trophies including the Premier League in 2020 and the Champions League in 2019.

Helped by Salah's league-leading 27 goals this campaign, Liverpool holds an 11-point lead in the Premier League in its bid for a record-tying 20th English top-flight title.

"I would like to say to (the fans), I am very, very happy to be here," Salah said. "I signed here because I believe we can win a lot of big trophies together. Keep supporting us and we'll give it our best, and hopefully in the future we're going to win more trophies."

Slot said he knew for some time that Salah was likely to stay at Liverpool and praised sporting director Richard Hughes for securing the forward's future.

"Mo Salah is such a great player that as a free agent he can go probably to every club in the world, wherever he wants to," Slot said. "But he stayed at our club." Attention now turns to whether Van Dijk and Alexander-Arnold will follow Salah in committing their future to Liverpool.

Van Dijk, the commanding Netherlands center back who has been at Anfield since 2018, said in comments reported Monday that he was getting closer to signing a new contract. (AP)

# Infantino promises 'the world will be welcomed' as Club World Cup makes US debut

**PHILADELPHIA, April 11:** Take a look at Ticketmaster or most secondary market websites this week and there are plenty of seats still available at various stadiums for this year's Club World Cup in the United States.

No, not the World Cup. The "FIFA Club World Cup 2025."

It's an international soccer tournament designed to bring together 32 professional teams from around the world with matches in 11 American cities, including Philadelphia. Lincoln Financial Field will host six group stage matches, a round-of-16 match, and, per FIFA, "a highly anticipated quarterfinal match" on July 4. In fact, while FIFA President Gianni Infantino promoted the tournament — a pair of Lombardi Trophies for the Philadelphia Eagles behind him — he alternated between Spanish and English and at one point turned to American reporters to say, "Buy tickets. There are still a few available."

Whether you call it soccer or call it football, the sport is coming to the U.S. this year, in part to promote next year's real deal World Cup. Next year's tournament, with 48 national teams for the first time, also will be played at various NFL stadiums, as well as in Canada and Mexico.

FIFA plans to spread the wealth of staging the warm-up event, pledging on Thursday USD 1 million to each of the 11 cities that will host Club World Cup matches this summer.

"Everyone thinks that the country winning their own national or continental competition is the best in the world," Infantino said, referring to tournaments like the Champions League and Copa Libertadores.

"But that's actually not the case. So we decided to create a real World Cup for teams."

This year's revamped and expanded tournament is set to start on June 15 and run through July 13, with the final set for New Jersey's MetLife Stadium — also the site of the 2026 World Cup final. FIFA announced earlier this year



a USD 1 billion broadcast deal with DAZN for broadcast rights to this summer's Club World Cup.

Two American teams are confirmed for this year's tournament: Inter Miami and the Seattle Sounders. Twelve teams from Europe will be included in the Club World Cup: Atletico Madrid, Bayern Munich, Benfica, Borussia Dortmund, Chelsea, Inter Milan, Juventus, Manchester City, Paris

Saint-Germain, Porto, Real Madrid and Salzburg.

Other teams that have qualified are Boca Juniors, Botafogo, Flamengo, Fluminense, Palmeiras and River Plate from South America; Leon, Monterrey and Pachuca from North America; Al Ahly, Esperance, Mamelodi Sundowns and Wydad from Africa; Al-Hilal, Al Ain, Ulsan and Urawa from Asia; and Auckland City from

Oceania.

"I don't have any concerns about ticket sales," Infantino said. "We'll have full stadiums in America. If in America you fill soccer stadiums for friendly games, then when you come with a World Cup and the best players to win a competition ... we'll have to promote it, we'll have to present it, we'll have to explain it to the people. That's what we are doing. But it's a celebration of soccer and the stadiums will be full and fans will be coming from all over the world."

The current U.S. political climate could be enough to scare off fans from traveling overseas for the games. Infantino met with President Donald Trump last month in the Oval Office to hype this event — and next year's true main event.

"The world loves America, whatever you might say," Infantino said. Infantino said he received assurances from the White House that any foreign fans would be in good hands during their time in the United States. (AP)

# LSG vs GT: In-form Pooran will have a Siraj riddle to solve

**LUCKNOW, April 11:** The prolific Nicholas Pooran will have his task cut out against a menacing Mohammed Siraj in a battle of equals as table toppers Gujarat Titans take on hosts Lucknow Super Giants in an IPL match here on Saturday.

In sapping Lucknow heat, an enticing battle is likely to ensue since there is not much to choose between the two teams. Titans have won four matches in a row to sit pretty on top of the table (8 points) by virtue of better net run-rate compared to Delhi Capitals, which also has four victories in its kitty.

LSG are currently fifth in a mid-table muddle with six points but it is a side on upward curve at the moment.

In all big battles, the important sub-plots hold the key and in this match, it would be a duel between tournament top scorer Pooran and Siraj, the best fast bowler on view.

With 288 runs, Pooran is on top of the leader-board of run-getters, with only one failure in five innings so far. The 24 sixes that he has smashed alongside 25 fours is a testimony to his dominance in the shortest format.

A strike-rate of 225 will intimidate any rival captain. Slotted at No.3 by head coach Justin Langer and skipper Rishabh Pant has worked perfectly for him.

But in Siraj, Pooran will face a crafty operator, who has been brilliant in Powerplay overs with 10 wickets in five games so far. An economy rate of 7.70 is more than decent if one factors in the pace at which the game is moving.

The best part about Siraj's bowling is his ability to bowl the conventional Test-match length first up with movement off the surface.

Hitting Siraj through the line during the Powerplay overs isn't always the easiest of propositions and not just Pooran but the two openers Aiden Markram and Mitchell Marsh



will also have to be careful while playing him.

Kagiso Rabada's absence hasn't really hurt Titans as was the case in the last game with an improved Prasad Krishna (8 wickets, ER 7.05) proving to be a revelation this season. Left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore (10 wickets, ER 7.25) has in fact overshadowed team's premier spinner Rashid Khan (3

wickets, ER 10)

Add to it, head coach Ashish Nehra's uncanny ability to find specific roles for unheralded bowlers like Arshad Khan or Kulwant Khejroliya, and it's not a surprise that the Titans have one of the most effective attacks in this competition.

Rashid looked good against Royals the other night and if he finds his rhythm, Titans

would be unstoppable. Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant are two class players but neither of the two skipper have been able to set the IPL stage on fire.

Gill had a great 2023 season when he scored 890 runs but since then his T20 game has tapered off a bit. He hasn't exactly been at his free flowing best since taking over the leadership role last season. He has so far scored 148 runs at a strike-rate of 146. B Sai Sudharsan (273) and Jos Buttler (203) has done bulk of the heavy lifting at the top order.

Pant, the player auctioned at the highest price (₹ 27 crore) in history of IPL, is enduring a rough season so far. Only 19 runs across four innings isn't a reflection of his abilities.

If Gill and Pant get going, it will be a treat for the weekend Lucknow crowd.

**Teams :**

**Gujarat Titans:** B Sai Sudharsan, Shubman Gill (Captain), Jos Buttler (wk), Shikhar Dhawan, Sherfane Rutherford, Rahul Tewatia, Rashid Khan, Kagiso Rabada, Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore, Mohammed Siraj, Prasad Krishna, Ishant Sharma, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Anuj Rawat, Mahipal Lomror, Arshad Khan, Jayant Yadav, Nishant Sindhu, Kulwant Khejroliya, Gerald Coetzee, Manav Suthar, Kumar Kushagra, Gurnoor Brar, Karim Janat.

**Lucknow Super Giants:** Lucknow Super Giants: Rishabh Pant (c&wk), David Miller, Aiden Markram, Aryan Juyal (wk), Himmat Singh, Matthew Bretzke, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Mitchell Marsh, Abdul Samad, Shahbaz Ahmed, Yuvraj Chaudhary, Rajvardhan Hangargekar, Arshin Kulkarni, Ayush Badoni, Shardul Thakur, Avesh Khan, Akash Deep, Manimaran Siddharth, Digvesh Rathi, Akash Singh, Shamir Joseph, Prince Yadav, Mayank Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi.

Match Starts at 3:30 pm. (PTI)

## Desperate SRH aim to press reset button against Punjab Kings

**HYDERABAD, April 11:** Desperate to arrest a worrying slide, Sunrisers Hyderabad will be eager to effect a turnaround when they host a power-packed Punjab Kings in their next IPL engagement here on Saturday.

Last season's finalists, SRH began their 2025 campaign on a thunderous note, racking up a mammoth 286 to dismantle Rajasthan Royals by 44 runs.

With an explosive batting line-up at their disposal, the 'Orange Army' seemed poised to become the first team to breach the 300-run mark but their ultra-aggressive approach has since backfired spectacularly.

In their last three matches, their attack-at-all-costs strategy with the bat yielded underwhelming totals of 163, 120, and 152 resulting in crushing defeats, and leaving them languishing at the bottom of the points table. They have worst Net-Run-Rate of -1.629 as of today.

With the bat, Sunrisers Hyderabad need far more from their big names like Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, and Heinrich Klaasen. Head and Sharma, who played a crucial role in delivering explosive starts last season, have failed to find their rhythm this year. In fact, SRH's best opening stand so far is a paltry 15.

Head's performance has tailed off dramatically, returning scores of 67, 47, 22, 4, and 8. Abhishek, who has struggled for consistency, with a top score of just 24 across five innings.

Kishan, after his unbeaten ton in the opener, has looked a shadow of himself, while SRH's middle-order mainstay Klaasen is yet to set the stage on fire. Yet, the team appears committed to sticking with their aggressive blueprint. Head coach Daniel Vettori stressed on the need for better game awareness rather than a shift in philosophy after their last defeat.

"I think we know the style is going to work, but we have to respect conditions, and we have to assess really well and that's probably something we haven't done," Vettori said.

While SRH's misfiring batting line-up has dominated post-match discussions, their bowling unit hasn't exactly lit up the tournament either. The pace attack has failed to make any meaningful impact. Despite the presence of seasoned campaigners like Pat Cummins, Mohammed Shami, and Harshal Patel, SRH have struggled to make early inroads.

The struggles continue into the middle overs, where they've failed to build pressure or claim key breakthroughs.

In stark contrast, Punjab Kings are riding a wave of early season momentum under the fresh leadership of Shreyas Iyer. (PTI)



## Indian team finishes second overall in ISSF World Cup



**BUENOS AIRES, April 11:** The Indian team finished a creditable second in the year's first ISSF World Cup for rifle, pistol and shotgun shooters despite the young trap mixed team pair of Lakshay Sheoran and Neeru missing out on a medal by a point in the final event of the tournament here.

After the bronze picked up by the mixed team air pistol pair of Suruchi and Saurabh Chaudhary on Thursday, India's overall tally swelled to eight medals, including four gold, two silver and two bronze, which put them in second position. China finished on top of the standings with five gold, three silver and three bronze medals, thanks to a 1-2 in the mixed team air pistol event on the final day. The other gold of the day was picked up by Chinese Taipei in the mixed team trap.

The highlight of India's performance was the gold medals won by Sift Kaur Samra (women's 50m rifle 3 positions), Rudranksh Patil (men's 10m air rifle), Suruchi (women's 10m air pistol) and Vijayveer Sidhu (men's 25m rapid-fire pistol).

Sidhu became the first Indian ever to win an ISSF World Cup gold in his event.

Also noteworthy was the silver winning performance in the women's 25m pistol by young Paris Olympian Esha Singh, a reigning mixed team world champion.

Heartwarming performances were also delivered by the likes of Chain Singh, an Asian Games medallist in men's 3P from over a decade ago, winning his first individual ISSF World Cup medal, as well as former Asian Games and Youth Olympic Games champion Saurabh Chaudhary, making a return to the ISSF World Cup medals fold after a gap of two years.

The most experienced member of the squad, Zoravar Singh Sandhu, who has been competing in ISSF World Cups since 1998, showed heart to finish seventh in the men's trap, ending second best in a five-way shoot-off for the sixth and last final qualifying spot.

The squad now moves to Lima, Peru where competitions in the second leg of the combined ISSF World Cup stage begin from April 15. (PTI)

## We asked for good pitches but got challenging ones; need to talk to curator: RCB's Karthik

**BENGALURU, April 11** Royal Challengers Bengaluru mentor Dinesh Karthik conceded that his side has received a "challenging" pitch at the Chinnaswamy Stadium this season despite asking for a batting friendly surface, adding that the management will have a chat with the curator soon.

RCB's power-packed batting line-up was rendered ineffective on a sluggish deck in their two home games while getting restricted to 169/8 and 163/7 against Gujarat Titans and Delhi Capitals respectively, losing both the fixtures.

Karthik thinks the 22-yard strip has deprived RCB of the home advantage at a venue where home matches have traditionally been high-scoring.

"In the first two games, we have asked for good pitches. But it's turned out in this way where it's been challenging to bat on. So, we try to do the best with what we get. But we will obviously have a chat with him (curator). We trust him to do his job," said Karthik in the post-match press conference.

"So, definitely, this is not a pitch that's helping the batters too much. It's a challenging pitch. So, that has been the case so far in both the games that we have

played," he added.

Karthik said big hits and boundaries are an essential part of T20s, palatable to all stakeholders.

"I think the way T20 cricket is, the more runs there are, the better it is for the broadcaster, the better it is for the fans. They all like to see boundaries. And we will try and do the best of what we can," he said.

The former India wicketkeeper batter said while they try not to follow any particular template in a match, pitches such as the one at the Chinnaswamy made it tough for batters to even rotate the strike.

"I think with every pitch, we'll try and understand what's the best way to play. I don't think we have one set template that is how we want to go out there and play. It's important to adapt and understand what the pitch is.

"But it's been hard to, at times, rotate strike. And the big shot has been really hard as well. But in the end, it's a T20. You have to play some shots and that has gotten the wicket of a few batters," he detailed.

Karthik said the slight drizzle mid-way during DC's innings helped the pitch settle down, which made the visitors' job that



much easier.

"It was a bit sticky, the pitch. After the first four overs, and up until the 13th over, we were very much in the game. With the bat, we did have a wobble, but we found a way to get to a very decent score. They were struggling at 50 for 4.

"In the first game (vs GT), there was dew. So, it got a lot better to bat in the second innings. Today, there was not as much dew. Then, unfortunately for us, a little bit of rain came.

"And then you could see the difference in the pitch. The shots that they played definitely weren't possible in the first innings," he explained.

Thus Karthik joins the likes of Lucknow Super Giants and Chennai Super Kings coaches Zaheer Khan and Stephen Fleming in expressing displeasure over the nature of pitches at their home stadiums.

After LSG's defeat to Punjab Kings, Zaheer had said the curator could have been from Punjab, while Fleming said CSK have not been able to read the pitch correctly for the last two seasons and his side has lost the home advantage.

Young leg-spinner Suyansh Sharma had a good 4-0-25-1 spell, and Karthik saw a bright future for him. (PTI)

## Pakistan slaps one-year PSL ban on South African Corbin Bosch for breaching contract

**ISLAMABAD, April 11:** The Pakistan Cricket Board has banned Corbin Bosch from playing in its Super League competition for one year after the South African all-rounder withdrew from the event to sign for an Indian Premier League team.

Bosch was picked by Pakistan Super League franchise Peshawar Zalmi in January's draft, but Mumbai Indians then snapped him up as an injury replacement for South African Lizaad Williams.

Both T20 competitions are clashing this year.

Bosch's withdrawal prompted the PCB to serve a legal notice, alleging breach of contract.

"The all-rounder will serve a one-year ban and will not be eligible for selection in next year's Pakistan Super League," the PCB said in a statement on Thursday.

Bosch said: "I deeply regret my decision and offer my sincere apologies to the people of Pakistan, the fans of Peshawar Zalmi and the wider cricket community. "I fully understand the disappointment caused by my actions... but I am committed to learning from this experience and hope to return to the PSL in the future with renewed dedication and the trust of the fans." (AP)

## KL Rahul: Stamping his authority in white ball formats in style

**BENGALURU, April 11:** From being panned as a stat-padder, who lacked intent from the word go to being a master of tricky chases, KL Rahul has turned the wheels in a manner only a batter blessed with skill-set like him, can.

He printed the latest blueprint of his growth chart with an unbeaten 93 off 53 balls at a strike-rate of 175 on a gripping Chinnaswamy pitch to fashion Delhi Capitals's six-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

Tim David (185) and Phil Salt (210) made runs at a higher strike-rate but through brute force and the readiness to travel on riskier routes either at Power Play or at the death overs.

But Rahul's fifty was smoothly paced -- from a cautious 29 off 29 balls, the right-hander made the remaining 64 runs off just 24 balls on Thursday.

It's easy to term the innings as a product of his first-hand knowledge of the local conditions as a Karnataka boy. It might have played a part but that is just one chapter of the story.

The Capitals are trying to weave their batting around Rahul, and it is partly be-

cause of his technical adaptability.

On Thursday night, Rahul showed DC's faith on him is not misplaced while nullifying a competent set of bowlers.

Even during the sedate initial period, there was no hint of struggle as it was very evident that he had judged the character of the track to the T and was waiting for the right moment to unleash himself.

It came in the 15th over bowled by Josh Hazlewood. Rahul punished the pacer for 22 runs in that over, including three fours and a six.

It decisively swung the momentum in Delhi's favour, but none of those shots were hit in anger.

Even the six that sailed over Hazlewood's head was the outcome of a beautifully poised open-faced bat, a classic method to reduce the possibility of edges or false shots on such pitches.

Just to compare, his top-order colleagues Jake-Fraser McGurk, Faf du Plessis and Abhishek Porel went for cross-batted swipes to get caught as the innate slowness of the surface did not allow them to time the shots well.

RCB's mentor Dinesh Karthik appre-



ciated the way Rahul played his knock, particularly because the 32-year-old is still a floater through the batting line-up

in whichever team he plays.

"It's a very challenging to bat at different positions in T20. But he's done that

really nicely in the recent past. I've believed he's a high-quality middle-order batter. He's tweaked a bit," said Karthik.

The former wicketkeeper batter noted the "freedom" with which Rahul has been batting of late.

"From whatever I'm hearing, he's worked with Abhishek Nayar before the IPL started. You can see he's getting into some good positions and playing some nice shots.

"He always had the skill. You can see when he has given himself more freedom and the way he's played, it's been nice to watch. May not be from my perspective, though," he added.

Rahul said his pre-match preparations now include sessions to master different pitches.

"I always try to adapt to different wickets (even in practice). It gives me a fair idea of the areas I can target - where I can take singles, where I can hit sixes. I don't keep batting for hours and keep slogg-

ing. "I do that sometimes but that is when I am not getting into a flow and rhythm. It is more about how I can master playing (on a particular pitch) and that becomes

second-nature," said Rahul.

It showed in the way he played out Suyash Sharma, whose been excellent this season.

Knowing that Tristan Stubbs might not be able to read his leg-spin off the wicket or off the hands, Rahul took the task of keeping Suyash in check upon himself.

Rahul faced 13 balls from the 21-year-old spinner, and made just four runs. It was not being merely defensive, but a deliberate ploy to neutralise opposition's best bowler on the day without any damage.

Rahul knew that a chance would come his way sooner rather than later to accelerate and it indeed came.

However, the most poignant moment came right after he thwacked pacer Yash Dayal for a six to seal the match.

Rahul drew a circle on the ground, and stamped the bat in the centre of it.

"This is my home ground, and I know it better than anyone else," he would say later. But that moment also might have symbolised him finally stamping his authority on the white ball formats.

He now has another home. (PTI)