

**6 WORLD**  
  
 ● China's frequent military drills spark concerns in Taiwan of real attack  
 ● Israel controls 50 per cent of Gaza after razing land to expand its buffer zone

**8 NATION**  
  
 ● People feeling cheated under BJP rule, are looking at Cong with hope: Pawan Khera  
 ● 'We are learning from mistakes in Bihar, empowerment of downtrodden now top priority'

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*'We will soon be signing an MoU with ISRO to facilitate this'*  
**ISRO chief assures support for ASSAMSAT launch**



**GUWAHATI, April 7:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday discussed with ISRO chairman V Narayanan on the state launching its own satellite.

"ASSAMSAT will help to ensure continuous flow of data for the implementation of critical socio-economic projects and a host of dedicated services for agriculture, disaster management, infrastructure development, and security border management and police operations," Sarma said. The ISRO chairman assured the chief minister that his organisation would lend full support in realising Assam's vision to have its own satellite.

"I had an enriching meeting with the very knowledgeable Chairman of @isro, Mr V Narayanan. We spoke at length about Assam's ambitious space agenda", Sarma posted on X.

"ISRO is fully onboard to help Assam launch its first ever satellite. Tentatively these will be low earth orbit satellites, that can generate continuous and contiguous coverage of the state. This will help us in several areas such as flood mitigation, policy planning and fighting infiltration. We will soon be signing an MoU with ISRO to facilitate this," he said.

The chief minister said Guwahati's Chandrapur will soon be 'home to a major space observatory that will assist India's satellite launches. We expect commissioning (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**Will quit politics if someone can prove I demanded money: Bhupen Borah**

**GUWAHATI, April 7:** Assam Pradesh Congress president Bhupen Borah on Monday claimed that he would quit politics and public life if anyone could prove that he had demanded money from any person.

In a statement, Borah asserted that the Congress follows the path of principles and ideals and it was the BJP supporters who circulated fake audio clips on social media, featuring a person allegedly demanding money from someone involved in a coal syndicate.

The BJP claimed that it was the voice of the state Congress chief, but Borah denied it saying that the ruling party is out to defame his party. Borah said he spoke to Guwahati police commissioner and demanded that an inquiry be conducted into the circulation of the fake video clip. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**LPG price up ₹ 50, CNG by ₹ 1; excise duty hiked on petrol, diesel**



**NEW DELHI, April 7:** The domestic cooking gas LPG price on Monday was hiked by a steep ₹50 per cylinder across India and CNG by ₹ 1 per kg, while the government raised taxes on petrol and diesel to shore up its revenues.

The increase in cooking gas price will be for the Ujjawala - poor beneficiaries who got LPG connection free of cost - and general users, and will be effective from April 8 and has been necessitated due to the rise in input cost, Oil minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

Cooking gas for Ujjawala users will cost ₹ 553 per 14.2-kg cylinder from the current ₹ 503 in the national capital. The same for general users will now cost ₹ 853.

The rates, which vary from state to state depending on local incidence of taxes, were last revised in March last year when they were cut by ₹ 100.

Also, CNG prices were hiked by ₹ 1 per kg in the national capital and adjoining cities after the government last week raised input natural gas prices by almost 4 per cent. CNG in the national capital will cost ₹ 75.09 per kg, Indraprastha Gas Ltd - the city gas retailer - said in a post on X.

This follows the price of input natural gas being hiked from USD 6.50 per million British thermal units to USD 6.75 from April 1.

Alongside, the government hiked excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹ 2 per litre each to raise

about ₹ 32,000 crore additional tax revenue. However, there will be no change in retail prices as the increase will be adjusted against the price cut that was warranted because of falling international oil prices. Puri said prices of crude oil - which is turned into petrol and diesel in refineries - have fallen to about USD 60 per barrel from USD 70-75, and a reduction in the retail selling price of petrol and diesel is possible if the international oil prices stay at those levels.

The special additional excise duty (SAED) on petrol has been increased from ₹ 11 per litre to ₹ 13, and that on diesel from ₹ 8 to ₹ 10 a litre. With this, the total incidence of taxes imposed by the central government on petrol has increased to ₹ 21.9 a litre (₹ 1.40 a litre basis excise duty, ₹ 13 SAED, ₹ 2.50 agriculture cess and ₹ 5 road and infrastructure cess) from ₹ 19.9 a litre.

On diesel, the total incidence has gone up from ₹ 15.80 per litre to ₹ 17.80 (₹ 1.80 per litre basic excise duty, ₹ 10 special additional excise duty, ₹ 4 agriculture cess and ₹ 2 road and infra cess). Puri defended the move, saying oil companies had been incurring losses on LPG sales and the increase in retail price and revenue from excise hike will be used to make up for that. The average Saudi CP - the international benchmark used for LPG pricing since India is majorly

(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**CESHs signs MoU with GSI for exploration of geothermal energy in NE**

**ITANAGAR, April 7:** The Centre for Earth Sciences and Himalayan Studies (CESHS) in Arunachal Pradesh signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Geological Survey of India (GSI) to collaborate on scientific studies focusing on geothermal energy and geosciences across the state and the wider northeastern region.

The MoU was signed on Monday at GSI's northeastern headquarters in Shillong, an official statement said.

Describing the MoU as a landmark development, GSI director general Asit Saha said it would play a key role in shaping the geological, mineralogical, hydrological, and broader earth science landscape of the Arunachal Himalayan region.

Saha extended congratulations to the CESHS team and reaffirmed GSI's full support for promoting earth science initiatives in the region.

"This partnership marks a new era of collaboration, with GSI committed to assisting CESHS in realising its vision," he said, according to the official statement.

Founded in 1851, the GSI has been instrumental in laying the foundation of India's geoscientific framework. From mapping expansive terrains and identifying key mineral resources to monitoring seismic activity, the organisation has been at the forefront of India's scientific advancement. CESHS Director Tana Tage highlighted this (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**Prohibitory orders in Manipur's Lilong after BJP leader's house burnt over support to Waqf Act**

**IMPHAL, April 7:** A day after an irate mob set the house of BJP Minority Morcha's Manipur president, Md Asker Ali, on fire allegedly for supporting the Waqf Amendment Act, the Thoubal district administration imposed prohibitory orders under Section 163 of BNSS in entire Lilong assembly constituency on Monday.

The order, promulgated by the district magistrate, prohibited the assembly of five or more people and the carrying of firearms, swords, sticks, stones or other lethal weapons by the public.

It stated that the superintendent of police reported on Sunday night that nearly a 7,000-8,000-strong mob, armed with lathis and stones, stormed the residence of Md Asker Ali in Lilong-Samburkhong Mamei area and set it ablaze.

Ali had on Saturday expressed support on social media platforms for the



Waqf Amendment Act, 2025. Following the incident on Sunday night, he apologised for his earlier statement and condemned the Act.

"It is reported that the matter is very sensitive in and around Lilong assembly constituency and there is a likelihood of further disturbance which

poses a risk to peace and public tranquility in the constituency," the order stated. Various parts of Imphal Valley witnessed protests against the Act on Sunday. Over 5,000 people participated in a rally that disrupted the traffic on NH-102 at Lilong, while protesters (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**Storm wreaks havoc in West Karbi Anglong; school among worst hit**

**KHERONI, April 7:** A powerful storm accompanied by relentless heavy rainfall has left a trail of destruction across West Karbi Anglong district, demolishing several houses and severely damaging key community infrastructure.

Among the hardest hit is Chengbong Amang English M.E. School, where two classrooms, a veranda, and the headmaster's office were completely destroyed.

The devastating weather also damaged essential school resources, including books intended for students, admission registers, two blackboards, chairs, and benches. The school management, along with concerned members of the public, has issued an urgent appeal for assistance to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). The destruction has disrupted (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**'Children should not fall prey to dark side of internet'**

*Older generation must keep up with times to meet challenges of digital world: Assam DGP*

**GUWAHATI, April 7:** From online recruitment by militant groups to web addiction, the digital world poses various challenges for youngsters, and parents can help them navigate these by staying updated, Assam DGP Harmeet Singh said on Monday.

He underlined the importance of parents' communicating with their wards and also monitoring their online activities so that children do not fall prey to the dark side of the internet.

Singh was delivering the keynote address at a national dialogue on children's rights on the internet, 'Infantia', hosted by Assam Police here.

He maintained that the internet entered children's lives especially



during COVID-19 when most of the activities had gone online, from classes to family gatherings. "Adults came out of online life at the end of the pandemic, but children stayed on with the inter-

net," he said. Singh, who leads the state police's 'sharenting' campaign highlighting the risks of parents sharing children's details online, emphasised that children can no longer be kept away from the internet or the digital world.

He said digital policies should be designed to teach children both how to use the internet responsibly and what to avoid.

The older generation has to understand the digital world to help their children navigate through it safely, the DGP added.

Among the perils facing the new generation is 'problematic internet use' or addiction to the internet, which could hamper a child's growth and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**Popularity must for success: Biplab Deb on Baby becoming CPI(M) chief**

**AGARTALA, April 7:** BJP's Lok Sabha MP from West Tripura Biplab Kumar Deb on Monday said that one needs to have nationwide popularity, not only high educational qualification, to become a successful leader.

The former Tripura chief minister said this when he was asked about the election of MA Baby as the new general secretary of the CPI(M).

The 71-year-old veteran Communist leader was elected to the post on Sunday.

"Leadership quality is something else rather than mere academic degrees. One may be a professor, engineer or teacher. One has to acquire nationwide popularity to become a successful leader," Deb told the reporters when asked about the CPI(M) new leader's leadership quality.

"As of today, the CPI(M) has no such leader who has nationwide popularity like BJP's Narendra Modi,

Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath," he said. In Tripura, the CPI(M)-led Left Front was dethroned after 25 years by the BJP-IPFT combine in 2018 and Deb became the chief minister.

The saffron party, however, replaced him with Manik Saha a few months before the 2023 assembly elections and won the polls for the second time.

The former chief minister of Tripura also said he doesn't know the new CPI(M) general secretary MA Baby even though he may be a qualified person, loyal to the party and having expertise in running an organisation. "Being a former chief minister and MP, I

don't know MA Baby. He may be a professor, engineer or teacher. I will check Google. While the Communist has no well-identified leader, the Congress has one parivar (family)," he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

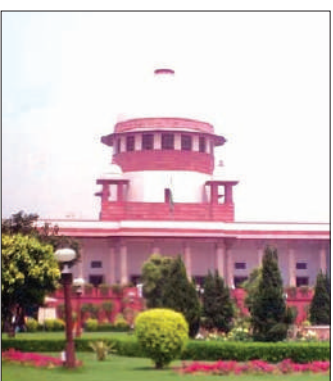


**NTA 'lapses' in NEET-UG 2024**  
**SC closes case as Centre assures to implement panel suggestions**

**NEW DELHI, April 7:** The Supreme Court on Monday closed a matter over the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) in holding last year's NEET-UG after the Centre assured of implementing exam reforms suggested by its expert panel.

A bench comprising Justices P S Narasimha and Joyymalya Bagchi took note of the Centre's compliance reports on the issue and the submissions of its solicitor general Tushar Mehta as it disposed of the plea. Mehta said the Centre had accepted all the suggestions of the seven-member panel, except one - NTA conducting online NEET exams - for the time being.

"Over 26 lakh students take up NEET across India and the government will have to ascertain availability of internet and computers... this will take some time," he said, "but the report (of the expert panel) has been accepted".



Nothing survived in the case and it can be disposed of, Mehta added.

The bench noted the submissions and the developments, saying no further order was required.

The top court on August 2, last year, refused to annul the contentious NEET-UG of 2024, saying there was no sufficient material on record to indicate a systemic leak or malpractice compromising the

integrity of the examination.

It had expanded the remit of the seven-member expert panel, headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan, to review NTA's functioning and recommend exam reforms to make the NEET-UG (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Undergraduate), transparent and free from malpractices. On January 2, Mehta said the Centre-appointed committee filed its report and assured that the government would implement all of the panel's recommendations.

On October 21 last year, the top court extended the time granted to the Centre-appointed expert panel to file its report on exam reforms.

The NEET-UG is conducted by the NTA for admission in undergraduate medical programs. While expanding the scope of the expert panel, the top court had flagged multiple (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**Sitharaman to attend India-UK Economic Dialogue in London**

*On sidelines of India-UK 13th EFD, FM to hold bilateral talks, meet investors and financial leaders*

**NEW DELHI, April 7:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will embark on a weeklong official visit to the United Kingdom and Austria on Monday to participate in the India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue, besides investor roundtable.

During her visit, Sitharaman will participate in 13th Ministerial round of India-UK Economic & Financial Dialogue, besides bilateral meetings, engagement with think tanks, investors, business leaders in both the United Kingdom and Austria.

"Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman will embark on an official visit to the United Kingdom and Austria from 8th to 13th April 2025, today," a finance ministry statement said.

The 13th round of the India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue (13th EFD) is scheduled to be held



in London, United Kingdom, on April 9, 2025.

The 13th EFD dialogue will be co-chaired by the Union minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs and the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The 13th EFD is a significant bi-

lateral platform between the two countries that offers opportunities for candid engagement at the minister-level, officer-level, working groups and between the respective regulatory bodies in various aspects of financial collaboration, including investment matters,

financial services, financial regulations, UPI interlinkages, taxation matters, and illicit financial flows.

The key priorities of the 13th EFD dialogue for Indian side include cooperation in IFSC GIFT City, investment, insurance and pension sectors, FinTech and Digital economy, and mobilising affordable and sustainable climate finance. On the sidelines of India-UK 13th EFD, Sitharaman will engage in bilateral meetings with key dignitaries, participate in investor roundtables and other meetings with heads of key financial institutions and companies.

During the United Kingdom leg of the official visit, the Union finance minister will deliver the keynote address at the India-UK Investor Roundtable in presence of chief executive officers of international organisations, including key management personnel from across the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Govt stepping up efforts to help exporters

## Group to monitor possible import surge

**NEW DELHI, April 7:** The government has set up an inter-ministerial group to monitor a possible surge in imports from countries like China, Vietnam and Thailand, fearing a surge in inbound shipments following the imposition of high reciprocal tariffs by the US on these countries, sources said.

The product categories that may see an upsurge in diversion of imports from the US to India include consumer goods, electronics, chemicals and steel.

The clear signals for these rises in imports are likely to manifest from June to July, they said, adding the "import monitoring group" will include officials from the departments of commerce, revenue and the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The concerned line ministries and industry associations have also been asked to provide inputs on the surge in imports and its impact on the domestic industry.

"The idea is to observe these imports and see if any measures need to be taken. It will look at all the data points closely, including shipments coming from air and sea routes. While intense watch is required, volatility in imports is normal," the sources added.

As sweeping tariffs have been imposed on India's competitors including China, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, their goods become expensive in the US market and this would lead to diversion of goods into countries like India after some months.

While the US has imposed an additional 26 per cent import duty on



India, its competitor Vietnam is facing 46 per cent tariff, China 34 per cent, and Indonesia 32 per cent, and Thailand 36 per cent.

However, they added that this situation also provides an opportunity to the domestic industry to procure intermediate goods at affordable rates.

One of the sources said that the government is also stepping up efforts to help exporters explore new markets.

The commerce ministry is fast-tracking formulation of its export promotion mission to support exporters in areas such as providing credit at affordable rates; and negotiations of proposed free trade agreements with the European Union, Oman, New Zealand and the UK.

Additionally, concerned officials have been directed to hold a series of bilateral meetings with the identified 20 countries such as Australia, Brazil,

China, and France for pushing India's exports.

These developments come at a time when exporters and industries have raised concerns that the additional 26 per cent import duty imposed by the US on India may hurt them.

The identified 20 countries are Australia, Brazil, Bangladesh, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Turkey, the UAE, the UK, the US and Vietnam. Huge opportunities are there in these nations for Indian exporters.

The government is framing schemes for MSME exporters to provide credit at easy terms, promote alternate financing instruments through strengthening factoring services for them, and offer assistance to deal with non-tariff measures imposed by other

countries. The commerce, MSME and finance ministries are working on these schemes, which are being formulated under the export promotion mission, announced in the Union Budget for 2025-26.

The government on February 1 announced the setting up of an Export Promotion Mission with an outlay of ₹ 2,250 crore to promote the country's outbound shipments.

Further concerns have been raised by the industry that countries like China may divert their surplus exports to India as Beijing is facing 54 per cent tariffs in the US.

The commerce ministry's arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is the main body to deal with dumping of goods and sudden surge in imports. It investigates cases and suggests imposition of anti-dumping or safeguard or countervailing duties.

In 2023-24, the US was the largest trading partner of India with USD 119.71 billion bilateral trade in goods (USD 77.51 billion worth of exports, USD 42.19 billion of imports and USD 35.31 billion trade surplus). China was the second largest trading partner with USD 118.39 billion two-way commerce (USD 16.65 billion exports and USD 101.73 billion imports and USD 85 billion trade deficit).

The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports and 6.22 per cent in imports and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade. On the other hand China's share is just about 4 per cent in exports and a staggering 15 per cent in imports. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## LPG price up ₹ 50, CNG by ₹ 1;

import-dependent to meet its needs - has risen by 63 per cent to USD 629 per tonne in February 2025 from USD 385 in July 2023, he said. This necessitates LPG to be priced at ₹ 1,028.50 per 14.2-kg cylinder in Delhi. "But the public sector oil marketing companies have been so far modulating the prices," he said, adding that the oil PSUs suffered under-recoveries or loss of ₹ 41,338 crore in the fiscal year ended March 31 (2024-25) on account of selling LPG below cost.

In view of the mounting losses, the prices have been moderately increased. "At current prices, the cost of cooking per day using LPG for Ujjawala households is around ₹ 6.10 and that for general users is ₹ 14.58, which is reasonable," Puri noted. The rates, he said, will be reviewed every month and any softening will be passed on to consumers.

The ₹ 50 per cylinder hike will only cover the future cost and for the past cost, the oil ministry will seek budgetary support from the finance ministry. The additional accruals from the excise duty hike can be used to compensate the oil companies for their losses, he said.

"It is our commitment to make good their losses." As much as 16,000 crore litres of petrol and diesel is consumed annually in the country and the ₹ 2 a litre excise hike could yield up to ₹ 32,000 crore to the government.

While the mop up from excise duty hike on petrol and diesel will be solely at the disposal of the central government, as SAED is out of the divisible pool with the states, the LPG price hike of ₹ 50 per cylinder is likely to mop up ₹ 5,000-7,000 crore.

"The ₹ Excise Duty increase of ₹ 2 per litre on #petrol and #diesel by the Central Government will not be passed on to the consumers. On the one hand, this will insulate the customers from the price hike, while on the other hand, the collected amount may be utilised towards under-recovery of #LPG, providing relief to Oil Marketing Companies," Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) - the nation's largest oil firm - said in a post on X.(PTI)

## ISRO chief assures support

of the first phase by January 2026." "During my meeting, Mr Narayanan was kind enough to personally explain to me the fascinating workings of the cryogenic powered GSLV launch vehicle. This same system will also be used in docking and berthing, while India prepares to send humans during Mission Gaganyaan," Sarma said.

The chief minister, earlier in the day, held a meeting with Krishan Kumar, the managing director of National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) to review the status of key infrastructure projects in Assam being implemented by the agency.

The projects include the Rs 25,000 crore Guwahati Silchar Express Way, Numaligarh Gohpur underwater tunnel and the expansion of the National Highway network from Baihata Chariati to Tezpur and Gohpur to Kulajam.

Sarma also held a meeting with the Union fertiliser secretary Rajat Kumar Mishra to discuss the current progress of the brownfield ammonia complex at Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFL) in Namrup, which was recently approved by the Union Cabinet, and to ensure its time-bound completion. (PTI)

## Storm wreaks havoc in West

education in the area, leaving students and staff in dire need of support to rebuild and restore normalcy. Authorities have yet to respond formally to the plea for help, but the community remains hopeful that the KAAC will step in to provide the necessary resources and aid. As recovery efforts begin, the resilience of West Karbi Anglong's residents shines through amidst this natural calamity.

## 'Children should not fall

parents have to be vigilant about it, Singh added. Radical groups, religious or others, and militant groups also use the internet to recruit youth and there have been instances when they have succeeded, though most such youth have been brought back to the mainstream later, he added.

Emphasising that parents need to keep tabs on what their children are looking for on the internet, the top cop added, "Parents need to monitor, not to intrude. They must communicate with their children so that they open up."

Singh maintained that the productive use of the internet should be encouraged among children and physical activities promoted so that they can develop their social skills also. (PTI)

## Popularity must for success

Backing the concept of One Nation One Election (ONOE), Deb said if the Bill is passed the country will be able to save money, time and spend much on development. "This is not a new concept. Simultaneous elections have been practised in the country since independence but the cycle was broken by the Congress. The Congress has topped many elected governments in different states using Article 356," Deb said. "Currently, simultaneous elections are being held in three to four states. If the ONOE is implemented, huge money and time could be saved to undertake development works," the former Tripura chief minister said. Elections are conducted at the expense of people's money, he said. "If money is saved by implementing ONOE, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch more schemes for the welfare of the people," he added. (PTI)

## SC closes case as Centre

lapses on the part of NTA like the security breach at an examination centre in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh where the rear door of the strongroom was opened and unauthorised people were permitted to access question papers; transportation of question papers by e-rickshaws and distribution of wrong set of question papers among the candidates. Aside from Radhakrishnan, other panel members were Randeep Guleria, B J Rao, Ramamurthy K, Pankaj Bansal, Aditya Mittal and Govind Jaiswal.

The bench said the remit of the committee, in addition to the areas suggested by the Centre and the NTA, should encompass examination security and administration, data security and technological enhancements. The bench had asked it to further include policy and stakeholder engagement, collaboration and international cooperation, and recommendations for providing mental health support to students and training of NTA staff. Over 23 lakh students took up the NEET-UG in 2024 for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses. In November last year, the top court dismissed a petition seeking review of the August 2 verdict by which it had refused to allow a fresh NEET-UG 2024 examination. (PTI)

## Sitharaman to attend India-UK

UK financial ecosystem covering pension funds, insurance companies, banks, and financial services institutions among others.

During the Austrian leg of the official visit, the Union finance minister will hold bilateral meetings with senior Austrian government leaders, including with finance minister Markus Marterbauer, and federal chancellor Christian Stocker.

Sitharaman and Austrian minister for Economy, Energy and Tourism Wolfgang Hattmannsdorfer will co-chair a session with key Austrian CEOs to apprise them of existing and upcoming opportunities in India for deeper investment collaboration between the two countries. (PTI)

## Will quit politics if someone

He demanded that investigations be conducted and the culprits be booked immediately. "We do not take money from any person, instead party workers spend their own money to cover the functioning costs," he added. A three-member team led by the party's state general secretary (administration) Ramanna Barua filed a complaint at Hatigaon police station against a person for allegedly circulating the fake audio clip.

Police said they were investigating the complaint. BJP spokesman Manoj Baruah in a statement alleged that the Congress president continuously accuses the ruling party of corruption and existence of syndicates but 'now the truth is out about who indulges in corruption'.

"The Congress is now trying to mislead the people by saying that these audio clips are fake and are AI generated but the people of the state now know the truth," he said. The Congress is known for its widespread corruption and 'their leaders have no moral right to give lessons on principles and honesty to the ruling BJP', Baruah said. (PTI)

## CESHs signs MoU with GSI

legacy, stating, "When we look at the numbers, the sheer scale and depth of GSI's work over nearly two centuries becomes evident. It has been a cornerstone of India's scientific journey." While acknowledging CESHs as a relatively young institution, Tage emphasised its shared vision with GSI and its ambition to make meaningful contributions to the field of earth sciences, not only in Arunachal Pradesh but across the nation.

"The GSI's work transcends academic and scientific boundaries. It holds national value by informing development, shaping policy, and deepening our understanding of the very ground beneath our feet," he added.

Speaking on the potential of the Arunachal Himalayas as a geothermal hotspot, Tage stressed the untapped energy resources beneath the region's surface. He expressed hope that the collaboration would spark a new chapter in exploration, combining traditional knowledge with cutting-edge science and channelling local insights into national progress. (PTI)

## Prohibitory orders in Manipur's

scaffolded with security forces in some areas, including IrongChesaba in Thoubal. Protests were also held in Kshatri Awang Leikai, Kairang Muslim and Kiyamegi Muslim areas in Imphal East, and Sora in Thoubal district, among other places. Security has been strengthened in Muslim-dominated areas of the valley, with additional forces deployed, officials said.

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Thursday, and by the Rajya Sabha in the early hours of Friday after marathon debates in both Houses of Parliament. The Act aims to streamline the management of Waqf properties (assets permanently donated by Muslims for religious or charitable purposes) with provisions to safeguard heritage sites and promote social welfare. It also seeks to improve governance by enhancing transparency in property management, streamlining coordination between Waqf boards and local authorities and protecting stakeholders' rights. President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Bill on Saturday. (PTI)

## Topcem Cement's Annual Bohag Bihu Celebration commences

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, April 7:** Topcem Cement, a leading cement brand in Northeast India, has launched its Bohag Bihu - 2025 celebrations with an initiative aimed at spreading joy and happiness among the inmates of old age homes and orphanages, said an official statement here on Monday.

The festivities were officially inaugurated at a press conference in Guwahati, with Anil Kapur, Senior President, Sales & Marketing, Meghalaya Cements Ltd., flagging off the event.

This year, the celebrations will span across five days and involve 12 organisations and institutions located in the districts of Kamrup (M) and Kamrup, the statement informed.

As part of the celebrations, cultural programs featuring Bihu songs and dances will be organised in each institution.

Traditional Bihu delicacies such as Pitha and Ladu will also be distributed, along with special gifts to the institutions.

Expressing his thoughts on the occasion, Kapur said, "Topcem feels proud to conduct this activity, which brings joy to the inmates of these institutions who, otherwise, do not have the opportunity to partake in such festivities. We are committed to continuing this initiative in the years ahead."

The inaugural program of Bohag Bihu - 2025 was held at the Sonapur Government Old Age Home in Sonapur, Kamrup.

Similar activities will be organised in the following locations over the coming days - Assam Sishu Kalyan Sadan, Jalukbari; Kalyani Niwas, Rupnagar; Santaneer Old Age Home, Amerigod, 9th Mile; Shishu Sarothi, Birubari; Sench-Bhabada Devi Memorial Home for Destitute Old Women, Kahilipara; Amar Ghor Old Age Home, Pathar Quarry; Apon Ghor Old Age Home, Ashadeep, Boko; Maa Kamakhya Old Age Home, Bagharbari; Priyo Bandhu Bohumukhi Vidyalaya, Sonapur; and Ananda Old Age Home, Tezpur.

## Rupee drops 38 paise to settle at 85.82 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, April 7:** The rupee declined 38 paise -- steepest in more than five weeks -- to settle at 85.82 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday amid the wide-spread global turbulence over escalated tariff war and fear of a global economic slowdown.

A steep decline in crude prices and a weaker American currency failed to arrest the fall in domestic currency due to the withdrawal rush by foreign as well as domestic equity investors, forex traders said. They said the currency exchange markets globally faced extreme volatility as investors tried to escape risks, following the US administration's sweeping reciprocal tariffs on multiple countries and China's retaliatory move on the American imports. On the do-

estic macroeconomic front, market participants were watchful as the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI)'s monetary policy committee began its three-day deliberations on key interest rates. The decision of the six-member rate-setting panel will be announced on Wednesday.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.79 and moved in a wide range between the high of 85.57 and the low of 85.90 against the greenback during the day. The unit ended the session at 85.82 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 38 paise from its previous closing level.

Earlier, the domestic unit had witnessed such a steep fall on February 25 when it depreciated 47 paise. On Friday, the rupee settled 14 paise lower at

85.44 against the US dollar, a day after gaining 22 paise on Thursday, following the implementation of the US' reciprocal tariff on about 60 countries.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee declined on risk-off sentiments in global markets and a strong US dollar.

He said the rupee is expected to trade with a negative bias due to weak global markets and ongoing uncertainty around trade tariffs.

"Selling pressure by FIIs may also weigh on the domestic currency. However, weak crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 85.50 to ₹ 86.20," Choudhary added. (PTI)

## JITO NE Guwahati Chapter announces collective chanting of Navkar Mahamantra

### PM to join virtually from New Delhi

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, April 7:** The JITO North East (NE) Guwahati Chapter has announced its participation in the upcoming Visva Navkar MahaMantra Diwas, a global spiritual event set to be observed on Wednesday, April 9, 2025.

The international event will also be held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend and speak on the spiritual and cultural importance of the Navkar MahaMantra in promoting peace and unity. The Visva Navkar MahaMantra Diwas will witness collective chanting across 108 countries, aiming to foster spiritual harmony and global well-being.

In India, celebrations will take place simultaneously in different regions under the banner of the Jain International Trade Organisation (JITO), reflecting the unity and spiritual heritage of the Jain community.



In Guwahati, the local observance will be held at the Terapanth Dharmasthal, MS Road, Fancy Bazar, from 8:01 AM to 9:36 AM IST.

JITO NE Chapter Chairman Sunil Kathothia confirmed the details of the city's participation in this global event.

Vice-Chairman Sanjay Chabra highlighted the significance of the Navkar

MahaMantra, describing it as a sacred and universal prayer central to Jainism that emphasises non-violence, compassion, and spiritual purity.

He said that the event intends to create a positive vibrational force capable of uplifting individual consciousness and contributing to collective peace.

East Zone Advisor Nirmal Kotecha extended an open invitation to community members, spiritual seekers, and well-wishers to join in the celebration, which is being supported by the Jain community globally and in Guwahati.

During a media interaction, an official poster of the event was unveiled.

The launch was attended by several dignitaries, including Chairman Sunil Kathothia, Vice Chairman Sanjay Chabra, East Zone Advisor Nirmal Kotecha, Advisor Shantilal Khater, JITO Apex Committee Member Manoj Bokaria, along with Nirmal Golcha, Padam Choraria, and others.

## ₹ 75 cr allocated as a Special Grant to the Council NCHAC conducts special budget session 2025-26

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, April 7:** North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council conducted its Special Budget Session for the financial year 2025-26 held at NCHAC Session on Monday. The Budget was presented by Donpoinn Thaoson, Executive Member in-charge of Finance.

In the budget speech, Thaoson expressed his honour and privilege in presenting the 13th Budget Estimate for the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council. The detailed financial plan included both receipts and expenditures of the Council. Thaoson emphasised the strengthened fiscal framework, and the enhanced discretionary powers of the Council, citing the Government of Assam's continued support.

The total budget estimate for 2025-26 stood at ₹ 1,002,11,14,000, which included



₹ 312,66,57,000 for SOPD and ₹ 689,44,57,000 for E.E.

Notably, the Government has also allocated ₹ 75 cr, as a Special Grant to the Council.

Further, a provision of ₹ 35,19,91,000 under E.E. has been made to address pending salaries and gratuities of the

Council employees, the salary of Class I and II officers, and officers on deputation under NCHAC.

To ensure financial discipline, Thaoson emphasized the inclusion of unspent fund balances from previous financial years, amounting to ₹ 151,00,00,000, into the current

budget. The Council aims to utilize these resources judiciously for the welfare and development of the region.

Additionally, the Council's estimated revenue receipt for the financial year 2025-26 is projected at ₹ 124,79,29,000, against an estimated total expenditure of ₹ 269,75,07,000. Efforts to enhance revenue generation through taxation, land revenue, royalties from coal, limestone, and other forest products, among others, are underway.

While the budget reflects a closing deficit of ₹ 144,95,78, the Council remains committed to addressing this gap through strategic initiatives and sound financial management.

The Session was attended by Chairman Mohet Hojai, Executive members and Members of Autonomous Council.

## SANGAM – 7<sup>th</sup> Annual District Conference

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, April 7:** The 7th Annual District Conference of District 322G, SANGAM was held on April 5 and 6 2025 at IITA Centre, Machkhowa, Guwahati, under the esteemed leadership of District Governor Lion Seema Goenka.

This grand congregation of service and fellowship was inaugurated by International Director Lion Raj Kumar Agarwal, in the presence of Guest of Honor Lion Kailashji Lohia, alongside 900+ delegates from Lower Assam, Meghalaya, Barak Valley, and Tripura.

During the inaugural session, ID Raj Kumar Agarwal emphasised on the global impact of Lions Clubs International, the world's largest service organisation, and shared an inspiring vision for the future. He announced that Lion A P Singh from India will serve as

the International President for 2025-26, with a mission to expand Lionism from 1.4 million to 1.5 million members under MISSION 1.5 ensuring more hands to serve humanity.

As a mark of honor and appreciation, Lions International bestowed several prestigious recognitions upon distinguished Lions for their exemplary contributions:

PDG Lion Sudhir Choudhary received the International Key Award & Medal for sponsoring 200 new members.

International Presidential Medal, the Second Highest Award, was presented to PDG Lion Sudhir Choudhary, Lion Tapash Saha, Lion Nabina Mazumder, and Lion Pratik Killa.

International Leadership Medal, the Third Highest Award, was con-

ferred upon Lion Ritu Banka, Lion Bijay Agarwal, Lion Bikash Agarwal, Lion Kishore Saboo, Lion Vishal Beriwal, and Leo-Lion Mayank Sureka.

Additionally, many members were honored with Lions International President's Appreciation Certificates and Pins for their outstanding support of the District Governor's initiatives.

Guest of Honor Lion Kailashji Lohia, in his heartfelt address, expressed his delight in attending his first-ever Lions Conference and lauded the remarkable humanitarian work being carried out by the Lions of Northeast India. Moved by their dedication, he made a generous contribution of \*\$100,000\* to the Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) and handed over the cheque to ID Lion Raj Kumar Agarwal.

## Golaghat prepares for panchayat elections

**HT Correspondent**

**GOLAGHAT, April 7:** The panchayat elections in Golaghat district will be held in the first phase on May 2. The voting process would start from 7.30 am to 4.30 pm for 8 zila parishads, 20 anchalik parishads and 108 ward members in 1164 polling stations. Altogether 392783 male and 395646 female voters would take part in this election. The last date of filling nominations will take place on April 11 and list of the candidates will be published on April 17. Thereafter, counting of votes would take place on May 11. In the run-up to the elections the district administration has laid emphasis on the model code of conduct currently in place due to the elections and has been hopeful that the election would be held smoothly. Further, state election commission had mentioned that ballot boxes will be used in the voting process in the elections.

## KAAC CEM assures help to public

**HT Correspondent**

**BOKAJAN, April 7:** The chief executive member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang reiterated his love for the Karbis and said that he would do his best to help whenever they faced any trouble. He was speaking at the public meeting held at Rong Barim in Karbi Anglong.

He said the people of Karbi Rongbarim have been given land pattas and will help them again whenever needed. However he cautioned the Rongbarim villagers not to sell the land now that they have secured the land pattas.

It may be mentioned that Karbi Rongbarim is situated on Assam-Nagaland border area at Lahorijan. The villagers faced attempts by miscreants to evict them using earth movers and machetes. The village was also attacked by burning down houses.

## NAME CORRECTION

I, Sri Amor Paul S/o late Bijoy Paul, a resident of village Natun Basti, Bakalia, P.O. & P.S., Bakalia, district Karbi Anglong, Assam do hereby solemnly affirm and declare this affidavit before the Executive Magistrate/Notary Public, Diphu Court on this 04th day of April, 2025, that my son's name Sujay Paul has been wrongly recorded as Surja Paul with date of birth written as 21/11/2012 instead of the actual name and date of birth as Sujay Paul and date of birth 13/06/2014.

## Two iconic Bodo literary works honoured in Kokrajhar

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, April 7:** The Natives' Institute of Bodology (NIB) on Sunday organised the glorious 50 years of two iconic Bodo literary works — "Okhrang Gonshe Nangou" authored by late Bajendra Kumar Brahma and "Hagra Guduni Mwi" by the late Nilkamal Brahma being held at the Brajendra Kumar Brahma Seminar Hall, Central Institute of Technology (CIT) in Kokrajhar.

As part of the ceremony, floral tributes were offered in honour of the two legendary writers, followed by the felicitations of their family members, recognizing their lasting contributions to the Bodo literature and culture.

A special session to discuss and reflect on the literary value, cultural relevance, and continued impact of "Okhrang Gonshe Nangou" and "Hagra Guduni Mwi", were held which are regarded as foundational works in the canon of modern Bodo literature.

The programme witnessed the presence of eminent dignitaries including Dr Surath Narzary, Bodo Sahitya Sabha president, Assam cabinet minister, Urkhaow Gwra Brahma, and Sahitya Akademi awardee writer Dr Anjanee Basumatary, Janil Kumar Brahma, and Prof Indira Boro, among others.

The celebration not only paid homage to the literary pioneers but also reignited interest among the younger generation in the richness of Bodo literary heritage.

Minister Brahma recalled the contributions of prominent writers late Brajendra Kumar Brahma and Nilkamal Brahma who authored the two iconic books — "Okhrang Gonshe Nangou and Hagra Guduni Mwi" which contributed a lot towards the uplift and development of the Bodo literary world. He said that the people of the region, especially Bodos has celebrated the glorious 50 years of the books that marked a remembrance of the literary creativity of the prominent writers.

## Thana Chariali overbridge in Dibrugarh gets final touch

Minister Prasanta Phukan inspects ongoing construction

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, April 7:** State cabinet minister and Dibrugarh MLA Prasanta Phukan on Monday inspected the newly constructed rail over bridge at Thana chariali before its inauguration.

The bridge built in 1965 is one of the historical bridge in Dibrugarh which connects Thana Chariali to Chowkidinghee but due its reconstruction for last two years, the people are facing process to pass through the narrow stretch.

Everybody expected that the over bridge will be inaugurated before Rongali Bihu and workers were busy to give the final touch.

"Most of our works has been completed. We are placing the tiles. The colour work has been finished. It will be completed soon," said a worker.

DRM Tinsukia recently reviewed the construction work of



the bridge.

"For last two years, we are facing problem due to the construction work of the bridge. After the inauguration of the bridge, the traf-

fic flow will be smooth. The Thana chariali has become more congested due to the construction work of the bridge," said a local resident.

## Over 3500 new members join UPPL



**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, April 7:** More than 3500 members from various political parties and social organisations have joined the ruling United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) at different places in the districts of Bodoland Territorial Region on Monday.

In Bijni, 2000 new members representing political parties including BPF, GSP, Congress, and social organisations have joined

the UPPL party at a programme held at the Panbari under Bijni district in the presence of CEM of Bodoland Territorial Region and UPPL president, Pramod Boro, and several senior party leaders.

CEM of BTR, Pramod Boro, senior party leaders have welcomed the newly joined members with party mufflers and traditional Aronai amidst a well attended gathering on the occasion.

The peoples cutting across the

communities are coming forward to extend support to the UPPL party, and accordingly joined the party.

In Tamulpur, more than 1500 new members from various political parties under Darrangajuli block joined the UPPL party at a programme held at the Kumerikata. The UPPL party has been now gaining popularity amongst the citizens and communities across the region.

CEM Boro have hailed the newly joined members, and welcomed them to the UPPL family.

"UPPL party continues to be first choice for the people of BTR as party has been rendering services towards the welfare and development of the society. This was reaffirmed at Panbari Bazar, as persons from all walks of life joined our party at a Grand Joining Programme after being inspired by various developmental works undertaken by our govt in the last 5 years. I'm glad to welcome them to the party and urged them to dedicate themselves to dedicatedly serve the people of BTR", Boro said.

## Chintan Shivir in Kokrajhar lays stress on school dropout rates

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, April 7:** A Chintan Shivir was held on Monday that focused on tackling the issue of school dropout students in Kokrajhar district.

The event was organised by the District Administration of Kokrajhar, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Samagra Shiksha, at the KDSA Indoor Stadium.

The meeting was attended by Gossaigaon MLA, Jiron Basumatary, Kokrajhar District Commissioner Masanda Magdalin Pertin, BTC Director of Education Jagadish Chandra Brahma, along with principals of various educational institutions and representatives from NGOs and stakeholders.

The Chintan Shivir was convened in the wake of the dismal performance of Sixth Schedule districts in the recently declared Gnutovs 2025 results, where BTR districts such as Udalguri, Baksa, Chirang, and Kokrajhar ranked at the bottom across the state.

The meeting emphasized on identification of the underlying causes of school dropouts and to



devise practical, sustainable strategies to re-engage students with the education system and to explore ways to improve the overall educational scenario in the region.

The meeting stressed the need for collaborative efforts at all levels—government, institutional, and community—to ensure universal access to quality education in Kokrajhar and other Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) districts.

Several issues including socio-economic factors contributing to dropout rates, lack of inclusive learning environments, and urgent need to reintegrate out-of-school

children. Emphasis was also laid on promoting community participation, improving the quality of teaching, and strengthening the overall education infrastructure.

Speakers underlined that reducing dropout rates would require collective responsibility and long-term commitment from the government, educational institutions, civil society, and families alike.

The shivir concluded with a call for concrete action plans and coordinated efforts to ensure that no child in the Bodoland Territorial Region was left behind in receiving quality education.

## Panchayat elections related all political party meeting in Sonitpur

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, April 7:** A meeting with political parties was held on April 5, under the chairmanship of the District Commissioner Ankur Bharali to discuss the preparations for the upcoming Panchayat Elections 2025.

The meeting was attended by the Superintendent of Police (SP) Barun Purkayastha, District Development Commissioner (DDC) Lakhinandan Saharia, Additional District Commissioner Tawahir Alam, Election Officer Ahmadullah Thakuria, and representatives of various political parties.

During the meeting, officials shared the tentative schedule for the elections and briefed attendees on the nomination process. This included details about the documents and affidavits required at the time of filing nominations. The procedure for the allotment of election symbols was also discussed, with special emphasis on the Gaon Panchayat level, where political party representation is not expected this time. SP Purkayastha provided a briefing to the meeting regarding adherence to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) guidelines.

The administration also shared a list of authorized officers who will be involved in the election process. The representatives were informed about the approved rates for various items commonly used during election campaigns, which will be used for monitoring candi-



dates' expenditure. In addition, a list of polling stations was provided to all political parties for their reference and preparation. It was further informed that the Panchayat Elections 2025 as per government directives will be conducted at the Co-District Commissioner (CDC) level for the functioning Co-Districts.

As per the finalized electoral rolls for Sonitpur district, the total number of electors stands at 7,99,640, which includes 3,98,906 male, 4,00,716 female, and 18 others category. The mapping count details include 20 Zilla Parishad Constituencies, 8 Anchalik Panchayat Constituencies, 88 Gaon Panchayats, comprising 880 wards and 1,070 polling stations.

The District Administration reiterated its commitment to conducting free, fair, and transparent elections and urged all political parties to extend their cooperation for the smooth conduct of the electoral process.

## Free medical camp in Margherita

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, April 7:** The Indian Red Cross Society, Margherita sub district Branch on Monday organised a free medical camp in the remote Ulup Pathar MV School (Dumpani) located under Inthem gaon panchayat of Margherita Co-District on the occasion of World Health Day on Monday.

The event aimed at addressing the pressing urgent healthcare needs of rural communities under Margherita Co-District areas as it turned into a beacon of hope for the local residents.

Pabitra Borgohain, Secretary of Indian Red Cross Society Margherita sub district Branch, kicked off the event with an inspiring welcome speech, shedding light on the purpose of the camp as "The majority of people living in rural areas are the driving force of our nation," he said.

"Yet, this vital force often grapples with numerous challenges, with health issues consistently standing out as a primary

and critical concern" as Indian Red Cross Society Margherita sub district branch ongoing efforts to alleviate these struggles through health awareness programs and initiatives like this medical camp added Pabitra Borgohain.

The camp offered an array of free healthcare services, including specialized check-ups for women's health, prenatal care, neurology, eye care, dental care, and general ailments where attendees also benefited from free blood sugar and hypertension screenings, along with the distribution of medicines and eyeglasses at no cost said Pabitra Borgohain.

The event was formally inaugurated by Dr Sanat Dutta, Superintendent of Margherita Civil Hospital, adding a touch of official grace to the proceedings where Dr Indira Neog, Dr Abhijit Ojha, Dr Sudam Dori, Dr Prayal Ghosh, village defence party members and local residents of Ulup Pathar attended making the programme a remarkable one.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

If you can't feed a hundred people,  
then feed just one -Mother Teresa

## A path to global recession?

President Donald Trump's declaration of April 2, 2025, as "Liberation Day" marked a seismic shift in U.S. trade policy, with the imposition of sweeping reciprocal tariffs that have sent shockwaves through the global economy. The new measures include a universal 10% tariff on all imports, with punitive rates as high as 54% for China, 46% for Vietnam, and 20% for the European Union, alongside a separate 25% levy on foreign-made automobiles. Framed as a corrective to decades of "unfair" trade practices, the policy has been celebrated by the administration as a rebirth of American industry. Yet beneath the rhetoric lies a complex web of economic consequences, retaliatory threats, and a potential reordering of global trade dynamics that could leave the U.S. and its allies grappling with long-term instability. For American manufacturers, the tariffs present a double-edged sword. On one hand, industries like steel, automotive, and textiles - long battered by foreign competition - may see short-term gains as higher import costs push consumers toward domestically produced goods. The Alliance for American Manufacturing, for instance, praised the move as a lifeline for workers who have "seen unfair trade cut the ground from beneath their feet for decades". However, the reality is more nuanced. Many U.S. manufacturers rely on global supply chains, importing components like auto parts from Mexico or semiconductors from Asia. The 25% tariff on foreign auto parts, for example, could raise production costs for American automakers by \$2,000 to \$15,000 per vehicle, forcing them to either absorb losses or pass expenses onto consumers. Small businesses, from craft breweries to electronics assemblers, face similar strains. The National Association of Manufacturers warned that thin margins could collapse under the weight of new tariffs, jeopardizing investments and jobs.

Consumers, meanwhile, are poised to bear the brunt of this policy. Despite White House claims that tariffs act as a "tax cut," economists overwhelmingly agree that import taxes inflate prices for everyday goods. Fruits and vegetables from Mexico, clothing from Vietnam, and electronics from China - all staples of American households - will become more expensive. The Yale Budget Lab estimates that the average American family could pay an additional \$2,700 to \$3,400 annually. Retailers, already grappling with inflation, warn of unavoidable price hikes, particularly for items like apparel and toys, which lack a domestic manufacturing base. Even sectors temporarily spared, like pharmaceuticals, face uncertainty as the administration considers future investigations that could extend tariffs to critical medicines. The global reaction has been swift and severe, signalling the onset of a protracted trade war. The long-term implications for global trade are profound. Trump's tariffs represent not just a tactical escalation but a philosophical rejection of the post-WWII liberal order.

Factually speaking, Trump's tariffs are less a solution to globalization's discontents than a high-stakes gamble - one that prioritizes political symbolism over economic stability. While the administration touts "liberation" from foreign competition, the costs - higher prices, lost exports, and a destabilized trading system - will be borne by the very workers and consumers it claims to protect. The world is now bracing for a new era of economic nationalism, where the rules of trade are written not through cooperation but through conflict, and the collateral damage could reshape economies for decades to come.

## Protests in the US show how a people's mass movement can be rebuilt

By: Ben Chacko

Demonstrations across the United States over the weekend against Donald Trump and his policies give the lie to claims that all is lost in the struggle for people's rights and social justice against the conservative right and its far-right allies.

Of course, there are always the defeatists - notably the "centre-left" intellectuals - who insist that the working classes on both sides of the Atlantic are too stupid, lazy, selfish and racist to resist injustice. In the words of Private Frazer: "We're all doomed!" Fascism is inevitable.

Meanwhile, millions of protesters of all colours, creeds and political affiliations, from the centre-right to the real left, from Los Angeles to Washington DC, marched in defence of jobs, women's rights, the US constitution, the young, the elderly, the sick, black communities, the world's poor and the Palestinians against the Trumpian onslaught.

They face a deeply reactionary Republican administration backed by a sizeable section of ruthless monopoly capital and a powerful state apparatus. The US working class, the labour and progressive movements and the people will need all the unity they can muster to block the advance of the resurgent right and its proto-fascist elements.

But as the worldwide pushback grows against Donald Trump's global trade war, cracks will open up within the ruling Republicans, the monopoly capitalist class and even within and between the agencies of the state. Provided the insurgents put not their trust in Democratic Party politicians on the big-business payroll, they can generate their own vision, strategies and leadership to turn back the MAGA maniacs.

In Britain, too, the "centre left" must not be allowed to divert or demoralise the emerging opposition to Keir Starmer's treacherous regime and its pro-City, pro-NATO policies. In many local

communities, people are beginning to mobilise to defend their public services, their social facilities and their rights.

Never have such policies as a wealth tax, public-sector house-building and public ownership of energy and public transport been so popular. The Alternative Economic Strategy is making a welcome comeback.

Protesters march every week against the British government's sickening silence about - and complicity in - the Israeli genocide. Britain's armed forces can blast the Houthis and defend Israel against incoming rockets, can bomb and invade Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen - yet not a finger can be lifted to protect defenceless Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Public cynicism about the West's real motives for pouring yet more weapons into the Ukraine war cauldron instead of genuinely seeking the end to a conflict that did not begin with Russia's brutal incursion three years ago. In Britain, we can build a people's mass movement around these burning issues and, in the process, expose the anti-working-class politics of Reform UK, whose four top officers made their millions in banking, property development or the City.

Again, though, we need unity to be built on solid foundations. These cannot include demands for Britain to align itself with the EU in a trade war against the US and even China. Nor should there be illusions that deep-seated problems which festered during decades of EU membership can somehow be more readily resolved by rejoining the big-business club or its capital and labour markets.

NATO rearmament must be opposed. The US-led cold war anti-socialist alliance has now outlived the Warsaw Pact by more than 30 years. Clinging these two serpents to its bosom would spell suicide for any people's movement that stands for public services, social justice, peace and solidarity. (IPA Service)

## BJP's resurgence in Indian politics

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was established with a vision to bring in "Cultural Nationalism," in 1980. The BJP is a national party and is the most prominent member of Sangh Pariwar family. The history and spirit of BJP can be traced back to the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS). BJS, the predecessor party of BJP, was founded in 1952 which won 3 seats in the first Lok Sabha (LS) election in India and continued as a political party for 24 years. Subsequently the BJS merged into the Janata Party in 1977 and formed a coalition government. BJP was formed after the fallout of Janta Party coalition government in 1979.

The man behind creating such a large party with once single objective was none other than the great visionary, scholar and leader Dr Syama Prasad Mookerji, drawing inspiration from Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. Pandit was an insightful leader and guided the erstwhile BJS party from 1953 to 1968.

Taking its genes from RSS and the erstwhile BJS, BJP is dedicated to the country's unity, integrity, its inherent uniqueness, social strength, individual character and cultural exclusivity that have been the characteristic of India.

With the principle of "Justice for all and appeasement of none" the Sangh(RSS), founded by Dr K B Hedgewar (Doctorji) in 1925 and strengthened after 1940 by M S Golwalkar (Gurujii). It believes the Hindu identity and culture as the foundation of the country. To the Sangh, all Indians, irrespective of their religion, region, caste, and creed are equal.

In 1967 the BJS gained a substantial foothold in the Hindi-speaking regions of northern India. Ten years later the party, led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, joined three other political parties to form the Janata Party and took over the reins of government. Plagued by factionalism and internal disputes, however, the government collapsed in July 1979. The BJP was formally established in 1980, following a split by dissidents within the Janata coalition, whose leaders wanted to prohibit elected BJS officials from participating in the RSS. The BJS subsequently reorganized itself as the BJP under the leadership of Vajpayee, Lal Krishan Advani, and Murali Manohar Joshi.

On 4th April, 1980 the National Executive of the Janata Party adopted a resolution prohibiting members of RSS to continue in the Janata Party. This resolution was sequel to the fears entertained by Chandrashekar's Group and a few Socialists who had not left the Janata Party when the split caused by Ch. Charan Singh took place and others that the erstwhile Jana Sangh would capture the party on account its mass base and large army of dedicated workers. This development was anticipated by leaders and workers of the Jana Sangh and RSS background in Janata Party. So they had asked Jana Sangh workers from all over the country to assemble at Delhi before the meeting of the National Executive of Janata Party and to be prepared for all eventualities. The resolution adopted then was not acceptable to erstwhile Jana Sangh constituent and to several other leaders and persons in Janata Party who had no RSS background. The Jana Sangh constituent had sincerely worked towards the strengthening and smooth working of the Janata Party. Even though it constituted the largest single constituent of the Janata Party and had a larger popular base in the country it did not ask for proportionate share either in Janata Government or in Janata Party and was content with whatever was given to it.

The Jana Sangh constituent wanted Janata Party to succeed and emerge as an alternative to Congress which had ruled the country for three decades prior to 1977. In this background, there was a feeling of regret and unhappiness as well as of good riddance and relief in the Jana Sangh workers. The condition imposed for membership of the Janata Party was unacceptable. No such condition was stipulated when the Janata Party was formed and this matter had been settled before the merger of the constituents to form Janata Party. This being raised at this stage was not for any genuine reason arising out of the manner in which Janata Party or Janata Government was functioning during 1977 to 1979, but for ulterior reason to control the party. RSS had not interfered in any manner either in the functioning of party or government. Two

days after, the adoption of this resolution the Jana Sangh workers held a Conference on April 6, 1980 at the Kotla ground in Delhi and decided to part company with Janata Party. The general mood was of unhappiness and of being forced to leave a party which had been formed under the inspiration of Jayaprakash Narayan with high hopes. There was, however, no alternative. BJP was, thus, launched on 6th April, 1980.

Besides these there was a galaxy of other leaders who worked with dedication selflessness and competence. These included Nanaji Deshmukh, Dr. Murlil Manohar Joshi, S.S. Bhandari, K.R. Malkani, V.K. Malhotra, K. Subramanian Thakre, Jana Krishnamurthi, Kidandath Sahani, J.P. Mathur, Sundar Lal Patwa, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Shanta Kumar. Many eminent persons who had no RSS background such as Jethmalani, Shanti Bhushan and Sikander Bakht also joined the party. The leadership available to the party was a great asset. The party had also inherited a disciplined, dedicated and hard working cadre of workers from Jana Sangh. The band of workers available to the BJP was willing to face any challenge.

Thus, the BJP started with able leadership and dedicated and disciplined cadre on its journey to become an alternative to Congress and to work for making India a developed and prosperous country not only in the material sense but also culturally and spiritually in keeping with its tradition and culture. Atal Bihari Vajpayee assumed the Presidency of JP and L.K. Advani became the General Secretary. It was decided to convene a Plenary Session of the party in December, 1980. The period between April-December, 1980 was utilised for intense activity throughout the country to build the party. During this period, about 25 lakh members of BJP were enrolled. The plenary session of BJP was held at 'Samata Nagar' at Bombay on 28-30 December, 1980.

Advani describes this convention as follows: "The Bombay Convention of the BJP has been universally acclaimed as a landmark in recent political history. It has evoked sharp comments from admirers and critics of the party alike. Veteran statesman M.C. Chagla, has described the party as 'a glimmer of hope' in an otherwise very depressing situation. In a symposium titled 'The Challenge of 1981' published by Times of India's Sunday Review (January 18, 1981), Chagla wrote that "there is just a glimmer of hope which is beginning to show itself and that is the extraordinary strength which this new party, the BJP, has shown.... And if this party goes on from strength to strength and receives the support of people from all over the country we might at last have a democratic alternative to Indira's Government."

The BJP led NDA Government after it assumed charge in 1998 embarked on policy changes and reforms in various sectors to put economy on rails and to promote growth with equity. The main issues confronting the economy were:

(i) The need to tackle the high gross fiscal deficit of the Centre and State Governments together;  
(ii) Low savings and investment;  
(iii) High interest rates and reduced growth;

(iv) Adverse pressures on inflation, financial markets and external sector.

(v) Mounting interest payments leaving a declining share of Government expenditure available for essential functions such as defence, law and order, social services and public investment in infrastructure;

(vi) Redefinition and narrowing of Government responsibilities to focus on primarily social sector;

(vii) Systematic efforts to reduce subsidies by targeting these to the poorest segments of society;

(viii) Disinvestments of commercial undertakings such as power utilities, transport undertakings and others;

(ix) A concerted programme to deploy user charges for economic services rendered by Government;

(x) Systematic induction of information technology tools and modern management practices to enhance efficiency of government and resource generation;

(xi) Institutional reforms necessary to nurture modern-economic growth. This requires changes in legal and administrative structures, reform of legal system modernisation of laws, regulations and rules which gov-

ern and influence economic transactions;

(xii) Launching of effective public programmes for irrigation, agriculture and allied activities, agricultural research, rural credit;

(xiii) Ensuring larger investment in agriculture and rural development-promoting private investment in this sector;

(xiv) Bringing about reform of policies for agriculture trade, pricing and marketing to bring about rapid development of agriculture;

(xv) Removal of controls on agricultural exports and import controls;

(xvi) Giving priority to development of infrastructure including power, roads, ports, telecommunications and civil aviation;

(xvii) Providing dedicated, high quality long-term private investment in higher education, skill generation;

(xviii) Reform of financial sector by making structural changes aimed at removal of rigidities of the banking system and tackling the problem of weak banks and non-performing assets;

(xix) Reforms in India's external economic policies relating to foreign trade, investment, external debt and currency convertibility.

After identifying the major issues and priorities, the Government embarked on policy initiatives to tackle these in a systematic manner. In 2003-04, some major initiatives were further announced like:

\* Antyodaya Anna Yojana expanded from April 1, 2003 to cover an additional 50 lakh families raising the total coverage to more than a quarter of all Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in 2003-04.

\* A community-based Universal Health Insurance Scheme launched in July 2003.

\* A special pension policy, Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana, guaranteeing an annual return of 9 per cent in the form of a monthly pension scheme launched in July 2003.

\* National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) launched in 2003-04 for providing additional components for education of girls at elementary level.

\* Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) designed with an objective, to provide AIMS like institutions in six backward states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttaranchal.

\* Unorganised sector workers' social security scheme launched in January 2004 on a pilot basis in 50 districts in the country.

The question of reviving the Jana Sangh was considered at this meeting. But this idea was not accepted. Vajpayee firmly said: "No. We should not turn back. We will make use of our experience in the Janata Party. We shall move ahead on the strength of our original thinking and principles."

According to the Constitution of BJP the objective of the party is as follows:

The party is pledged to build-up India as a strong and prosperous nation, which is modern, progressive and enlightened in outlook and which proudly draws inspiration from India's ancient culture and values and thus is able to emerge as a great world power playing an effective role in the comity of the nations for the establishment of world peace and a just international order. The party aims at establishing a democratic state which guarantees to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed or sex, political, social and economic justice, equality of opportunity and liberty of faith and expression. The party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established and to the principle of socialism, secularism and democracy and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

**Five Commitments:**  
BJP adopted five principles viz. 'Our Five Commitments'. They were:  
1. Nationalism and National Integration:  
The first principle adopted was 'Nationalism and National Integration'. In the era of Nation States, the welfare of the people depends largely on nation's efforts.

Defence of national interests should become the primary concern of every Indian. India is one nation and Indians are one people; constituting and mutually accommodating plurality of religious faiths, ideologies, lan-

guages, interest etc. People of different faiths and different ideologies should be able to co-exist in peace and harmony with one another. Those who have external or extra-territorial loyalties or are engaged in anti-social activities have to be kept out.

2. Democracy  
Second commitment is to 'Democracy, a fundamental plank of the JP Movement. The subversion of the democratic institutions had been going on for a long time. To defend democratic institutions and norms and to fight ceaselessly against emerging fascist trend and to defend democracy and fundamental rights was an important commitment. In this regard decentralisation of administration assumes importance. It is not enough to have representative democracy at the level of Parliament and State legislatures operating through bureaucracy but also to have institutions of participatory democracy at district, Intermediate and Panchayat levels with adequate powers and financial resources guaranteed by the Constitution in order to involve people in the efforts for national reconstruction and to make them feel responsible for shaping their own destinies.

3. Positive Secularism  
The third commitment adopted is 'positive Secularism', that is 'Sarva Dharma Sama Bhavana' based on moral values. The Congress concept of secularism identified it simply with

protection of interests of religious minorities with a view to nursing com-

munal vote banks. It became a respectable garb for appeasement of narrow communal and sectional interests. No doubt, protection of minority interests is an important aspect of secularism. But in its totality, secularism is a much wider and more positive concept. It constitutes the bedrock of democracy. A state that discriminates between one citizen and another on grounds of their faith, which does not treat them equally, cannot claim to be truly democratic because one of the cardinal principles on which democracy is based is equality of all citizens.

Commitment to secularism is as fundamental as commitment to democracy. Secularism is also a guarantee of nationalism and national integration. It is this broad concept of secularism that BJP subscribes to. A truly secular state can be established only if a sense of 'Indianness' gets instilled in every citizen, irrespective of his religion, caste, region or language.

4. Gandhian Socialism:

The Fourth commitment is 'Gandhian Socialism'. The BJP adopts Gandhian approach to socio-economic issues leading to the establishment of an egalitarian society free from exploitation. Gandhian approach to economy aims at decentralisation of power and regulating the production and patterns of consumption to ensure distributive justice, which represents the basic feature of integral humanist approach. Integral Humanism demands a technology with a human face. A technology which provides employment and bread to the hungry millions and economic system, which is free from exploitation. This is a must for improvement of quality of life. Bread, Freedom and Employment are also the Gandhian first principles. In the Gandhian framework, there is always a scope for large, medium and small and there need not be restriction on any technology so long as it does not debase human beings or becomes an instrument of exploitation or neo-colonialism.

5. Value-based Politics:  
Fifth commitment adopted by BJP is 'Value-based Politics'. Integral Humanism believes in a value-based society. Political activity without any commitment to a set of norms and values becomes merely a self-seeking game. Social and political life should be guided by a set of norms and values, the abridgement of which should bring forth social sanctions and punishment. BJP will strive to build up such a 'value-based politics' and, thus, cleanse the public life and restore moral values. Irrespective of caste creed, language, region, an average Indian cherishes deep respect for values like tolerance, contentment's, simple living, hardwork and brotherhood.

BJP emerged as the largest single party in the LS election, 1996 and was invited by India's president to form a government. However, its tenure in office was short-lived, as it could not muster the majority required to rule in the 545-member lower house. In 1998 the BJP and its

allies were able to form a majority government with PM Vajpayee. In May of that year, nuclear weapons tests ordered by Vajpayee drew widespread international condemnation. After 13 months in office, coalition partner All India Dravidian Progressive Federation (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) withdrew its support, and Vajpayee was prompted to seek a vote of confidence in the LS, which he lost by the margin of a single vote.

BJP then contested the 1999 parliamentary elections as the organizer of the NDA, a coalition of more than 20 national and regional parties. The alliance secured a governing majority, with the BJP winning 182 of the coalition's 294 seats. Vajpayee, as leader and was again elected the PM. Although he sought to resolve the country's long-standing conflict with Pakistan over the Kashmir region and made India a world leader in information technology, the coalition lost its majority in the 2004 parliamentary elections to the Congress Party's United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition, and Vajpayee resigned from office.

**Return to power**  
BJP's fortunes began to rise, largely because of the growing discontent with Congress Party rule. Narendra Modi, the long-time Chief Minister of Gujarat, was chosen to lead the BJP electoral campaign, thus making him the party's candidate for PM. The party won 282 seats outright, and its NDA partners added 54 more. Modi was then named head of the party, and began forming a government that included not only senior BJP officials but also several leaders from parties allied with the coalition. Modi was sworn in as the PM on May 26, 2014.

BJP rule included a mixture of policies relating to the economy and to promoting Hindutva. On November 8, 2016, ₹ 500 and ₹ 1,000 banknotes were demonetized with just a few hours' notice with the intent of stopping 'black money'. More than 99% of the banknotes were returned and replaced, indicating even black money had been successfully exchanged and returned to circulation. But the policy did broaden the income tax base through increased bank activity and stimulated the use of cashless transactions. In 2017 the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced, reforming the collection of consumption taxes nationwide.

Meanwhile, the BJP appealed to notions of Hindutva through measures such as banning the sale of cows for slaughter, a move later overturned by the Supreme Court. The party likewise legislated name changes for certain jurisdictions. As both unemployment and the cost of living continued to rise and Modi's grandiose promises on economic growth remained unfulfilled, the BJP began suffering local election losses. In 2018 the party lost all 5 state elections held in November and December, including those in its strongholds of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh. On the national level, however, the party was able to pull off a landslide victory in 2019 and even expanded its representation in the LS. This was in part due to the support it gained after the government's handling of a security crisis in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in February 2019.

The party's second term in power was marked by swift and heavy-handed actions. In August 2019 the BJP-led government stripped J&K of its autonomy and brought it under the direct control of the union government. Communications and movement in the territory were severely restricted during the transition. In March 2020 the spread of the global COVID-19 pandemic prompted the government to implement a strict national lockdown until June. As restrictions were eased, the BJP made efforts to counter the economic impact of the pandemic. Those efforts included Modi's use of executive action to reduce obstacles to selling produce and to encourage private investment.

The BJP aimed to secure 370 seats in the 2024 LS elections even though it needed just over 272 seats to win. In a surprising turn of events, it faced stiff competition from the opposing INDIA alliance and failed to secure a majority on its own even though its alliance, the NDA, won enough seats to form the government at the center.

The BJP has also become the world's largest political party with 11 crore members under the leadership of BJP National President Amit Shah. (The author can be reached at 702699011 or digantaraju@gmail.com)

# The future of libraries in modern society

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Libraries have long been regarded as the repositories of knowledge, serving as sanctuaries of learning and intellectual growth. Their role in society has evolved significantly over the centuries, and as we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, it becomes increasingly clear that libraries remain integral to our social, educational, and cultural fabric. The future of libraries, however, hinges on their ability to adapt to a rapidly changing world, one where digital technologies, shifting societal needs, and new methods of information dissemination continue to reshape the landscape of knowledge acquisition.

In the past, libraries were primarily defined by their physical collections—books, manuscripts, and printed materials. These collections were the centerpiece of libraries, and for centuries, the library was synonymous with the concept of the book. But today, in a world where information is often digitized, and the internet provides instant access to a wealth of data, the traditional image of the library is no longer sufficient. The idea of the library as a mere storehouse of books has been replaced by a more dynamic, multifaceted view of libraries as hubs of learning, creativity, and community engagement.

One of the most significant changes to the future of libraries lies in the digital transformation they are undergoing. The advent of the internet, digital archives, and online resources has opened up new possibilities for how libraries function. No longer are libraries simply places where people go to read books—they have become centers of digital access, offering a

vast array of electronic resources. E-books, digital journals, academic databases, and online learning platforms are just some of the many offerings now available through libraries. This digital shift allows libraries to transcend physical boundaries, providing access to information from virtually anywhere in the world. As more people gain access to the internet and digital devices, libraries will continue to expand their role as a bridge between people and information, enabling access to knowledge that would otherwise be out of reach for many.

In addition to serving as portals to digital resources, libraries have also embraced new technological tools that enhance their ability to serve their communities. The integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and data analytics has the potential to transform the way libraries operate and engage with patrons. For example, AI-powered tools can help patrons find information more efficiently, personalize recommendations, and enhance the search for scholarly resources. Virtual reality (VR) offers immersive experiences that can enhance learning, from virtual tours of historical landmarks to simulated laboratory experiments. Data analytics can be used to improve library services by analyzing patron usage patterns, streamlining operations, and tailoring programming to meet the needs of the community. As libraries continue to adopt and integrate these emerging technologies, they will increasingly position themselves as forward-thinking institutions capable of meeting the evolving needs of modern society.

Another significant aspect of the

future of libraries is their role in fostering community engagement. Traditionally, libraries have been viewed as quiet spaces for individual study and research. However, in recent years, there has been a shift toward making libraries more interactive and inclusive spaces for social and community-driven activities. Libraries are increasingly seen as community hubs where people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests can come together to learn, collaborate, and exchange ideas. This evolution is evident in the growing number of libraries offering programs and services that go beyond book lending, including workshops, public lectures, art exhibitions, and social events. Libraries are also taking on a more active role in addressing social issues, such as providing support for individuals facing homelessness, helping immigrants navigate legal systems, and offering services for marginalized groups. As the role of libraries expands, they will continue to serve as safe spaces where people can engage with one another and with the resources that allow them to improve their lives.

The future of libraries will also be shaped by their increasing emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility. As our society becomes more diverse, libraries must strive to ensure that their services are accessible to all individuals, regardless of their background, language, or abilities. Libraries are uniquely positioned to serve as inclusive spaces where people from different walks of life can find resources that meet their needs. This includes offering multilingual collections, providing resources for individuals with disabilities, and ensuring that libraries are physically accessible to everyone.

Libraries can also play a pivotal role in promoting social justice by offering programs that address pressing issues such as racial inequality, gender discrimination, and economic disparity. By making their services more inclusive, libraries will not only continue to serve as equalizers but also as powerful agents of positive social change.

As libraries continue to embrace digital technology, there is also an increasing focus on the preservation of digital information. While the digital age has revolutionized access to information, it has also presented new challenges in terms of preserving and archiving digital content. Unlike physical books and manuscripts, which have a longer shelf life, digital files can become obsolete quickly as technology evolves. The future of libraries, therefore, must also involve a commitment to preserving digital knowledge for future generations. This will require libraries to invest in digital archiving, ensuring that vital information is stored in formats that will remain accessible and usable in the years to come. By doing so, libraries can safeguard the vast amount of digital knowledge that is being created and ensure that it remains available for future research, education, and discovery.

Another critical aspect of the future of libraries is their role in education. Libraries have long been integral to formal education, providing students with access to research materials, textbooks, and academic resources. However, the educational landscape is changing, with more emphasis being placed on digital learning and alternative methods of education. As the future of education continues to evolve, libraries will play an increasingly important role in supporting

lifelong learning. Libraries can offer a wealth of resources for individuals looking to further their education outside of traditional academic institutions, including online courses, certifications, and professional development programs. In addition, libraries will continue to be essential in supporting K-12 education, providing students with research materials, tutoring, and educational programs that complement classroom learning.

Moreover, libraries will play an essential role in addressing the issue of information literacy. In an age where misinformation, fake news, and media manipulation are widespread, the ability to critically assess and interpret information is more important than ever. Libraries have always been centers of information literacy, teaching individuals how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively. As we look to the future, libraries will continue to be at the forefront of this movement, offering resources, workshops, and programs that promote critical thinking and media literacy. This will help individuals navigate the complexities of the modern information landscape, empowering them to make informed decisions and contribute to a more informed society.

Despite the promise of these exciting possibilities, there are also challenges that libraries will face as they adapt to the future. One of the most pressing challenges is funding. As libraries become more digitally oriented and embrace new technologies, they will need to secure adequate resources to sustain these advancements. Libraries are already facing financial pressures, and without adequate funding, it will be difficult for them to continue expanding their services and staying current with

technological trends. Public libraries, in particular, may face difficulties in maintaining their relevance as governments prioritize other areas of funding. To ensure that libraries remain vital institutions, there must be a continued commitment to supporting them through public funding, grants, and private partnerships.

Another challenge is the digital divide. While digital technology offers vast opportunities for expanding access to information, not all individuals have equal access to the internet or the necessary devices to take full advantage of these resources. Libraries can play a key role in bridging this divide by providing free access to computers, the internet, and digital literacy training. However, this will require ongoing efforts to ensure that all members of society, regardless of socioeconomic status, have the tools and knowledge to participate in the digital world.

In conclusion, the future of libraries in modern society is filled with potential. As society continues to change, libraries must evolve to meet the needs of their communities. The digital transformation, the expansion of community-focused services, the emphasis on inclusivity, and the commitment to preserving digital knowledge will define the library of tomorrow. Libraries will remain central to education, intellectual development, and the fight for social justice. They will continue to serve as bridges to knowledge, fostering a more informed, engaged, and equitable society. By embracing innovation while staying true to their core mission of providing free access to information, libraries will continue to be an essential part of our collective future. (The author can be reached at [himangshur1989@gmail.com](mailto:himangshur1989@gmail.com))

## Aurangzeb's tomb: A reflection of imperial decline and historical controversies

By: Dipak Kurmi

Three days after violent clashes erupted in Nagpur, authorities partially lifted the curfew in affected areas on March 20, 2025. At the heart of the unrest is the tomb of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, a historical site now embroiled in contemporary political and ideological disputes. The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and other Hindutva organizations have called for its removal, reigniting discussions on the legacy of one of India's most controversial rulers. While Aurangzeb died over 300 years ago, on February 20, 1707, his unassuming grave, once largely forgotten, has become a focal point of modern conflict. However, beyond the present-day turmoil, the emperor's burial site and his final years offer profound lessons on the rise and fall of empires, the fragility of power, and the ironies of history.

The Final Years of Aurangzeb: An Empire in Decline

Aurangzeb reigned for nearly five decades, the longest rule of any Mughal emperor. Under his dominion, the empire reached its territorial zenith but also sowed the seeds of its eventual downfall. By the late 17th century, his reign was marked by an agrarian crisis, growing discontent among the nobility, and relentless military conflicts, particularly against the Marathas in the Deccan. As the empire's administrative efficiency crumbled, regional forces such as the Marathas gained strength, posing a formidable challenge to Mughal authority.

It was during one of these prolonged military campaigns in the Deccan that Aurangzeb met his end. Nearing the age of 90, the emperor succumbed to illness, leaving behind an empire that was fracturing under its own weight. Unlike his predecessors, who were buried in grandiose mausoleums reflecting the splendor of their reigns, Aurangzeb had explicitly instructed a simple burial, adhering to Islamic austerity. His grave lies within the dargah complex of Sheikh Zainuddin, a 14th-century Chishti Sufi saint in Khuldabad, Maharashtra.

Austere in Death: Aurangzeb's Unadorned Grave

Aurangzeb's tomb starkly contrasts with those of his forebears. While Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan rest in grand edifices visited by tourists worldwide, Aurangzeb's burial site is modest and unembellished. Saqi Musta'd Khan's Maasir-i-Alamgiri, later translated by historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar, provides a detailed account of his burial: "According to His Majesty's last will, he was buried in the courtyard of the tomb of Shaikh Zainuddin [at Rauza, near Daulatabad] in a sepulcher built by the emperor in his own lifetime. The red stone platform over his grave, not exceeding three yards in length, two and a half yards in breadth, and a few fingers in height, has a cavity in the middle. It has been filled with earth, in which fragrant herbs have been planted."

Over time, his grave received a minimal enhancement. American historian Catherine Asher, in *Architecture of Mughal India*, notes that Aurangzeb's open-air tomb was originally marked by



a simple stone cenotaph. In the early 20th century, British Viceroy Lord George Curzon had a white marble screen erected around the grave, not as an endorsement of Aurangzeb's policies, but in acknowledgment of his status as one of India's longest-reigning monarchs.

The Significance of Khuldabad: A Chosen Resting Place

Aurangzeb's decision to be buried in Khuldabad, formerly known as Rauza, carries historical and religious significance. The site is home to the shrines of many revered Sufi saints, and Aurangzeb, despite his rigid Sunni orthodoxy, expressed reverence for Sufism. This paradox is emblematic of the complexities in his character; while he enforced strict Islamic laws, he chose to be buried in a place associated with Sufi mysticism, which often diverged from orthodox interpretations of Islam.

The tomb complex also houses the graves of his son Azam Shah, who briefly ascended the Mughal throne, and the first two Nizams of Hyderabad—Asaf Jah I and his son Nasir Jung. This further cements Khuldabad's importance as a resting place for key figures in India's early modern history.

The Contradictions in Aurangzeb's Legacy

Aurangzeb's legacy remains deeply polarizing. Historian William Dalrymple describes him as a "depressingly puritanical figure," enforcing bans on music, art, and public celebrations that were hallmarks of the Mughal court. Yet, his actions defy simple categorizations. Despite his austere religious policies, his choice of burial site reveals a continued esteem for Sufi saints, whose beliefs often ran counter to strict orthodoxy.

His tomb is notably similar to that of his elder sister, Jahan Ara, who is buried in a simple grave within the Nizamuddin Auliya dargah in Delhi. Ironically, Jahan Ara had been a staunch supporter of Prince Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb's rival in the succession battle. Dara Shikoh, known for his syncretic religious views, was executed on Aurangzeb's orders, yet the contrast between their religious inclinations is blurred by the striking similarities in their final resting places.

Tomb Architecture as a Reflection of Mughal Fortunes

The grand tombs of earlier Mughal

emperors symbolized imperial stability and prosperity. In contrast, Aurangzeb's modest grave serves as a reminder of the Mughal Empire's decline. Historian Michael Brand, in his research paper *Orthodoxy, Innovation, and Revival: Considerations of the Past Imperial Mughal Tomb Architecture*, observes that "while Babur and Aurangzeb willed their own simple burials, Humayun, Akbar, and Jahangir were all entombed in structures built by their sons and successors. It can be asked whether Mughal tombs were really erected to commemorate dead emperors or as victory monuments for the survivors of interregnum warfare."

Aurangzeb's grave signifies that, unlike his predecessors, he lacked powerful successors capable of cementing his legacy through grand architecture. The Mughal Empire, from Babur to Aurangzeb, had in a sense come full circle—an empire that began with Babur's modest burial in Kabul ended with Aurangzeb's simple tomb in Khuldabad.

A Dying Emperor's Reflections

Aurangzeb himself was acutely aware of his failures. In his last days, he penned a letter to his son, Prince Azam, filled with regret and existential reflection. Historian Jadunath Sarkar, in *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, quotes the letter: "I know not who I am and what I have been doing. I have not at all done any (true) government of the realm or cherishing of the peasantry. Life, so valuable, has gone away for nothing." These words, spoken by a ruler once feared across the subcontinent, reflect the weight of his unfulfilled aspirations.

Lessons from Aurangzeb's Grave

Aurangzeb's tomb, unassuming yet historically profound, encapsulates the contradictions of his reign—religious rigidity versus personal reverence for Sufi saints, imperial ambition versus administrative failure, and power versus ultimate humility in death. Whether viewed as a tyrant or a ruler who upheld his convictions, his resting place stands as a testament to the impermanence of power. In the modern era, where historical grievances fuel contemporary conflicts, Aurangzeb's life and legacy serve as a crucial reminder that history is seldom black and white—it is a landscape shaped by paradoxes, ambitions, and, ultimately, the passage of time. (The writer can be reached at [dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com))

## Ghibli's world vs. reality: A struggle between art, employment, and originality

By: Privanka Saurabh

If we look at the real world, employment is necessary. Without a job or business, one cannot fill their stomach just by getting lost in the beautiful world of Ghibli. But art is also necessary for mental peace and inspiration. This is why Ghibli-style images and videos have become a trend on social media. People are passing time by watching it on Pinterest, Instagram, and TikTok; some are trying it themselves and are creating Ghibli-style images with the help of AI tools.

Ghibli-style images and videos have become very popular on social media these days. With the help of AI tools, anyone can now create Ghibli-like images without art skills. People are sharing aesthetic GIFs and wallpapers made of Ghibli movie scenes on Pinterest and Instagram. TikTok and Reels are creating fun content by adding relatable audio or quotes to Ghibli scenes. Some AI tools can now even convert your real photos into Ghibli style, giving people a fairytale look to their photos. This trend is not just limited to entertainment, but it is giving rise to a big debate—can AI-generated art replace real art?

AI-generated Ghibli-style imagery has raised questions about originality. Artists used to have to spend months of effort to create Ghibli-like paintings, but now AI can create something similar in seconds. People are relying on ready-made art instead of thinking for themselves. Real artists are now forced to compete with AI-generated content. The idea of doing something "different" is

slowly dying out due to AI and templates. If art is reduced to just a trend, originality will slowly fade away. The solution is for people to take inspiration from the Ghibli style and create their own unique stories and art, rather than just copying what is available on the internet. The soul of Ghibli is not just in its beautiful visuals but in its deep stories and emotional connection.

If someone loves the Ghibli world enough to want to add to it, it can also become a source of employment. For example, digital artists can make money by creating Ghibli-style art. Merchandise businesses (posters, stickers, clothing) can generate income. Creating Ghibli-style content on YouTube and social media can be a career option. In the animation industry, original short films and series inspired by Ghibli can be created. Game design and VFX studios can also build careers by adopting a Ghibli-like visual style. However, being immersed solely in the Ghibli world can be detrimental. Real-life tasks get put off, and people can lose productivity. If someone is caught up in just watching animation and not focusing on their career, this can become a problem.

The world of Ghibli is idealistic—where everything is beautiful, peaceful, and magical. But the real world is full of struggle, stress, and hardship. If someone is always looking for a life like Ghibli, the real world can seem dull and difficult. Waste of time: People spend hours watching Ghibli movies, Pinterest art, AI-generated images, and Instagram reels. One does not even re-

alize when this "time pass" turns into "time waste." If someone is just caught up in watching animation but should be focusing on their career, it can be detrimental.

If someone is always looking for a Ghibli life, the real world can seem dull and difficult. Some people may even lose motivation and ambition because of this. The Ghibli style has become so popular that many artists are simply copying Ghibli-style art instead of developing their own style. Enjoy the Ghibli style, but don't get lost in it. If you like art, turn it into a skill that can earn you money. Don't ignore your career and life goals—work is important; art is just for relaxation. Maintain originality—be inspired by Ghibli, but develop your own unique style. Manage time—enjoy art and entertainment, but don't ignore work and responsibilities.

The magic of Ghibli is beautiful, but if it starts to affect our real lives, it can be harmful. It's important to find a balance between art and career and fantasy and reality! Ghibli-inspired art can be turned into a career—it can be used in digital art, merchandise, YouTube content, and the animation industry. But getting lost in the world of Ghibli alone can be harmful—it can lead to a waste of time, an impact on careers, a disconnect from the real world, and a lack of originality.

The solution is to create something new and original with the inspiration of Ghibli and not just copy it. It is important to maintain a balance between art and employment so that we can take full advantage of both aspects of life.

## Why does the universe exist?

By: Satyabrata Borah

The question of why the universe exists is one of the deepest mysteries of human thought. We live in a vast and complex universe, filled with stars, planets, and life. But why is there something instead of nothing? This question has puzzled philosophers, scientists, and thinkers for centuries. Some have tried to answer it using science, others with philosophy, and some with spiritual beliefs. Yet, no single answer has satisfied everyone.

When we look around, we see that everything has a cause. A tree grows from a seed, a river flows from a source, and even our own lives come from our parents. This makes us wonder: what caused the universe? Did it appear by itself, or was there something that brought it into existence? Science tries to explain this by looking at the Big Bang theory. According to this idea, the universe started from a tiny point and expanded into what we see today. But even if this is true, we still ask: what caused the Big Bang? Why was there something to begin with?

Some people believe that the universe has always existed in some form. They argue that there was never truly "nothing." Maybe the universe keeps changing, going through cycles of birth and death. Others believe that something beyond the universe, something outside our understanding, created everything. This could be a higher power, a force, or an unknown principle.

There is also the idea that "nothing" is not really possible. When we imagine nothing, we usually think of empty space. But even space is something. True nothingness would mean no space, no time, no energy, and no possibility for anything to happen. Some scientists argue that even in what seems like empty space, there are tiny energy fluctuations. If this is the case, maybe the universe appeared naturally from these fluctuations.

Philosophers have also thought deeply about this question. Some suggest that the universe exists simply because it is possible. If something can exist, maybe it eventually will. Others say that the question itself might not make sense. They argue that asking "why" assumes there must be a reason, but maybe existence is just is.

Some people find comfort in religious or spiritual explanations. Many religions teach that a divine power created the universe. They believe that the universe exists for a purpose, even if we do not fully understand it. For them, the question is not about science or logic, but about faith and meaning.

Another interesting idea is that our universe is just one of many. Scientists have proposed the concept of a multiverse, where countless universes exist with different rules and realities. If this is true, our universe might just be one of many possibilities, and the question of "why" might not have a single answer.

Some thinkers suggest that the universe exists because we are here to observe it. This idea, known as the anthropic principle, says that if the universe were different, we would not be here to ask the question. So, in a way, the universe exists because it allows conscious beings to exist and wonder about it.

Despite all these ideas, we still do not have a final answer. Maybe the question is too big for us to understand right now. Science is always discovering new things, and perhaps one day we will get closer to an answer. Or maybe the question itself will change as we learn more.

Even without a clear answer, the question itself is valuable. It reminds us of our curiosity, our desire to understand, and our place in the universe. Whether we look to science, philosophy, or faith, searching for meaning is part of being human. The universe exists, and so do we. Maybe that is the greatest mystery of all.



## Manipur: Security forces bust militant camp after brief encounter

**IMPHAL, April 7:** Security forces seized arms and ammunition from a militant camp in Manipur's Thoubal district after a brief encounter with insurgents of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (PWC) outfit, police said on Monday.

The incident took place on Sunday when security forces were conducting a search operation in Heirok part III area.

Upon spotting the security forces, militants opened fire at them, and they retaliated, leading to a gunfight following which the insurgents fled the spot, a police officer said.

The security forces discovered a large camp of the militants from which a cache of arms and ammunition was seized.

A self-loading rifle with a magazine, a 12-bore single-barrel gun, twenty-one 7.62mm cartridges, three bulletproof jackets and two plates, camouflage clothing, syringes, medicines and three four-wheelers were seized from the camp, he said.

Police, meanwhile, arrested a KCP (PWC) militant in Nagamapal area in Imphal West district on Sunday.

The insurgent, identified as Waikhom Loveson Singh (31), was involved in extortion activities.

In another operation, security forces seized a .32 pistol with a magazine, an empty INSAS magazine and cartridges from Makou hill range near Pourabi village in Imphal East district on Sunday. (PTI)

## Waqf (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Thursday

# Waqf Amendment Act unconstitutional: Manipur Congress

**IMPHAL, April 7:** The Manipur Congress has termed the Waqf Amendment Act, 2025 "unconstitutional", asserting that the party will stand with the minorities in the country to oppose the legislation.

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Thursday, and by the Rajya Sabha in the early hours of Friday, following marathon debates in both Houses of Parliament.

State Congress president Keisham Meghachandra, in a post on X, said, "I, on behalf of Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee, strongly object the @narendramodi Government's Waqf (Amendment) Act, which was recently passed in Parliament and was given assent by the President of India."

"I believe that the Modi Gov-



ernment's Waqf (Amendment) Act is unconstitutional, and it also undermines Article 25 of the Constitution - the Right to Freedom of Religion - which is enshrined as a fundamental right in the Constitution," Meghachandra said on

Monday. It is nothing but an attempt through an "unconstitutional legislation" to bring personal laws under state control, he alleged.

"I stand with our brothers and

sisters of the minorities of the country in opposing the unconstitutional legislation, which will snatch away the properties of our brothers and sisters of the minority community. I and our Congress party will oppose this divisive RSS/BJP agenda, which is against the law of the land," Meghachandra added.

The Act aims to streamline the management of Waqf properties (assets permanently donated by Muslims for religious or charitable purposes) with provisions to safeguard heritage sites, and promote social welfare.

It also seeks to improve governance by enhancing transparency in property management, streamlining coordination between Waqf boards and local authorities and protecting stakeholders' rights. (PTI)

## Arunachal Guv tells students about opportunities in Sainik Schools

**ITANAGAR, April 7:** Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Monday encouraged Sainik School aspirants from the remote districts of Kurung Kumey and Upper Subansiri to foster a spirit of participation, curiosity, hard work, and the essential habits of reading and writing. Interacting with students from Sarli in Kurung Kumey district, and Taksing and Daporijo under Upper Subansiri, at the Raj Bhavan here, the governor emphasised the importance of good health, discipline, and regular physical activity in a student's life.

The students are participants in a dedicated coaching initiative run by

the Indian Army's Spear Corps, aimed at preparing children from remote border villages for the All India Sainik School Entrance Examination. Recalling his own experience as part of the Sainik School batch in 1962, Parnaik highlighted the tremendous opportunities these institutions offer.

"Sainik Schools provide a golden opportunity to build a bright future, serve the nation with pride, and bring honour to one's family and state," he said.

Urging the young aspirants to become educated, disciplined, and responsible citizens, he encouraged them to contribute meaningfully to the development of Arunachal

Pradesh, a Raj Bhavan communique said. The governor lauded the efforts of Spear Corps for raising awareness and inspiring students from isolated regions to aim for admission to Sainik Schools. He called the initiative a shining example of civil-military cooperation, opening new avenues of empowerment for youth in the state's border areas. Parnaik expressed satisfaction over the visible development in these regions, which he had visited back in 2008 as a Corps Commander. He noted that communities in these border villages are now benefiting from the opportunities provided under the Indian Army's

Operation Sadbhavana.

The Spear Corps initiative was launched in Sarli and Taksing, with the aim of identifying, educating, and motivating eligible students. Out of 65 students screened, 32 students, including 21 girls, were selected for comprehensive coaching. The programme included baseline assessments, subject-specific tutoring, and regular evaluations.

Army troops also coordinated with civil administration to ensure correction of necessary documents and made travel and lodging arrangements to facilitate the students' journey to examination centres in Itanagar. (PTI)

## Financial fraud tops cybercrime chart in Mizoram



**AIZAWL, April 7:** Financial frauds were the most common cybercrime in Mizoram, accounting for 56.38 per cent of 321 cases registered between January 2020 and March 11 this year, as per official data.

A total of 181 cases of financial crimes, primarily online banking fraud and cheating by impersonation, were registered during the period, records from the state cybercrime police station said.

Other offences include identity theft (32 cases), child pornography (16), social media harassment (nine), copyright infringement (seven), false rumours (five), and hacking (one).

The highest number of financial crimes was reported in 2022 during which 107 cases were registered, the records said.

More than ₹ 1.42 crore was recovered in financial fraud cases between 2021 and March 11, 2025.

The state registered the highest number of cybercrimes in 2022, recording 158 cases, followed by 72 cases in 2023, the records stated.

The number of cybercrime cases decreased to 41 in 2024, and of these, 17 were related to financial crimes and 15 to sexual harassment.

In the current year till March 11, thirteen cybercrime cases were registered, of which six were related to sexual harassment and four to financial fraud.

The records stated that 113 people, including eight juveniles, were arrested in cybercrime cases and 40 of them were convicted, since 2021. (PTI)

## ₹ 100 crore sanctioned for eye hospital in Tripura: CM

**HT Correspondent**  
**AGARTALA, April 7:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday announced that ₹ 100 crore has been sanctioned for opening an eye hospital in the state. Saha said this while addressing the World Health Day program organized by the Hepatitis Foundation of Tripura today in Agartala.

"We are opening the Maternal and Child Clinic, and work has already started. We have received over ₹ 150 crore from MDO/NER. Work is underway for the infrastructure development, and manpower will also increase. Prevention is better than cure. If we remain alert beforehand, we will be free from diseases. If we stay fit physically, we will also remain disease-free. In this year's budget, we have kept ₹ 100 crore for an eye hospital with all facilities, and we are also opening more PHCs across the state. Now private hospitals and investors are coming as peace is prevailing here. We want everyone to stay happy. The health sector has seen development in the state," said Saha.

Saha also said that while everyone will do rallies, the main aim of such rallies is to convey the message that everyone must stay healthy and fit.

"We must change our lifestyle to stay healthy. Due to not changing lifestyle, many people die at a very young age. We must give stress on this matter. We advise people on this matter, but we don't follow it ourselves. But we must do this. Drug addiction is a major problem in the state. The number of injectable drug users is rising along with HIV/AIDS patients. We must focus on this issue and eradicate it from the state. Everyone must participate in the war against drugs. The government is with everyone. We are doing very well in all parameters," said Saha, who is also the Health Minister of the state.

**ELECTRICAL WORKS OVER TINSUKIA DIVISION**

Tender Notice No.: TSK/Elect/184, Dated: 03-04-2025. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

SN-1: Tender No.: LV-T-14-TSK-895; Brief Description of Item : At Tinsukia Division - Provision of Smart Prepaid Energy meters in Staff Quarters Under SSE/Elect/Tinsukia, Dibrugarh Town, Mariani Jn., Simalupuri Jn., Furkating Jn., & North Lakhimpur (Phase-II)

Tender Value: ₹ 3,56,58,940.70/-  
Earnest Money: ₹ 3,28,300/-  
SN-2: Tender No.: LV-T-14-TSK-896; Brief Description of Item : (1) At Tinsukia - Replacement of old aged quarters by Type-III Qtrs = 7 units. (2) At Tinsukia Division - At Tinsukia - Improvement of various staff amenities in staff quarters type-II Qtrs = 4 units & type-III = 3 units. (3) At New Tinsukia - Replacement of old aged quarters by Type-III Qtrs = 4 units. (4) At Mariani Jn. - Replacement of old aged quarters by Type-III Qtrs = 4 units. Tender Value: ₹ 32,93,279/-  
Earnest Money: ₹ 65,900/-  
SN-3: Tender No.: LV-T-14-TSK-897; Brief Description of Item : (1) At Tinsukia Division - At Dibrugarh Town - Replacement of old aged quarters by Type-II Qtrs = 4 units & Type-III = 3 units. (2) At Tinsukia Division - At Dibrugarh Town - Replacement of old aged quarters by Type-II Qtrs = 4 units & Type-III = 3 units. (3) At Tinsukia Division - At Dibrugarh Town - Replacement of old aged quarters by Type-II Qtrs = 4 units & Type-III = 3 units. Tender Value: ₹ 26,43,893/-  
Earnest Money: ₹ 56,900/-  
SN-4: Tender No.: LV-T-14-TSK-898; Brief Description of Item : (1) At Murkongselek : Proposal for new circulating area and approach road for Ballast Siding and development of existing circulating area and approach road. (2) At Silapathar : Electrical Works for Extension and Development of Goods circulating area and approach road. Tender Value: ₹ 46,97,528/-  
Earnest Money: ₹ 94,000/-  
Date & time of closing of above all tenders at 13.00 hrs. on 25-04-2025 and opening at 15.00 hrs. on 25-04-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 13.00 hrs. on 25-04-2025 in the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

DRM (Elect), Tinsukia  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
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## ASEAN-India Artists' Camp concludes



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, April 7:** The 3rd edition of the ASEAN-India Artists' Camp (AIAC) concluded in Shillong with an exhibition at Tripura Castle, where paintings created by 21 artists from ASEAN Member States, Timor-Leste, and India were displayed, an official statement said here on Monday.

Over the ten days, these artists engaged in collaborative work, drawing inspiration from Shillong's landscapes, cultural interactions, and artistic exchanges.

Organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, in collaboration with Seher, AIAC has been a key initiative under India's 'Act East Policy'.

The camp facilitated artistic dialogue across borders, fostering an environment where diverse styles, traditions, and techniques converged to create original works of art.

Speaking on the significance of such initiatives, Pabitra Margherita, minister of state for external affairs and textiles, said, "This camp shows the strong cultural and artistic links between India and ASEAN nations. Art has real power, it connects people. Through this effort, we're strengthening ties that matter, building a foundation for our countries to grow closer."

During the camp, artists participated in a series of immersive experiences, including interactive workshops on classical dance, in-

digenous music, and traditional handicrafts. They engaged in discussions on creative techniques, explored Meghalaya's artistic heritage, and conducted interactive sessions with local schoolchildren, offering them a rare opportunity to observe and learn from distinguished artists, the statement noted.

These exchanges not only enriched the creative process but also deepened cultural understanding.

Sanjeev Bhargava, founder-director of Seher, said, "As the one who dreamed up this camp, I've watched it evolve into something extraordinary. Over ten days, I saw these artists from across borders dive into Shillong's culture, challenge each other's ideas, and produce works that pulse with life. This exhibition is the result of raw creativity, late-night debates, and a shared passion that's now tangible on every canvas. I couldn't be prouder of what we've built together."

With the conclusion of the camp, the artworks showcased in Shillong will next be exhibited in New Delhi and Malaysia, further extending this cultural exchange beyond borders.

The artists return to their home countries with new perspectives, experiences and memories, reinforcing India's engagement with ASEAN nations through the arts, the statement concluded.

## LNKR condemns brutal attack on civilians

**IMPHAL, April 7:** The Liangmai Naga Katimai Ruangdi, Manipur (LNKR) strongly condemned the "heinous incident" that occurred on April 5, 2025, at around 11:45 am. The attack was allegedly carried out by individuals identified as Thangnaimang Veiphei, chief of L. Phaijang Kuki village, Thangkhen Veiphei, chief of Munlai Kuki village, and Houmang Veiphei, chief of Haraothel Kuki village, the Liangmai student body said.

Despite the curfew imposed by the district magistrate of Kangpokpi, these individuals led a sudden and brutal assault on the peaceful residents of Konsakhul/Konsaram Naga village, said the LNKR. At the time, the villagers were lawfully engaged in leveling their plots and constructing homes. This violent and unlawful action constitutes a gross violation of human rights and a blatant disregard for the rule of law, it added. The LNKR then demanded immediate action from the concerned authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure the safety and security of the Konsakhul Naga community. Such acts of aggression should not go unpunished in a democratic society, it also said. The LNKR then said, "In a deeply distressing and unforgettable turn of events, Aimson Abonmai, chief of Konsakhul Naga village, and Adam Dirinamai, chairman of Konsakhul Naga village, along with three other individuals— Ch. Paramchandin, Ab. Widinbou, and Th. Aloipu—were assaulted".

## Manipur MLA to challenge Waqf Amendment Act in Supreme Court

**IMPHAL, April 7:** Manipur legislator Sheikh Nourul Hassan on Monday said he will challenge the Waqf Amendment Act, 2025, in the Supreme Court.

In a video message, Hassan, a National People's Party MLA, said, "The Waqf Amendment Act 2025 violates the rights of Muslims. I personally condemn and reject this Act. I will challenge it in the Supreme Court."

In a separate development, the Manipur BJP strongly condemned the torching of the house of its Minority Morcha president Md Asker Ali by a mob.

In a statement, the BJP condemned the incident and assured that "such unfortunate incidents shall not happen in the future."

Ali's house at Lilong in Thoubal district was set on fire on Sunday for allegedly supporting the Act. (PTI)

## Arunachal launches new skills programme to boost youth employability

**ITANAGAR, April 7:** To enhance youth employability in Arunachal Pradesh, the Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (SDE) department on Monday inked a pact with a non-profit organisation to roll out latest skills programme across all Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in the state.

The initiative, formalised through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Wadhvani Skill Network (WSN) of Wadhvani Foundation, aims to equip ITI trainees with essential employability skills, including communication, adaptability, teamwork, critical thinking and workplace etiquette, making them job-ready in the dynamic job market, a statement said here.

The MoU was signed in the presence of state Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister Nyato Dukam, who emphasised the government's commitment to holistic development of ITI trainees.

"This collaboration is a milestone in preparing our youth for real-world challenges. It is not just about technical know-how, but the life and soft skills that drive career success," Dukam said in his address.



The minister also confirmed that the programme would be implemented immediately across all ITIs in the state.

Skill development and entrepreneurship commissioner Saugat Biswas in his address highlighted that the initiative is aligned with Directorate General of Training (DGT) norms and will adopt a hybrid learning model, blending digital, self-paced content with faculty-led classroom sessions.

Executive vice-president of Wadhvani

Foundation, Sunil Dahiya, in his deliberations reiterated the value of the collaboration, asserting that bridging the gap between technical skills and workplace-readiness is crucial for ensuring true employability.

The MoU signing ceremony was also attended by skill development director Sibopassing, deputy director K V Lincon, assistant director Gyati Kacho and senior consultants Suman Shukla and Vivek Raturi, among others. (PTI)

### ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE POST OF FIELD OFFICER

District Disaster Management Authority, Karbi Anglong invites application from candidates for contractual engagement against 1 (one) no. vacant post of Field Officer (Disaster Management) under District Disaster Management Authority, District Commissioner's Office, Diphu, Karbi Anglong.

Interested candidates are requested to submit their application in standard form along with a set of all necessary documents (self attested) i.e. Academic qualification, Mark Sheet and certificates from HSLC onwards, Computer Knowledge Certificate, recent passport size photo (2 copies), experience certificates, etc. at the District Disaster Management Authority, District Commissioner's Office, Diphu, Karbi Anglong.

For details refer to the District website of <https://karbianglong.gov.in> or DDMA branch (Room no. 27) office of the District Commissioner, Diphu, Karbi Anglong. Last date for submission of application is 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2025/ 5.00 PM and should address to:

The District Commissioner cum Chairperson,  
District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Karbi Anglong  
Office of the District Commissioner, Diphu, Karbi Anglong  
Pin- 782460  
Assam.

Sd/-

District Commissioner cum Chairperson, DDMA  
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

## People feeling cheated under BJP rule, are looking at Cong with hope: Pawan Khera

AHMEDABAD, April 7: Ahead of the Congress' huddle on April 8-9 here to brainstorm on challenges and key issues of national polity, its leader Pawan Khera on Monday said the country is looking towards the party with hope and Gujarat, the land of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel, will show the way forward.

Khera, the Congress' media and publicity department chairperson, said every section of society, be it the middle class, Dalits, tribals or minorities are feeling cheated under BJP rule at the Centre and in Gujarat.

On April 8, an extended Congress Working Committee (CWC) will meet at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Memorial.

On April 9, the AICC session will take place, with around 1,725 elected AICC members and co-opted members attending, along with MPs, ministers and other senior leaders, on the banks of the River Sabarmati between Sabarmati Ashram and Kochrab Ashram.

The party said the Ahmedabad Session will be themed "Nyaypath: Sankalp, Samarpan and Sangharsh", with more than 1,700 elected and co-opted AICC members attending the main conclave on April 9.

"Every section is suffering today. They are feeling cheated and are looking at the Congress with hope because democracy is being mur-



dered. Thus, as a responsible political party, it is our duty to come forward and lead them towards light from today's darkness," Khera said at a press conference.

"While people are looking at the Congress, we are looking at Gujarat because this state, the land of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel, had always shown us the way in difficult times. That is why our leadership has chosen Gujarat to hold the CWC and AICC session. We are sure Gujarat will show us the way forward," said Khera.

He said despite slogans like "Congress-mukt Bharat" and attempts to eliminate it from the political map, the party remains standing as "it is the voice of the citizens, not just a political party".

Amit Chavda, Congress Legisla-

tive Party (CLP) leader in the Gujarat Assembly, said many important issues concerning the people of the state and country will be discussed in the AICC session.

"Issues such as malnutrition, high cost of education, contract system in employment, people affected by demolitions, inflation and corruption will be discussed in the AICC session, which will begin at 9:30 am on Wednesday," Chavda said.

As per a party release, the CWC meeting will see participation of 262 leaders, including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge.

Incidentally, a CWC meeting was held at the same venue in 2019 ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. "The CWC meeting will begin

around 11:30 am. Leaders will discuss what Congress can do for the country and what party cadres can do for the Congress. Since it is an extended CWC, state Congress presidents and Congress Legislature Party leaders have also been invited," the party's state unit chief spokesperson Manish Doshi said.

The Gujarat unit has formed multiple committees to look after various aspects of the event such as accommodation, food, logistics and media coordination among others, he added.

A large dome has been erected at Sabarmati Riverfront for the AICC session while another structure has been put up on the premises of the Patel Memorial for the CWC meeting.

The AICC session is being held in Gujarat after 64 years, state unit chief Shaktisinh Gohil said.

"In the Congress' 139-year-old history, Gujarat has hosted the mega conclave only twice. The last one was held at Bhavnagar in 1961," he said.

Nearly 3,000 delegates from across the country will be attending the AICC session from 9:30 am to 6 pm.

In a statement earlier, the Congress said the AICC session will deliberate on challenges posed by the BJP's "anti-people" policies and its attack on the Constitution, as well as a roadmap for the Congress. (PTI)

## We are learning from mistakes in Bihar, empowerment of downtrodden now top priority: Rahul

PATNA, April 7: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday asserted that his party was "learning from its mistakes in Bihar" where the party had been lax in bringing about all-round development through empowerment of the downtrodden.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha was addressing a symposium in the state capital, months ahead of the crucial assembly polls in which the Congress, in alliance with RJD and the Left, will take on the formidable ruling NDA.

While addressing the "Samvidhan Suraksha Sammelan" (Save the Constitution Symposium), Gandhi claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had built a "system" in which the country is being run by five per cent of the population and 10-15 people are controlling the entire corporate world.

"I must be the first person in the Congress to admit that we did not work, in Bihar, with the zeal we should have. But we shall move forward learning from our mistakes. Our party, and the coalition of which we are a part, shall strive for uplift of SCs, STs, OBCs, extremely backward classes and minorities," said the Congress leader, whose party's decline in the state began with the Mandal wave of the 1990s.

He said, "We recently did something which may not have been great but was still of significance. We reconstituted District Congress Committees. Earlier, two-thirds of these were headed by upper castes. Now two-thirds of these are headed by the deprived castes. This has been in line with clear instructions from (national president Mallikarjun) Kharge ji and me for the organization".

Claiming that Bihar has been the land of great political changes, starting from the Independence struggle, Gandhi alleged that at present, the NDA's politics is serving the interests of billionaires. "We are sure that Bihar will once again serve as a catalyst for change," he said. The Congress leader, who was on his third tour of the state in four months, had earlier visited Begusarai, about 150 km away, to take part in "palayan roko, naukri do (stop migration, give jobs) pada-yatra", an initiative of the party's student and youth wings to highlight Bihar's endemic problem of joblessness and mi-

gration. Gandhi did not address the public in Begusarai, which is also the home state of the party's youth wing national in charge Kanhaiya Kumar. The former Congress president, however, was joined there by thousands of young supporters, many of them wearing white T-shirts like the leader has been doing since the "Bharat Jodo Yatra" a couple of years ago. Union minister Giriraj Singh, who represents Begusarai in the Lok Sabha, appeared miffed at the Leader of the Opposition's presence in the town. "Rahul Gandhi should worry about his own palayan (departure) from public mind," the BJP leader told reporters in Patna.

At the Samvidhan Suraksha Sammelan in the state capital, Gandhi gave a nearly 40-minute-long speech, calling the Constitution "not a merely 70 years old book, but an ideology that is thousands of years old, since the times of the Buddha, continuing through the era of Kabir and Guru Nanak, and ultimately inspiring Babasaheb Ambedkar". The Congress leader mocked PM Modi for "bowing down before the Constitution after the elections, realising that his bluster of 400 plus seats for the BJP had backfired and people would not allow him to tinker with the Samvidhaan".

He alleged that BJP, and its parent body RSS, drew inspiration from Vinayak Damodar Savarkar "who could not stand the truth", in stark contrast with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister, "both of whom loved truth with the same intensity as the Buddha did".

The former Congress president asserted that a nationwide caste census was needed "just like an X-ray is required to assess the injury to any part of the body", but the BJP-RSS were opposed to that.

"But they will have to get a caste census done. They will also have to pull down the fake barrier of the 50 per cent cap on quotas for the deprived castes. I have told the PM inside Parliament that if his government dithers, we will do the needful," said Gandhi.

The Congress leader peppered his speech with many anecdotes, recalling interactions with qualified medical and engineering graduates and a skilled shoe-maker, all of whom, he said, were finding it difficult to realise their full potential "because of the system". (PTI)

## NC, Congress, CPI(M) MLAs hold protest outside J&K Assembly against Waqf Act

JAMMU, April 7: The members of the coalition government in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Monday held protests outside the House over the Waqf (Amendment) Act after the Speaker adjourned the House following a ruckus over the demand to discuss the new law.

The MLAs of the National Conference (NC), Congress, CPI(M) and some independents staged a dharna at the entry gate of the Assembly and protested against the BJP-led government at the Centre.

"BJP resorted to manhandling in the House. They raised religious slogans. We reminded them that this is not a wrestling ring. We are here to raise constitutional issues," NC member Altaf Kaloo told reporters.

He said they had brought an adjournment motion in the House, which the Speaker did not accept. "In the Tamil

Nadu Assembly, a resolution was passed even though Muslims constitute only 6 per cent of the population. Why can't there be discussions in this Muslim-majority region?" he said.

The Speaker rejected the demand to debate the issue, stating that issues pending in the court cannot be discussed in the House. Participating in the protest, CPI(M) member M Y Tarigami called on everyone to unite against the BJP and its divisive politics.

"I urge the people of Jammu to support us. BJP may try to give it a communal colour, but we must stand united," he said.

Congress' Irfan Hafeez Lone carried a banner against the Act, saying it is not acceptable to the people and held a protest at the staircase of the House.

Earlier, Lone held a banner — Waqf Amendment Bill is not acceptable to us —

and called BJP "anti-Mahatma Gandhi" and "supporters of Nathuram Godse" inside the House. This drew a sharp reaction from some BJP members, who rushed near the well of the House.

There was pushing and shoving involving him and Congress MLA Ifitikhar Ahmed, but the watch and ward staff intervened and prevented a clash.

He said, "If the watch and ward staff had not intervened, they would have killed me. It was an attack on me."

Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma accused the ruling NC of inciting religious sentiments in Kashmir through its protest in the J&K Assembly.

He called the disruption unconstitutional and alleged bias by the Speaker.

He also pointed out that NC MPs remained silent in Parliament but are now creating unrest over a passed bill. (PTI)

## Pleas against Waqf (Amendment) Act 'vote bank interest litigations': BJP

NEW DELHI, April 7: The BJP on Monday criticised several public interest litigations challenging the Waqf (Amendment) Act as "vote bank interest litigations". BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla claimed that the pleas filed in the Supreme Court by several organisations are "merely an excuse to incite their vote bank and create riot-like situation in the country".

He told reporters that the only people whose interests will be harmed by the new law is the land mafia which has grabbed Waqf properties. "It seems to be less PIL and more vote bank interest litigation."

The organisations behind the legal challenge to the Act, including the Congress, AIMIM, and some Muslim outfits, were also behind the allegation that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act will



snatch the citizenship of Muslims, Poonawalla alleged.

He said that the new law will ensure social justice and the application of Constitution in managing Waqf properties.

Many Muslim bodies and even Christian organisations have welcomed the amendments to the Waqf Act, he noted, asserting that it is not a "Hindu-Muslim" issue.

The BJP spokesperson said the Con-

gress had used Parliament to overturn a Supreme Court judgment, which had provided alimony to divorced Muslim women in the Shah Bano case in 1985. When Parliament has now passed a law for ensuring justice to the backward and women among Muslims, the Congress is again opposed to it, he added.

Earlier in the day, a bench comprising Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan agreed to consider, listing for an urgent hearing, the plea of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi and others, including Congress MP Mohammad Jawed and AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan on the issue.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has also moved the top court against the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025. (PTI)

## Will fight till my last breath: Mamata vows to protect sacked Bengal teachers, restore their dignity

KOLKATA, April 7: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday pledged to protect the rights of "eligible candidates" who lost their jobs after the Supreme Court verdict, and asserted that she would continue fighting for them as long as she is alive and even if it meant going to jail. Speaking at a meeting with those who lost their jobs after the apex court verdict, Banerjee urged the affected teachers and staff to return to their respective schools and "voluntarily" resume duties.

"Even if I have to go to jail, I will keep fighting to ensure no deserving candidate is deprived of job — this is my promise, as long as I am alive," she said in an emotionally charged message at the Netaji Indoor Stadium here.

Speaking at a packed gathering of affected teaching and non-teaching staffers, Banerjee said, "No one has received any termination letter yet. So continue with your work. You are free to offer voluntary service in the meantime."

The Supreme Court on April 3 upheld a 2024 Calcutta High Court judgment annulling the recruitment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staffers appointed through the 2016 School Service Commission (SSC) recruitment drive, terming the entire selection process "vitiating and

tainted". Banerjee said the state administration would first seek "clarification" from the apex court, and if needed, file a review petition "to ensure the interests of eligible candidates are safeguarded".

"If the clarification is not in our favour, we will make alternative arrangements within two months. No eligible candidate will be jobless. The government has not sent any termination letters. You can continue to teach voluntarily," she said.

"Who will manage the schools now? Who will handle all the other tasks? If someone is not in a position to provide jobs, they shouldn't have the authority to take them away either," the CM said.

Banerjee, however, said the state government respects the top court ruling.

"We are not here to disobey the Supreme Court. We will act strictly within the legal framework. But I must say, the administration wasn't given enough time to rectify the mistakes," she said. She 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 chief minister asserted and appealed to the aggrieved teachers to trust her government.

"Continue teaching and educating without worry. If you suffer for two months now, you won't have to suffer for the next 20 years," she said.

Banerjee said the West Bengal government has plans ready to prevent any break in service for those who are eligible. "I will stand by those who lost their jobs in an unjust manner. I don't care what others think. I will do everything to restore your dignity."

In a clear message to the opposition, Banerjee alleged that a "dirty game" was being played to destroy the state's education system.

"A dirty game is being played by some people. One should figure out the real faces behind the masks. Many are trying to mislead people with false information," she said.

Without naming the party, Banerjee lashed out at senior advocate and CPI(M) leader Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya for initiating the legal proceedings that culminated in the Supreme Court verdict. (PTI)

## J-K assembly adjourned for the day over Waqf Act protests

JAMMU, April 7: The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly descended into chaos with religious and jingoistic sloganeering on Monday after the speaker rejected an adjournment motion, moved by the National Conference to discuss the Waqf (Amendment) Act, saying the matter was sub-judice.

The House was adjourned twice amid pandemonium to reconvene and witness chaos again. The third time, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather adjourned the House for the day.

A ruckus erupted in the House after Rather refused the motion, moved by NC's Nazir Gurezi and Tanvir Sadiq, seeking adjournment of the question hour to discuss the Waqf law.

A notice for the motion was given to the speaker by nine members from across the NC, Congress, and Independents.

Leader of the House, BJP's Sunil Sharma, mounted a vociferous opposition to the motion, triggering an uproar.

"It is a religious matter concerning our faith. There is no issue more pressing than this. Will you, Speaker, adjourn the house to address this critical issue?" Sadiq said.

NC's Kaiser Jamshed Lone said that it motion pertained to religious matters and a half-hour discussion should be scheduled.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary demanded that members be allowed to express their views on the issue. "If they wish to express their views, they should be allowed to speak," Choudhary said.

The Speaker instructed members to return to their seats.

However, the confrontation ratcheted up when the parties took to hurling sallies at each other. NC and Congress members raised shouts of "BJP haay haay" and "Bill wapis karo".

The BJP members responded by shouting "Bharat Mata Ki Jai," which was then countered by NC, Congress, and PDP members chanting "Allah hu Akbar."

The BJP members also shouted slogans like "Vande Mataram" and "Jaha hua balidaan Mukherjee, wo Kashmir hamara hai."

NC, Congress, and PDP members matched it with loud chants of "Nara-e-Takbeer."

As chaos continued, NC members Salman Sagar and Ajjaz Jan tore up the question papers and threw them in the air.

Intervening, the Speaker referred to rule 58, sub-section 7, stating that issues pending in the court cannot be discussed in the House. "The bill is currently sub-judice in the Supreme Court. I have received writ petitions. It cannot be debated here," he said.

He also stressed that the constitutionality of the Bill is a matter for the court to decide.

PDP member Wahid Para pointed out the religious significance of the matter.

"It is a crucial religious matter. The Tamil Nadu Assembly has passed a resolution on it. The house should act accordingly," he said.

The Speaker said the Tamil Nadu Assembly's resolution predated the court proceedings. "It is



sub-judice. I will not allow an adjournment," he asserted.

During the ruckus, NC member Majid Larmi's black achkan was torn. Party members held up pieces of the torn dress as symbols of protest against the Bill.

"Bill wapis lo, kanoon ko khatam karo," they

shouted, while BJP members countered them with "dramebazi ko bandh karo."

Gurezi said, "This is a religious issue, and we are prepared to sacrifice anything for our faith. If you do not allow us to discuss it, we will not allow the House to function."

There was a bit of jostling between BJP mem-

bers Satesh Sharma, Vikram Randhawa, Arvind Gupta, and Congress MLA Irfan Hafeez Lone. A full-on confrontation was however prevented by the watch and ward staff.

Sensing the situation, the Speaker adjourned the House for the day. NC, Congress, and CPIM members staged a protest at the entrance of the Assembly House.

"BJP resorted to manhandling in the House. They raised religious slogans. We reminded them that this is a wrestling ring, but we are here to raise constitutional issues," NC member Altaf Kaloo told reporters.

"We should be allowed to speak. In the Tamil Nadu Assembly, a resolution was passed even though Muslims constitute only 6 per cent. Why can't there be discussions in this Muslim-majority region?" he asked.

CPI-M member M Y Tarigami said, "We are not here to create divisions between Jammu and Kashmir regions. We are united as legislators — not Hindus and Muslims. We are protesting against the Waqf Bill."

He also urged the people to unite against the BJP's "divisive" politics.

"This Bill threatens secularism. I urge the people of Jammu to support us. BJP may try to give it a communal colour, but we must stand united. We will fight against it together in the House," he said.

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday gave her assent to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was passed by Parliament earlier this week after heated debates in both Houses. (PTI)



## FIR AGAINST COPS AND SIT PROBE

## Badlapur accused death: HC says prima facie offence disclosed

MUMBAI, April 7: The Bombay High Court on Monday ordered an FIR against five policemen for the custodial death of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde, who was allegedly shot in a police van, and setting up of an SIT, noting that a prima facie offence is disclosed.

A division bench rapped the Maharashtra government for its "reluctance" to lodge an FIR, stating that such action undermines the state's legitimacy and the common man's faith in the criminal justice system.

When a prima facie offence is disclosed, it is mandatory to lodge a case, the bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Neela Gokhale noted.

The bench said it was satisfied that the encounter required a thorough investigation as it is undisputed that the deceased succumbed to bullet injuries inflicted by a police officer when he was in police custody.

"We are of the opinion that a cognisable offence is disclosed, and as such, the police are duty-bound to proceed in adherence with the law. Reasonableness and credibility of the information are not conditions precedent for registering an FIR," the bench said.

As a Constitutional court, the HC cannot remain "mute spectators" even though the parents of the deceased had said they do not want to pursue the case, the bench said.



The parents of Shinde had claimed that their son was killed in a fake encounter.

"When a prima facie offence is disclosed, it is mandatory for a case to be lodged. When a cognisable offence is disclosed, the police are duty-bound to proceed in adherence with the law. Reasonableness and credibility of the information is not a condition precedent for registration of an FIR," the bench said.

Shinde, accused of sexually assaulting two minor girls at a school in Badlapur in Thane district, was allegedly killed in a police shoot on September 23, 2024, when he was being taken to Kalyan from the Talaja prison for questioning in another case.

The escorting police team had claimed they had shot at the accused in self-defence after he snatched the gun of one of them and opened fire.

A magistrate inquiry report, however, dismissed their argument and indicted five police personnel. Slamming the government for its "reluctance" to lodge an FIR, the bench said such action undermines the state's legitimacy and the common man's faith in the criminal justice system.

The bench added that a Constitutional court cannot ignore the state's failure to fulfil its obligations and remain mute spectators.

The bench directed the joint commissioner of Mumbai Police's crime branch Lakhmi Gautam to

form an SIT under a DCP and register FIR.

The court said it was confident that the SIT would unearth facts and conduct a fair and impartial investigation from all angles, uninfluenced by anyone.

After the order was pronounced, senior counsel Amit Desai, appearing for the government, sought a stay but the court refused.

"The only condition for recording an FIR is that there must be information and that information must disclose a cognisable offence, both present in this case," the HC said.

The bench said a refusal to investigate a crime undermines the rule of law, erodes public faith in justice, and allows perpetrators to go unpunished.

"The state's reluctance to even register an FIR has left the deceased's parents helpless, forcing them to forgo closure over their son's untimely death. Such negligence weakens public trust in institutions and compromises the state's legitimacy. As a constitutional court, we cannot allow this and be mute spectators," it said.

The bench said police authorities are duty bound to adhere to the principles of law and SC judgments and ensure that the case, which prima facie discloses the commission of a cognisable offence, is taken to its logical end.

"Such action was warranted in the interest of justice and to uphold

public confidence in the justice delivery system. The same is necessitated, keeping in mind the adage 'Justice must not only be done, but seen to be done'," the HC said.

"We are unable to understand the reluctance of the State CID or the police authorities to register an FIR more particularly when the petitioner's (Akshay Shinde's father Anna Shinde) complaint and now the inquiry report prima facie discloses the commission of a cognisable offence," the HC said.

The bench said the criminal justice system will acquire credibility only when the citizens at large are convinced that justice is based on the foundation of truth.

"Crimes affect the entire society and thus the legitimate interest of the society in the investigation cannot be brushed aside.

"It is important to strengthen the faith and confidence of people in the law enforcing agency and this institution lest the faith of the people in the administration of justice stands shaken," the court said.

Denial of a fair probe or delay is as much injustice to the victim and the society as to the accused, it added.

Considering the facts in the magistrate's report, the court cannot allow the issue to be swept under the carpet, especially when the moot question about adhering to Constitutional norms and due legal process is at stake, the bench said. (PTI)

## Adityanath inaugurates 13 developmental projects

GORAKHPUR (UP), April 7: India is emerging as a global leader because our growth trajectory is stronger than that of any other nation, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Monday.

While inaugurating and laying the foundation stone of 13 developmental projects worth over ₹ 91 crore at the Madan Mohan Malaviya University of Technology here, he said the country has witnessed resurgence as a global economic power under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This is the age of competition. India was once a guiding light to the world in education and technology, Adityanath said, adding the country was known as a 'Vishwa Guru' (world teacher) because of its leadership in various fields.

Highlighting India's progress since Independence, Adityanath said that by 2014, India had become the 11th largest economy in the world, but it took 65-70 years to get there. In the last ten years, India has leaped ahead in every sector. There is a new energy, a new enthusiasm in the country.

He said India is now the fifth-largest economy in the world and is on track to become the third-largest within the next two years. India is emerging as a global leader because our growth trajectory today is stronger than any other nation. In every field, India is creating a new identity, he said.

Underlining the impact of leadership, Adityanath said, the country, the resources, the system all were the same earlier. But with the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Modi in the last ten years, a transformed India is now reaching new heights that the world is eagerly watching.

Underlining the crucial role of technology institutions in shaping society, he urged students to step beyond campus boundaries and develop low-cost, life-enhancing innovations. He called for a people-centric approach to technological advancement.

"Technology should be affordable, sustainable, and aligned with the goals of 'ease of living'. When tech becomes expensive, it distances itself from the common man. Institutions must take the lead in creating models that serve societal needs," he said.

Prior to the event, the chief minister flagged off four CNG buses from the university campus.

Highlighting the need for indigenous solutions, he posed a challenge to the tech community and asked "Can we develop a model to build a house under PMAY (Gramin) within ₹ 1.2 lakh in just three months instead of nine?"

He also pointed to the environmental toll of brick kilns and stressed the need for eco-friendly alternatives and innovative methods in solid-liquid waste management using traditional techniques. (PTI)

## Callowness in filing DCPCR vacancies can't be appreciated: Delhi HC

NEW DELHI, April 7: The Delhi High Court on Monday pointed out "callousness" on the part of the Delhi government in filling vacancies in the Delhi child rights commission and directed the selection process for such posts to be completed in a time-bound manner.

Observing the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) was not functional since July 2023, a bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said children rights had taken a backseat in the national capital.

The DCPCR was directed to fill vacancies within six weeks. The bench also expressed concern on the menace of substance abuse among children and directed the authorities to complete the selection of members for District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) within eight weeks.

"There is no gainsaying that the DCPCR performs certain important statutory functions to ensure protection of child rights. However, on account of vacancies, such functions are not being performed, as a result of which it is the rights of the children which take a back seat. Such a situation, resulted on account of callousness on part of the government, cannot be appreciated," the bench said.

After the Delhi government counsel sought time to conclude the process for vacancies in DCPCR, the court said the officials were already in contempt of its order, mandating conclusion of the process by the Department of Women and Child Development within three months.

The court said constituting DCPCR was the duty of the officials, entrusted to them by the legislature.

"Three months" time was given in October (last year). Six months (have lapsed). Not a single day is possible in terms of the earlier order. You are already in contempt," it said.

The bench questioned the counsel for not being able to complete a "simple" selection process since July 2023.

"These measures have been annulled by you. They have been made otiose. Have the officers ever visited New Delhi Railway station or Old Delhi Railway Station or ISBT or other such places? These measures are for the welfare of those children. Is the government not aware of the menace of substance abuse amongst children?" it further asked.

The Delhi government counsel informed the bench that following an advertisement issued in December last year, a screening committee was constituted for DCPCR vacancies on January 31, and a list of eligible candidates should soon be placed before the committee.

For the district units, the counsel said, scrutiny was completed and interviews would be scheduled by April end.

"We thus direct that the selection process for the members of district child units shall be completed within eight weeks from today," the court ordered.

Saying DCPCR was not functional in Delhi since July 2023, and especially that the time granted on October 25, 2024 to fill the vacancies ceased long ago, the bench gave a six-week timeline to fill the posts.

The Delhi government was further directed to file an affidavit to show compliance of the court order.

The court a week ago expressed concerns over vacancies in the Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs).

On Monday, it was informed that all posts had been filled. "Not only did the Central government approve but the notification has also been issued by the government of the national capital territory of Delhi," additional solicitor general Chetan Sharma said.

While 12 members were notified for JJBs, apart from three names in the reserve, eight chairpersons and 27 members were finalised for the CWC. (PTI)

## Decide compensation afresh under insurance policy: SC to NCDRC

NEW DELHI, April 7: The Supreme Court on Monday directed the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) to consider afresh the quantum of compensation payable under an insurance policy to a company for its losses in 2005.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and Augustine George Masih was hearing an appeal of the insurance firm against the NCDRC's August 2022 order.

The NCDRC held the insurance firm was liable to compensate an Agra-based company, which suffered losses due to the collapse of a factory shed, under its policy.

The apex court said the company had taken a comprehensive insurance policy from the insurance firm against fire and special perils, and the policy was operative from June 30, 2005 to June 29, 2006.

It came on record that heavy rainfall on August 1, 2005, led to the collapse of the factory shed and caused the damage to the plant, machinery, stocks and buildings.

The bench said the company raised an insurance claim for ₹ 91 lakh following which the insurance firm appointed a surveyor who assessed the losses at ₹ 8.89 lakh.

The insurance firm repudiated the claim,



arguing the loss suffered was not due to the insured peril of "inundation" and would, therefore, fall outside the policy's purview.

Aggrieved by the repudiation, the company approached the NCDRC, saying it engaged an independent surveyor who confirmed the damage was caused by inundation and assessed the loss at ₹ 46.97 lakh.

The company argued in the NCDRC that its premises were renovated in 2003, and the insured shed/factory buildings were in a sound condition, obviating the possibility of a collapse due to weakening of walls or seepage.

The NCDRC directed the insurance firm to pay ₹ 46.97 lakh to the company.

In the top court, the insurance firm said it was not contesting its liability to pay compensation under the policy but the NCDRC did not properly deal with the issue of the quantum of compensation.

"Having noted that the surveyor appointed by the appellant (insurance firm) had assessed the damage at a much lesser figure, i.e., ₹ 8.89,176, the NCDRC could not have assumed that the appellant had mutely accepted the enhanced estimation of ₹ 46,97,085, as per the unilateral assessment made by the surveyor appointed by the respondent (company)," the bench said.

The apex court said the NCDRC did not independently apply its mind on deciding the quantum of the claim and "blindly acted" upon the alleged failure of the insurance firm to deny the assessment in surveyor's report produced by the company.

"This impression, as pointed out earlier, was unfounded and erroneous," the bench said. The top court remitted the matter to the NCDRC for a fresh consideration on the quantum of the compensation under the insurance policy for the losses suffered by the respondent. It asked the NCDRC to give priority to the matter and decide it expeditiously. (PTI)

## 26 Naxalites surrender before security forces in Chhattisgarh

DANTEWADA, April 7: At least 26 Naxalites, including three carrying bounties, surrendered before security forces in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Monday, police said.

The cadres turned themselves in before senior officials from the police and Central Reserve Police Forces (CRPF), citing disillusionment with the "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology, harsh forest life and infighting within the outlawed outfit, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai said.

He said the surrendered Naxalites belonged to Janmilita, Revolutionary Party Committee (RPC) and Janatana Sarkar wings of Maoists and their frontal units like Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Majdoor Sanghan (DAKMS) and Chetna Natya Mandli (CNM).

Of the surrendered cadres, Rajesh

Kashyap was active as the Aamdai area Janmilita commander and carried a reward of ₹ 3 lakh, while Kosa Madvi, head of the Janatana Sarkar squad, and Chhotu Kungam, a member of CNM, carried bounties of ₹ 1 lakh and ₹ 50,000 respectively, the official said.

He said the 111th, 195th, 230th and 231st battalions of the CRPF and local intelligence unit were instrumental in the surrender.

With this, 953 Naxalites, including 224 carrying bounties, have so far quit violence in the district under the 'Lon Varratu' (a term coined in the local Gondi dialect which means return to your home/village) campaign, launched in June 2020, police said. In 2024, 792 Naxalites had surrendered in the Bastar region, comprising seven districts, including Dantewada, they said. (PTI)

## Crown Prince of Dubai to visit India on April 8-9; meet PM Modi, Jaishankar, Rajnath Singh

NEW DELHI, April 7: The Crown Prince of Dubai, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, will visit India on April 8-9, during which he will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hold talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and participate in a business roundtable seeking to bolster India-UAE ties.

"His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, deputy prime minister and minister of defence, the UAE, will visit India on April 8-9," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday said in a statement announcing the visit.

"This would be the first official visit of His Highness to India as the Crown Prince of Dubai," it said.

Sheikh Hamdan's visit follows an invitation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will host a "working lunch for His Highness the Crown Prince" on April 8, the MEA said in the statement.

Sheikh Hamdan will be accompanied by several ministers, senior government officials and a high-level business delegation, the MEA said.

"The visit of the Crown Prince will further solidify the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) and strengthen our multi-faceted ties with Dubai," the statement said.

During his visit, the Crown Prince will participate in a business roundtable with prominent business leaders from both sides in Mumbai.

"The interaction will strengthen India-UAE economic and commercial cooperation across traditional and futuristic areas," the MEA said.

Traditionally, Dubai has played an important role in India's commercial, cultural and people-to-people exchanges with the UAE.

The majority of India's around 4.3 million diaspora in the UAE live and work in Dubai, the statement said. (PTI)

## Indian Navy warship INS Sahyadri arrives in Colombo

NEW DELHI, April 7: Indian Navy warship INS Sahyadri, mission deployed in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), has arrived in Colombo on a visit, highlighting the strengthening of maritime ties between India and Sri Lanka, officials said on Monday.

Personnel from both navies will engage in knowledge-sharing and joint activities to enhance operational synergy between the two maritime forces, they said.

The visit underscores the longstanding partnership between the two nations, furthering cooperation under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions) initiatives, the officials said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Mauritius in March unveiled this grand vision for security and growth for the Global South. Modi had announced that India's new vision for the Global South called "MAHASAGAR" will bring growth security.

"Strengthening maritime ties between India and Sri Lanka, the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet warship INS Sahyadri mission deployed in the IOR arrived at Colombo," a Navy spokesperson said.

The visit marks a key moment in regional cooperation, reinforcing mutual commitment to maritime safety and environmental protection, he said. (PTI)

## Railways land-for-jobs 'scam': SC refuses to hear ED's plea against bail to Lalu aide

NEW DELHI, April 7: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to examine a plea of the ED against the bail granted to RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav's close aide and businessman Amit Katyal in a money laundering case linked to the alleged land-for-jobs scam in the Indian Railways. A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal said they were not inclined to interfere with the Delhi High Court order.

"No big fish. Main persons have not been arrested. Why go on after only small flies? Are you afraid of going after them? Why have you not arrested 11 other accused?" the bench said.

Additional solicitor general S V Raju said the order of the high court was bad in law and needed to be set aside.

The high court on September 17 last year granted bail to Katyal while deprecating the "pick and choose" policy adopted by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The high court noted despite no other accused being arrested in the case and given Katyal had joined the probe, he was unceremoniously held from the Indira Gandhi International Airport before he took off for Ranchi.

The bail order said the agency did not explain the necessity of his arrest and while it reflected a "pick and choose policy", but also entitled Katyal to bail on the ground that his role was "much less" than the other accused.

Katyal, who was arrested by the ED on November 10, 2023 under various provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), was granted

bail by the high court on furnishing a personal bond of ₹ 10 lakh and two sureties of the like amount.

While he sought bail on parity, arguing the ED couldn't adopt a pick and choose policy, indicating discrimination, the ED argued Katyal actively assisted Yadav and his family members while handling the proceeds generated through alleged corrupt practices of the RJD supreme who was then the railway minister.

The high court said no other accused were arrested in the ED case, though they were the alleged to be the main perpetrators or beneficiaries of the offence under the PMLA, and chargesheeted.

Katyal, the court said, was not a flight risk as he joined the investigation and never evaded summons.

The ED claimed that Katyal was the director of a company named AK Infosystems Private Limited, which acquired land from candidates on behalf of Yadav.

Some other members of the RJD supreme's family are also accused in the case. On May 22, a trial court dismissed Katyal's bail application, saying there were no sufficient grounds to grant him the relief, after which he approached the high court.

The case is related to Group D appointments made in the West Central Zone of the Indian Railways based in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, during Yadav's tenure as the rail minister between 2004 and 2009 in return for land parcels gifted or transferred by the recruits in the name of the RJD supreme's family or associates, officials said. (PTI)

## Illnesses, income woes: Delhi's outdoor workers reel under heatwave

NEW DELHI, April 7: As World Health Day is observed under the theme "My health, My right", thousands of outdoor workers across the national capital — from auto-rickshaw drivers and rickshaw pullers to roadside vendors — are grappling with a growing health crisis due to extreme heat and air pollution.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert for the city, forecasting a heatwave to persist until Wednesday. Delhi's maximum temperature settled at 38.2 degrees Celsius, 3.1 degrees above the seasonal average on Sunday. The minimum temperature was 18.5 degrees Celsius, and the Air Quality Index (AQI) remained in the 'poor' category at 209.

Highlighting the physical toll of the heatwave, auto-rickshaw driver Santosh Hazra said, "Skin gets burnt during a heatwave; too also affects health. There's ample availability of free water in Delhi but there's a shortage of shaded areas to rest."

Another auto driver, Prashant Kumar (24), complained of feeling drowsy during the hot season.

"I've been working for 8 years now, and summers have always been difficult, as it greatly affects health. We get tired quickly, which limits our working hours. Delhi pollution also impacts us; we can feel it even in summer."

However, the scorching heat doesn't only bring physical hardships but also fi-



nancial distress.

Sarabjeet Singh, 45, who runs a fruit cart near Red Fort, complained of heatwave impacting his income. "Due to the scorching heat, we get tired very easily. It impacts our income. Also, there are no customers from 12 to 4 pm."

On the other hand, 42-year-old Mohamud Haseem said the compounded effects of heat and humidity reduce work and increase costs. "There's low income because people don't step out. We also end up spending money on buying water and lemon juice."

Highlighting the environmental factors contributing to rising temperatures, environmentalist Bhavreen Kandhari told PTI, "The expansion of concrete landscapes at the expense of tree cover has intensified the urban heat island effect, aggravating temperature to extremes."

Kandhari suggested that a comprehensive, long-term strategy is needed that includes the protection and expansion of tree

cover to enhance biodiversity and sustainable urban planning to mitigate excessive concretisation.

Meanwhile, a report by the NGO Sustainable Futures Collaborative has warned that while cities are taking short-term emergency actions like distributing water and adjusting work hours, long-term heat resilience strategies remain weak or absent. These include occupational cooling, insurance for lost wages, heat mapping of urban hot spots and improving electricity reliability, their recently-released report suggested.

The IMD's yellow alert also signals moderate health concerns, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, infants, and those with chronic conditions.

Thirty-four-year-old Jaspreet Singh, who has been running a food cart in the Red Fort area for 11 years, said, "We are habituated to this heat now, but we witness people fainting now and then due to the weather."

Narendra Shah, a 70-year-old rickshaw puller, is among the vulnerable populations most affected during heatwaves.

"This time, the weather has become worse very early. I'm the sole breadwinner in the family, and earnings get affected during this time. However, I must mention that there is ample availability of free water across the city," Shah told PTI.

Medical professionals have also warned that the impact of such heat exposure is often underestimated.

Dr Vivek Nangia, a senior pulmonologist, said, "First, the stage is heat cramps, second is heat exhaustion wherein people could develop dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and stage three is heat stroke, where people land up in hospitals and ICUs. It's like a medical emergency. The overall impact is dehydration, loss of salt and minerals from the body."

He added that extreme heat can worsen pre-existing heart, lung or kidney diseases, and, in severe cases, it may lead to confusion, organ failure or even death.

Measures that can be taken to avoid heat include staying indoors during peak hours, wearing light-coloured clothing, keeping the head covered and consuming ample fluids.

However, as the income of daily-wage earners depends on street-based work, these measures are difficult to follow.

The Sustainable Futures report also highlighted that many Heat Action Plans (HAPs) rely heavily on directives issued during emergencies by disaster management and health authorities. The long-term institutionalisation of HAPs is weak across cities. Measures such as creating shaded rest areas, rooftop solar panels for cooling and increasing urban green cover are not consistently implemented in the most exposed communities.

Delhi has expanded access to free drinking water in many public areas, but workers say other infrastructure, like shaded zones or cooling shelters, remains scarce. (PTI)



## I'M DOING A COUPLE OF PROJECTS FOR OTT: SUNNY DEOL

**MUMBAI, April 7:** Following the massive success of "Gadar 2", which reignited his popularity among fans, Hindi cinema star Sunny Deol says he is ready to embark on a new phase in his 42-year career with a few upcoming projects in the streaming space.

Deol, the action star of 1990s films "Ghatak", "Arjun", and "Damini", returned to the movies with a bang in 2023 with the sequel to his 2001 blockbuster "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha".

The 67-year-old actor, who is awaiting the release of his film "Jaat", said his OTT debut will allow people to watch his work on more than one medium.

"I'm doing a couple of projects for OTT, and they are not meant for the silver screen because the audience of that is

niche. So, it's best to go there (OTT). People keep watching your films on different platforms.

"It is an interesting thing (medium) for actors and directors because it offers all kinds of variety, and you don't have to restrict yourself to something," Deol told PTI in an interview here.

The actor said he wants to explore "newer kinds of roles".

"I'm already doing something (like that), I'm looking into it. But it all depends if a writer and director offer you something (different). If you try and look for it, then it becomes difficult," he added.

Deol credited OTT platforms for making his films relevant for the new generation of cinema goers.

"Those who didn't see our films in cinema (halls) but it

became relevant on digital platforms, and today's generation got to see it. I thank God and everybody for loving us so much."

Billed as a high-octane drama with larger-than-life action sequences, "Jaat" is different from his previous movies, he said.

The film, set to be released on April 10, is directed by south filmmaker Gopichand Malineni, known for "Don Seenu", "Bodyguard", "Balupu", and "Veera Simha Reddy".

"I enjoyed working on 'Jaat' because it was a refreshing thing to do. Whenever we do South films, they are mostly remakes. For me it's a new film. For the first time, I'm working with a South director, and it has been a great experience. We all learn so much from each

other," he said.

For Deol, he always looks at the story before signing a film, not action sequences.

"It's the story and the characters that drive the character to do what he does, and all of this makes the action look good. Most of the subjects that I've done or the characters I've portrayed are defending or fighting for something or are stuck in some situation wherein he (hero) stands up and fights. In real life, too, I believe you've to fight it out to be where you want to be," he said.

Besides "Jaat" and his upcoming OTT projects, Deol has a host of films lined up including, "Border 2", a sequel to his iconic 1997 film.

"I have emotions attached with every film because every film is a baby. You want to do your best every time. When you do part two ('Border 2'), you can justify things, and people get happy and satisfied, but there's always pressure as well. However, we will ensure that we don't overthink things," he added.

He is also collaborating with renowned filmmaker and his longtime friend Rajkumar Santoshi on period drama "Lahore 1947", and is reportedly to play a pivotal role in Nitesh Tiwari's two-part "Ramayana".

"Jaat" also features Ran-deep Hooda, Vineet Kumar Singh, Saiyami Kher and Regina Cassandra.

Produced by Mythri Movie Makers and People Media Factory, the film will release in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu languages. (PTI)

## Kunal Kamra asks BookMyShow to not delist him, share contact of audiences from his shows

**NEW DELHI, April 7:** Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra on Monday wrote an open letter to BookMyShow requesting the online ticketing platform to either not delist him or to hand over the contact information of audience members he has earned through his solo shows over the years.

The letter, which he shared on his X page, comes days after Shiv Sena claimed BookMyShow had taken Kamra off the sale and artists list from its platform amid ongoing controversy around his 'traitor' jibe against Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

"Dear BookMyShow, I understand that you need to maintain a cordial relationship with the state, and I know that Mumbai is a major hub for live entertainment. Without the state's co-operation, iconic shows like Coldplay and Guns N' Roses wouldn't be possible..."

"I request one of the following: Do not delist me, or provide me with the data (contact information) I've generated through your platform from my audience," Kamra said in his two-page letter.

On April 5, the Mumbai-born comedian -- who is now a perma-

nent resident of Tamil Nadu -- had asked BookMyShow whether the reports of him being delisted from the platform were true.

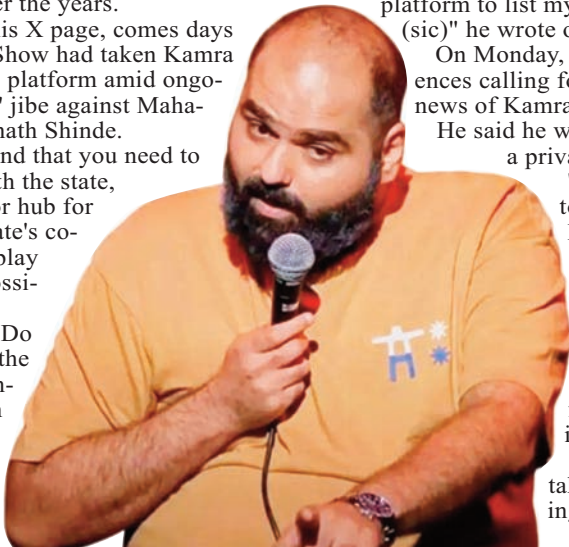
"Hello @bookmyshow can you please confirm if I have your platform to list my shows if not it's fine. I understand (sic)" he wrote on X.

On Monday, the comedian also addressed his audiences calling for a boycott of the platform over the news of Kamra being delisted as an artist.

He said he was "not a fan of boycotts or down rating a private business".

"BookMyShow is well within their right to do what's best for their business (sic). However, the issue at hand isn't about whether you can or will delist me-it's about your exclusive right on listing our shows. By not allowing artists to list their shows through their own websites, you've effectively prevented me from accessing the audience I've performed for from 2017 to 2025," he further stated in the letter.

According to Kamra, BookMyShow takes a 10 per cent cut of revenue for listing shows. (PTI)



## Amar Prem Ka Andaaz is back: Salman on 'Andaz Apna Apna' re-release

**NEW DELHI, April 7:** Bollywood superstar Salman Khan on Monday shared a new trailer of his 1994 cult comedy "Andaz Apna Apna" ahead of the re-release of the film in theatres.

The movie, which was both a critical and commercial failure at the time of its release, was directed by Rajkumar Santoshi and also starred Aamir Khan, Raveena Tandon, and Karisma Kapoor.

Presented by Vinay Pictures, "Andaz Apna Apna" will once again hit the big screen on April 25.

It featured Aamir and Salman as Amar and Prem as two gold diggers who attempt to woo an heiress called Raveena to have access to her father's wealth.

"Amar Prem Ka Andaaz is back... #AndazApnaApna Re-



releasing In Cinemas on 25th April 2025 Nationwide @AndazApnaApna @VinayPictures #VinaySinha @RajSantoshi #AamirKhan @TandonRaveena #KarismaKapoor @nammsinha @pritisinha333 @aamodsinha @shreyoby," Salman wrote on

X alongside a link to the new trailer of "Andaz Apna Apna".

Aamir Khan Productions, the banner owned by Aamir, also shared the trailer on the microblogging site.

"Vinay Pictures presents the official #AndazApnaApna Re-release trailer. #AndazApnaApna Re-releasing In Cinemas on 25th April 2025 Nationwide. #KarismaKapoor @nammsinha @pritisinha333 @aamodsinha @shreyoby," the post read.

"Andaz Apna Apna" gained cult status over the years after repeat views of television, with hilarious dialogues such as "Teja main hoon, mark idhar hai", "Crime Master Gogo, Mogambo ka Bhatija", and "Do dost ek cup mein chai piyenge" only becoming more popular through memes and reels in the age of social media. (PTI)

## Ram Charan-starrer 'Peddi' to release next March

**NEW DELHI, April 7:** "Peddi", starring popular Telugu actor Ram Charan, is set to be released in cinemas on March 27, 2026.

The actor, known for films such as "RRR", "YeVadu", "Magadheera", and "Dhruva", made the announcement on Sunday on the occasion of Ram Navami.

"Peddi" is directed by Buchi Babu Sana and presented by Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings under the banner of Vriddhi Cinemas.

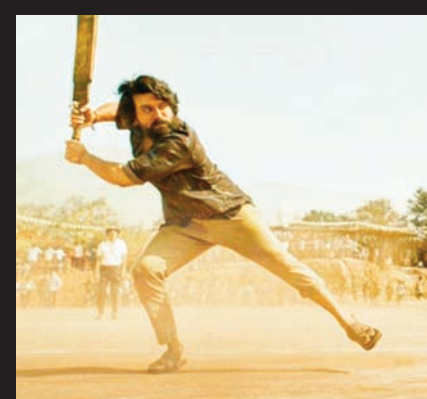
"Here's the #PeddiFirstShot Happy Sri Rama Navami #PEDDI will see you in cinemas 27th March, 2026," Charan

wrote on X alongside the link to the first glimpse of the upcoming movie.

In the 1.05-minute "first shot" of "Peddi", the actor is shown wielding a cricket bat and hitting the ball out of the park.

"Peddi" also stars Janhvi Kapoor, Shiva Rajkumar, Jagapathi Babu and Divyendhu. It is produced by Venkata Satish Kiluru, with music by AR Rahman, cinematography by R Rathnavelu, production design by Avinash Kolla and editing by Navin Nooli.

Charan was last seen in "Game Changer", directed by S Shankar. (PTI)



## HAD INITIALLY SAID NO TO 'BLACK WARRANT': PARAMVIR SINGH CHEEMA

**MUMBAI, April 7:** "Chamak" star Paramvir Singh Cheema, who gained prominence with the acclaimed series "Black Warrant", says he had reservations about starring in the Netflix show as didn't want to play a supporting role.

In the prison drama, created by Vikramaditya Motwane and Satyanshu Singh, Cheema portrays a no-nonsense jailer named Shivraj Singh Mangat, worried about his younger brother who has fallen in with insurgents.

"Black Warrant" had Zahan Kapoor, the grandson of late cinema legend Shashi Kapoor, play the lead in the show as Tihar jailer Sunil Gupta. "I had got a call from Mukesh Chhabra's team and I had initially said no to it because I was already playing the lead role (in 'Chamak').

My manager also said, 'I'm already playing a lead role, but in "Black Warrant", someone else is the lead'," Cheema told PTI in an interview. But destiny had other plans. The actor, also known for web series "Tabbar" and TV show "Kaleerein", met with a casting director at Chhabra's office in Aram Nagar, a bustling area in suburban Mumbai renowned for its casting agencies and production houses. "The guy said 'It is a Vikramaditya Motwane show, do you want to skip this? Have you read the full script?' I said no. He insisted I give auditions, and I did. I was finalised and met Vikram sir. The only thing I asked him was, 'If you will capture every beat of my silence,' and he said, 'I will,'" he recalled.

Once "Black Warrant" pre-

miered in January, the response was overwhelming, and Cheema was inundated with messages and calls from fans and notable filmmakers, especially from the South. "Initially, I would feel that my work has not reached a certain stage where it should, but eventually it did with 'Black Warrant'," he said.

Going forward, the Jalandhar-born actor wants to work with Hansal Mehta, Anubhav Sinha, and Rajkumar Hirani.

"I want to be part of good scripts that give me a kick or play a role that's different from what I've done in the past. It's a director who helps an actor bring out their best. Without a good director, an actor is nothing, you need a good director to produce a good performance."

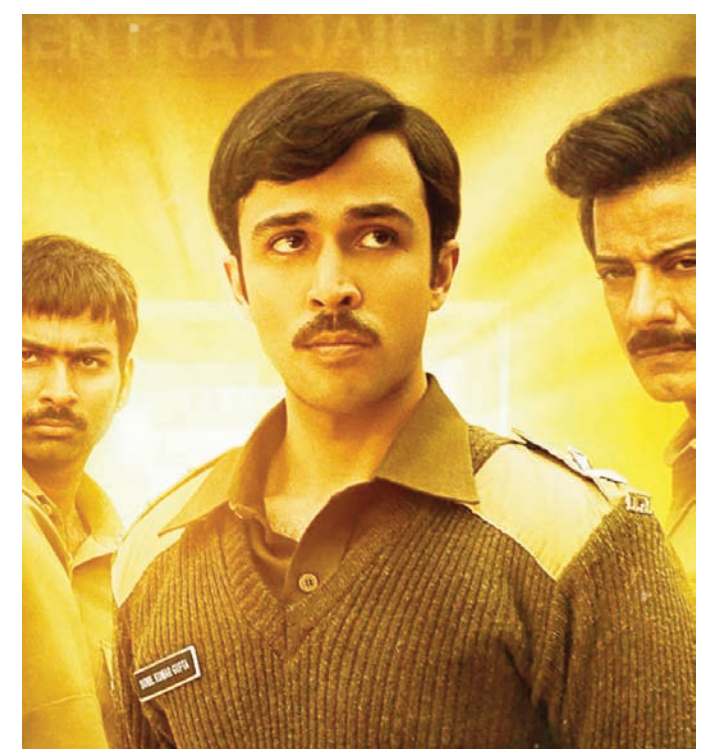
Cheema is also set to star in

the sequel of the 1997 blockbuster "Border", which will mark his Hindi cinema debut. He almost missed out on the film, directed by Anurag Singh of "Kesari" fame, due to scheduling conflicts. "A lot of things happened, like budget and date issues, but Anurag sir worked out everything for me because he was adamant that he wanted me to be part of 'Border 2'. I told him, 'Don't waste me in the film because I'm selective about the work I want to do.' "He said, 'I won't offer you a film where you have two lines'. It's a good role and there's an arc to your character," he said. Asked about working with Diljit Dosanjh in "Border 2", Cheema said he doesn't have any scenes with the Punjabi actor-singer.

"We all have our individual

stories." His latest project is the second part of SonyLIV's musical thriller series "Chamak - The Conclusion", directed by Rohit Jugraj. The actor reprises the role of Kaala, a young aspiring rapper who returns to his native Punjab from Canada to unravel the death of his father Taara Singh, a legendary singer who was shot dead during a packed performance years ago.

Cheema said the makers shot both seasons of the show in one go. "People love grey-shaded characters because we hide that side of our personality in real life, so maybe some people resonated with that aspect. Besides, music played a pivotal role in attracting audiences to the show. A lot of people said they loved the wild and psycho side of Kaala," he said. (PTI)



# LIFTING OF SALIVA BAN IN IPL BRINGS BOWLERS BACK INTO THE GAME: PBKS' LOCKIE FERGUSON

**NEW DELHI, April 7:** Punjab Kings pacer Lockie Ferguson has given a big thumbs up to the lifting of saliva ban in the IPL, saying it will bring the bowlers "back into the game" by helping them procure reverse swing, a crucial factor in death overs.

As per the amended rules in the post-Covid era, bowlers can now use saliva to shine the ball which can help it reverse even in benign conditions.

The New Zealander has so far taken three wickets in the IPL with a best of 2/37 against Rajasthan Royals in Mullanpur.

"From a fast bowler's point of view, bowling at the death, any assistance we can get to get the ball moving legally and make

an impact with it is always greatly appreciated," Ferguson told PTI Videos.

"We have high-scoring games here, which is great... but I suppose if you can shut out overs at the death with the use of reverse swing, then that's helpful," he added.

The BCCI had lifted the ban on use of saliva on the ball in the IPL last month after a majority of the captains agreed to its proposal.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) had banned the age-old practice of applying saliva to shine the ball as a precautionary measure during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, the world body made the ban permanent.

The IPL too included the ICC ban in its playing conditions in the aftermath of the pandemic but its guidelines are outside the purview of the sport's governing body.

The IPL 2025 has witnessed several close matches, and fewer runaway totals, partly due to the slight re-balancing of the scale between the bat and the ball.

"We have such dry wickets here in the IPL and sort of dry conditions... I think, it (use of saliva) brings the bowlers back into the game a little bit more, which is great. We want to see a contest between bat and ball. I think everyone wants that," he said.

Ferguson, who has not yet



bowled in the death overs this season, hailed PBKS' death-bowling options.

"I don't think it's that I just haven't been given a chance at the death, that's IPL cricket. That adaptability is a huge part of being a modern-day T20 player... we have so many great death options in our team that (captain) Shreyas (Iyer) has to look at," he said.

The Kiwi pacer had lots of praise for his new-ball partner, Arshdeep Singh, calling him a "lively character" and a fast-bowling workhorse.

"I'm in awe of Arshdeep, really. He's an exceptional bowler... he absolutely loves fast bowling. He loves bowling at the death. He loves bowling

with a new ball. He's hungry for the ball," said Ferguson.

Ferguson acknowledged Arshdeep's growing leadership within the group, saying, "He's the first person to run up and provide some words of wisdom or comfort or support. I think he's a big leader in this group."

Ferguson is hopeful that his side has the potential to go all the way this year. PBKS are on four points with two wins and a loss.

"I wouldn't be here if we didn't think we could win the competition," he said.

"It's a long road, but I feel very privileged to be here with a good group... hopefully we can go the distance," he said. (PTI)

# Top Indian shuttlers eye glory at Badminton Asia Championships

**NINGBO (CHINA), April 7:** India's top shuttlers, including Lakshya Sen, HS Prannoy and two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu, will try to overcome their string of below-par performances this season when the opening-round matches in the Badminton Asia Championships commence here on Tuesday.

Besides the two top-ranked Indian men's singles players in the world, Prannoy (17th) and Sen (18th), Kiran George (34th) and Priyanshu Rajawat (35th) will aim to put up a good show, while in women's singles, Sindhu, whose world ranking has dropped to 17th, will hope to recover her form in the continental event. The other Indians in the fray, the young Malvika Bansod (23rd), Anupama Upadhyaya (43rd) and Aakarshi Kashyap (48th), will be keen to make an impact in an extremely tough field. Sen, a bronze medalist at the 2021 World Championships, will open his campaign against Chinese Taipei's Lee Chia-Hao, a finalist at the All England Championships early this month, in the USD 500,000 tournament.

Prannoy, who hasn't been at his best since suffering a bout of Chikengunya, will face China's Guang Zu Lu in his first match. Priyanshu Rajawat has been drawn against Thailand's Kan-



taphon Wangcharoen, while Kiran George will face a qualifier.

In the women's singles, two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu will begin her campaign against world No. 34 Ester Nurumi Tri Wardoyo of Indonesia, while her compatriots face stiffer challenges.

Anupama will take on Thailand's former world champion Ratchanok Intanon, seeded eighth, while Malvika has been drawn against China's Fang Jie Gao. Aakarshi Kashyap faces second seed Yue Han of China.

In women's doubles, the pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, ranked 9th, will face a qualifier in their opening match. Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra will also compete in the women's doubles event with their opponents being Chinese Taipei's Shuo Yun Sung and Chien Hui Yu.

In men's doubles, India will be represented by the unheralded duo of Hariharan Ansakaran and Ruban Kumar Rethinasabapathi, along with Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy and Sai Pratheek K. The mixed doubles event will feature Rohan Kapoor/Ruthvika Shivani Gadge, Sathish Karunakaran/Aadya Variyath, Dhruv Kapila/Tanisha Crasto, and Ashith Surya/Amrutha Pramuthesh. The event will conclude on April 13. (PTI)

# Lionel Messi scores for Inter Miami in 1-1 MLS tie with Toronto



**FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA., April 7** Lionel Messi scored for the third time in four Major League Soccer matches this season, helping Inter Miami get a 1-1 tie with Toronto FC on Sunday night.

It was Messi's 40th goal across all competitions since joining Inter Miami, extending his franchise record. The goal Sunday was a left-footed volley from the top of the 18-yard box about five minutes into first-half stoppage time.

The tie left Inter Miami (4-0-2) one point behind Columbus in the Eastern Conference, with one match in hand.

Messi's goal tied the match, three minutes after Federico Bernardeschi opened the scoring for Toronto (0-4-3). Messi had what appeared to be a goal wiped

out earlier in the first half after it was determined he committed a foul shortly before that score.

Toronto had the lead for only the second time all season — the first was a 19-minute stretch against Chicago last month. This time, Messi took it away quickly.

Messi has had at least one point in all four MLS matches in which he has appeared this season for Inter Miami, which is 8-1-2 overall this season when adding in four victories in CONCACAF Champions Cup matches. The loss was a 1-0 decision against LAFC in a Champions Cup match last week; the second leg of that matchup is Wednesday in Fort Lauderdale.

Toronto plays Saturday at home against Minnesota. Inter Miami resumes MLS play next Sunday at the Chicago Fire. (AP)

# Painful memories travel with Villa coach Unai Emery as he returns to PSG in Champions League

**PARIS, April 7:** When Aston Villa coach Unai Emery returns to Parc des Princes for the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinals against Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday, it may stir up some difficult memories for him.

In contrast, Villa's on-loan forward Marcus Rashford will doubtless recall one of his happiest soccer experiences.

For Villa defender Lucas Digne and attacking midfielder Marco Asensio, the trip could be a case of mixed feelings.

Emery was PSG's coach for one of the biggest humiliations in Champions League history.

That was eight years ago, when PSG faced Barcelona in the Round of 16 and became the first team in Champions League history to throw away a 4-0 lead from the first leg, losing 6-1 in the return.

PSG then lost the Ligue 1 title to Kylian Mbappé's Monaco.

A few months later, PSG spent 422 million euros (then \$456 million) during the offseason to buy Neymar from Barcelona and Mbappé in a stunning double swoop. But even they could not save Emery. He left at the end of the following season after two difficult years during which PSG went out twice in the last 16 of the Champions League, but he also made his mark as a coach willing to stand up to player power. "It was a difficult time," Emery said. "For the team to adapt to me and for me to adapt to the team."

Villa seems to have adapted very well to his methods. The Birmingham-based club is on a seven-game winning run heading into its first quarterfinal in the

competition since 1983.

Emery, who has won the Europa League a record four times as a coach, guided unheralded Villarreal to the Champions League semifinals in 2022.

The season after Emery's departure, PSG experienced another Champions League blow.

On that occasion, it was Rashford who dealt it.

He scored a penalty deep into stoppage-time as an injury-hit Manchester United knocked out PSG in the last 16 on away goals, winning 3-1 after losing the first leg 2-0. The defeat infuriated Thomas Tuchel, who was hired after Emery left. Tuchel said he couldn't understand why some of his players arrived late for the pre-match preparations.

PSG's Qatari owners QSI were preparing for a third season at the helm of the club with new coach Laurent Blanc, and he signed Digne from French rival Lille for 15 million euros (then \$16.2 million).

It was a big fee for an unproven 20-year-old defender, but the quick and skillful Digne was impressive at times with his performances at left back.

However, he was unable to hold down a regular place and, after being loaned to Roma, he joined Barcelona in 2016.

His transition to the Premier League, first to Everton and then Villa four years ago, saw him become a consistent and respected Premier League defender.

The 31-year-old Digne recently reached 50 caps for France. Emery sensed an opportunity during the winter transfer window and got Asensio on loan from PSG until the end of the season. (AP)

# Gibson hails Vaibhav, says pacer's fine run has helped KKR take bold selection calls

**KOLKATA, April 7:** Kolkata Knight Riders have discovered a surprise hero Vaibhav Arora in the post Mitchell Starc era, and the team management trusts the pacer so much now that they are not hesitant to pick him ahead of more reputed international names, assistant coach Otis Gibson said on Monday.

Arora has been a revelation with the new ball, producing a match-winning spell of 3/29 against Sunrisers Hyderabad. His scalps included the prized wickets of Travis Head and Ishan Kishan, which derailed SRH's chase.

"Yeah, I think he's (Arora) done very well for us. You know, both him and Harshit (Rana) have done very well for us," Gibson said at the pre-match press conference ahead of his side's game against Lucknow Super Giants.

"You look at the fact that in the last game, for instance, that we were able to leave out Spencer Johnson, an international player, to play these two guys and back them because we trust them. We know what they're doing," he added.

Johnson, the Australian left-arm pacer, has struggled for rhythm, managing just one wicket from three matches while conceding 10 runs an over. But Arora and Harshit led the pace attack admirably alongside Andre Russell. The trio combined to take six wickets, eventually bowling out SRH for a paltry 120 and sealing an emphatic 80-run victory.

Arora is now the joint-leading wicket-taker for the franchise with their ace India spinner Varun Chakravarthy -- 6 wickets apiece.



The former West Indies pacer credited Arora's hard work with mentor Dwayne Bravo for his improved performances.

"We know how hard Vaibhav is working with (mentor) DJ (Dwayne) Bravo in terms of strategies, in terms of how he's going to set up his overs and how he's going to look to take wickets. That's working very well and hopefully that will continue to work," Gibson said.

"But like I said, the fact that we were able to leave out an international (bowler) and trust these two local guys and they went out and performed for us was a really pleasing sight."

Asked whether spin or pace is the bigger strength of the KKR bowling unit, Gibson offered a nuanced response.

"Bowling is the strength. We have no strengths. If we take wickets with a new ball, then we can be very dangerous in the middle-overs, of course, with

Varun and Sunil (Narine)," he said. "And if we don't take wickets with a new ball, then we've still got those guys that we can utilise in the middle-overs. We played Moeen Ali who bowled very well for us in Rajasthan and he didn't even get to bowl any overs in the last game. We've got some more overs into Russell."

Gibson acknowledged that while Russell could be expensive at times, his knack for picking up crucial wickets makes him a valuable asset.

"He might go for runs but he always takes a wicket for us. He's a partnership-breaker and we use him in that way as an impact sort of bowler. If you like to come on and take a wicket, then we can get him off and get one of our better bowlers back on," he explained.

Sunil Narine has been struggling for big runs at the pole position but Gibson played down any concern. (PTI)

# CL final price freeze for fans of competing teams but big increases for high-end seats

**NYON (SWITZERLAND), April 7:** Ticket prices at the men's Champions League final are unchanged from last year for most fans of the two competing teams with big increases only for high-end seats, UEFA said Monday.

Each finalist will get 18,000 tickets for the May 31 game at Bayern Munich's stadium with a special lowest-price rate of 70 euros (\$77). That's the same price as the lowest cost tickets at the 2024 final played at Wembley Stadium in London.

Substantial price hikes have been added to the two highest-rated categories of seats. Top-price tickets go from 713 euros (\$781) last year to 950 euros (\$1,040) this time, and "category 2" tickets rise from 500 euros (\$548) last year to 650 euros (\$712), UEFA said.

Ticket revenue from UEFA

club finals goes into the overall pot of billions of euros (dollars) in revenue from broadcasting and commercial deals that is mostly paid back to hundreds of clubs each season as prize money and solidarity payments. Real Madrid, the Champions League winner last year, got the highest payment of \$154 million from UEFA.

UEFA said 38,700 tickets of the 64,500 available for the showcase game in Munich are sold "directly for fans and the general public to purchase."

In addition to quotas for the two finalists, a further 2,700 tickets can be bought by fans worldwide on UEFA's website. Buyers are limited to two tickets.

More than 25,000 tickets are reserved for sponsors, broadcasters, national soccer federations and UEFA guests. (AP)

# Djokovic gets chance to avenge loss to Tabilo in Monte Carlo Masters meeting

**MONACO, April 7:** Novak Djokovic will get the chance to avenge one of the more surprising losses of his career.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion will face 32nd-ranked Alejandro Tabilo in his opening match of the Monte Carlo Masters. Tabilo rallied past 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka 1-6, 7-5, 7-5 in the first round Monday to set up the second-round rematch with Djokovic, who he beat at the Italian Open last

year. Djokovic, who had a first-round bye in Monte Carlo, won only five games against Tabilo in Rome.

It will be Djokovic's first match since losing the Miami Open final to Jakub Mensik.

The Monte Carlo Masters is first big clay-court tournament of the year. Also in the round of 64 Monday, Jiri Lehecka beat Sebastian Korda 6-3, 7-6 (7) and Marcos Giron beat Denis Shapovalov 6-3, 7-6 (5). (AP)

## Narine meets his 'fanboy' Rathi as KKR, LSG look to sustain momentum



**KOLKATA, April 7:** Sunil Narine will come face-to-face with his 'clone' and biggest fan Digvesh Rathi when Kolkata Knight Riders host Lucknow Super Giants in a high-stakes IPL afternoon clash at the Eden Gardens here on Tuesday.

Both sides are locked at four points from as many games -- two wins apiece -- going into the contest.

For the home side, it has been a season of mixed returns so far. After early defeats to Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Mumbai Indians, KKR roared back to form in their last outing -- a commanding win over Sunrisers Hyderabad -- following a long-awaited middle-order resurgence.

Their costliest buy Venkatesh Iyer finally delivered while Rinku Singh and veteran Ajinkya Rahane provided vital contributions.

Promising youngster Angkrish Raghuvanshi also caught the eye with his fluency and textbook technique.

But one area of concern continues to plague the Knight Riders -- their misfiring opening partnership.

The opening duo of Quinton de Kock and Sunil Narine has struggled to give them flying starts that Phil Salt provided last season.

Their highest stand this season has been 44 runs while the openers have managed 4, 1, and 14 in the other games.

Narine has looked scratchy and inconsistent, raising questions over his role at the top. It wouldn't be surprising if Raghuvanshi is pushed up alongside de Kock.

KKR know that Narine's importance is not just about scoring runs. With Narine and Rathi in opposite camps, it will be fascinating to see who outshines the other -- the master or the apprentice.

Rathi, who was spotted after a strong Delhi Premier League showing, now finds himself against the man who 'shaped his cricketing dream'.

"I fell in love with bowling after watching Sunil Narine," Rathi said after bagging the Player of the Match award against MI. "I want to stay calm like him, attack batters, and be fearless in crunch situations."

With Imran Tahir's hairstyle, Narine's bowling action, and Ksrick Williams' notebook celebration, Rathi has combined style with substance to become one of the most fascinating stories of IPL 2025.

On Friday night against Mumbai Indians at the Ekana, while every other LSG bowler went for 10 or more runs an over, Rathi stood out with figures of 4-0-21-1.

In four matches so far, Rathi has taken six wickets at an impressive economy rate of 7.62 -- conceding more than eight runs per over only once.

His control over length and clever variations has earned praise from experts and coaches alike.

While Rathi's bowling has been exceptional, his on-field celebrations have courted controversy. He has already been fined twice -- once for physical contact with PBKS batter Priyansh Arya, and again after the MI game for his 'notebook' celebration.

He now sits on three demerit points -- a point away from a one-match suspension.

Will Rathi risk his signature celebration again in front of his hero Narine? That remains to be seen.

LSG come into this contest riding high after a 12-run win over Mumbai Indians in Lucknow.

Mitchell Marsh has been striking the ball cleanly at the top, while Aiden Markram, after a quiet start to the season, returned to form with an impactful fifty against MI.

However, Rishabh Pant's poor run thus far in the IPL has already sparked criticism from fans and experts alike.

Having been bought for a record INR 27 crore, the pressure is only growing on the LSG skipper, especially with team owner Sanjiv Goenka known for his passionate involvement in the game.

After a much publicised 'schooling' session with KL Rahul last season, it remains to be seen how long Goenka's patience holds if Pant's lean patch continues.

### Teams:

**Kolkata Knight Riders:** Quinton de Kock (wk), Sunil Narine, Ajinkya Rahane (c), Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Venkatesh Iyer, Rinku Singh, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Ramandeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Spencer Johnson, Varun Chakaravathy, Anrich Nortje, Vaibhav Arora, Anukul Roy, Luvinth Sisodia, Moeen Ali, Rovman Powell, Mayank Markande, Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Chetan Sakariya.

**Lucknow Super Giants:** Rishabh Pant (c & wk), Abdul Samad, Akash Deep, Akash Singh, Avesh Khan, Ayush Badoni, Matthew Breetzke, Yuvraj Chaudhary, Rajvardhan Hangargekar, Himmat Singh, Shamar Joseph, Aryan Juyal, Arshin Kulkarni, Aiden Markram, Mitchell Marsh, David Miller, Nicholas Pooran, Prince Yadav, Digvesh Rathi, Ravi Bishnoi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Manimaran Siddharth, Shardul Thakur and Mayank Yadav.

Match starts: 3.30pm. (PTI)

## Dhoni's presence affecting balance as CSK face tricky Punjab test

**MULLANPUR, April 7:** The distinct lack of firepower in Mahendra Singh Dhoni's death overs batting is a sensitive area that Chennai Super Kings need to address ahead of their away IPL clash against Punjab Kings here on Tuesday.

In one of their worst starts to an IPL season, CSK have now completed a hat-trick of defeats, all while chasing.

While Punjab Kings lost their previous game against Rajasthan Royals at home but on current form as well as on paper, Shreyas Iyer's side looks more well-rounded than CSK who are grappling with combination problems.

Dhoni's presence at the back-end, which once was considered a boon, is turning into bane for the 'Yellow Brigade'.

But such is the aura of the man playing his 18th IPL season (only one apart from Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma), that no one in the CSK ranks can probably walk up to the man and show him the mirror.

While 'Brand Dhoni' still rules the hearts of CSK aficionados and cheer is deafening when he enters the turf, the game against Delhi Capitals was certainly an awakening for his supporters that there is more to a team than their 'Beloved Thala' and probably it's time to move on.

The opposition teams now expect to bat first and somehow score anything above 180 knowing that



it would be an uphill task for CSK unless Shivam Dube fires.

Now Dube is a muscular hit and miss kind of a player and odds of his success with his template will always be 50-50.

Dhoni's greatness in all these years has been his immaculate sense of timing whether it is bidding adieu to captaincy or retiring from international game. Will he decide himself once again or wait for the nudge?

With Dhoni being the same player and no one to "bell the cat",

CSK are in unusual mess with a mis-firing top-order where the skipper Rituraj Gaikwad has had to give up his opening slot.

"No, that's not my role to put an end to it. I have no idea. I'm just enjoying working with him. He's still going strong. I don't even ask these days. You guys are the ones that ask (about retirement)," head coach Stephen Fleming's helplessness was evident after the 25-run loss to DC where the former skipper didn't even try at times to go for big shots.

Yuzvendra Chahal, the seasoned leg-spinner, will certainly play a key role against Chennai Super Kings as he enjoys a favourable match-up against his former India captain.

Chahal and Dhoni have been pitted against each other 10 times in various IPL games and the Haryana bowler has dismissed the legend five times.

For Punjab Kings, skipper Iyer and young Nehal Wadhwa's form keeps them in good stead.

### Teams:

**Chennai Super Kings:** Rituraj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Matheesha Pathirana, Noor Ahmad, Ravichandran Ashwin, Devon Conway, Syed Khaleel Ahmed, Rachin Ravindra, Rahul Tripathi, Vijay Shankar, Sam Curran, Shaik Rashid, Anshul Kamboj, Mukesh Choudhary, Deepak Hooda, Gurjanpreet Singh, Nathan Ellis, Jamie Overton, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishnan Ghosh, Shreyas Gopal, Vansh Bedi (wk), Andre Siddarth.

**Punjab Kings:** Shreyas Iyer (c), Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Nehal Wadhwa, Glenn Maxwell, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Yash Thakur, Harpreet Brar, Vishnu Vinod, Marco Jansen, Lockie Ferguson, Josh Inglis, Xavier Bartlett, Kuldeep Sen, Pyla Avinash, Suryansh Shedge, Musheer Khan, Harnoor Pannu, Aaron Hardie, Priyansh Arya, Azmatullah Omarzai

Match Starts at 7:30 pm. (PTI)

## Pant says Nehra's advice helped him rebuild after life-threatening car crash

**KOLKATA, April 7:** The flamboyant Rishabh Pant on Monday acknowledged the influence and guidance of Ashish Nehra after he survived his horrific car accident, saying the former India seamer's advice to "stay happy" stood the keeper-batter in good stead during a difficult phase.

Pant met with the accident on the Delhi-Dehradun highway on the night of December 30, 2022. His car caught fire but he made a lucky escape even though his injuries were quite severe and needed multiple surgeries.

"I think one advice which really helped me was from Ashish Nehra," Pant recalled in a free-wheeling chat during CII Eastern Region's interactive session - 'India@100: Leadership Insight from the Sports Economy' here.

"He is a senior from my club also. He just came to me, saw me, and he told me, 'I had lots of injuries. Just one thing if you can do is keep yourself happy. Do things that makes you feel happy. And keep following that'."

"I think that advice really stood with me and helped me to go through my injury," the 27-year-old Pant added.

After a year of intense recovery and rehab, he returned to professional cricket during the Indian Premier League last year and made his international return in the T20 World Cup in the Americas.

For someone who preferred doing everything by himself, losing control over his own body was the most difficult thing to digest.

"I've been playing cricket day in and day out since I was a kid. And just seeing me so immobile in my life -- that was the hardest part," he said.

"So even a small thing, brushing my own teeth, was harder for my life. I just couldn't do it for the first one month at least."

It was at that moment Pant realised that he needed to surrender to the process.

"I have to accept that I can't move on from this in one day or two. That is where I calmed myself down and just realised that there is no point being negative and criticising yourself every day."

"For me, it might be eating food. For someone else, it might be talking to someone. So you have to find your own way."

The accident changed his perspective on life.

"Once your perspective to life changes, the perspective to sports definitely changes. Because how you see life, eventually it will follow," he said.

Pant realised how people often take most things in life for granted.

"Simple things like waking up every day, brushing your own teeth, walking towards your washroom... small, small things but it plays a huge part. And as day to day life, we take it for granted. I think that is my learning from it."

For a professional cricketer, success is often measured in runs, wickets and records but Pant's brush with the near-fatal accident reshaped his definition of it.

"You want to be successful each and every day. But a lot of time in sport it might not happen," he said.

"But that doesn't mean you are going to beat around the bush and put you down always. You have to have a mindset where you push yourself. 'Yes, I can be better'."

After leaving Delhi Capitals, Pant was acquired by Lucknow Super Giants for an IPL record fee

of ₹ 27 crore in the mega auction last year, after which he was made the captain of his new franchise.

Pant, who is going through a lean patch in the ongoing IPL, has a simple philosophy to deal with tough times: back the process, trust instincts.

"We should be following a certain process and that is part of my day-to-day life," he said.

"When you keep it very simple, like if you are watching a wicket, how it's going to play, what this batsman is going to do, what we can execute in a better way."

"Like Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni) said, if you can keep it simple for longer period of time, I think you're going to get the fair result."

He added, "I'm someone who lets that instinct take over during the game time. Because, in pressure situations, what happens is that you don't back your decision sometimes. So I feel that is really important for me."

For Pant, leadership is about keeping the team like one big family.

"The word 'team' means just one family. We always talk about how we can create an environment where everyone feels comfortable."

"A team for me is like having one goal -- collective people having one goal and working towards one goal."

Cricket has also taught him to back people during their worst days.

"Everyone on the field will not have the greatest of day. But at that moment, can you give that guy enough confidence, so he can deliver? You know, one ball matters. One extraordinary something. One extraordinary catch. One extraordinary run out." (PTI)

## Spring Futsal Cup 2.0 kicks off at Khremethang



### HT Correspondent

**TAWANG, April 7:** The second edition of the much-anticipated Spring Futsal Cup 2.0 was inaugurated on Monday at My Futsal Arena, Khremethang, with a thrilling exhibition futsal match between Team MLA Tawang and Team DC Tawang. The opening event was graced by Namgye Tsering, MLA Tawang as the chief guest, Kanki Darang, deputy commissioner Tawang as the guest of honor, and Dr. D.W. Thongon, Superintendent of Police Tawang as the special guest. The dignitaries emphasised the importance of sports in fostering community spirit, promoting good health, and building a drug-free Tawang.

In the exhibition match, Team DC Tawang claimed a decisive victory with a 12 - 6 scoreline. Kanki Darang, DC Tawang, stood out with an exceptional all-round performance, scoring 4 goals and leading his team with passion, skill, and sportsmanship. His agility, game awareness, and leadership on the field earned him the Man of the Match award. His performance not only entertained the spectators but also inspired the youth to embrace sports as a way of life.

The Spring Futsal Cup 2.0 will see 16 teams battling it out over the coming days, promising high-energy games and showcasing local talent.

The occasion also witnessed colourful cultural performances by the Ketchenga Cultural Troupe and the students of LD School, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and youthful vibrancy of the region.

## Ishant Sharma fined 25 percent of his matches for code of conduct breach

**HYDERABAD, April 7:** Gujarat Titans pacer Ishant Sharma has been fined 25 per cent of his match fees besides accumulating a demerit point for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Sunday night. "Ishant Sharma admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.2 and accepted the Match Referee's sanction," said the IPL in a statement. "For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding," the statement added. Article 2.2 of IPL's Code of Conduct relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during a match". (PTI)

## I've 10 months to decide whether I want to play one more year: Dhoni on IPL future

**NEW DELHI, April 7:** The legendary MS Dhoni stayed immune to the growing clamour around his future in the IPL, saying the decision to bring curtains on his career depends on how his body reacts to the demands of top-flight cricket and he has "10 months" to take a call.

In this IPL, Dhoni has not been able to make the kind of impact that he usually does while batting in the lower middle-order.

His lack of timing and ineffectiveness, evidenced in the 76 runs that he made from four matches, have prompted several experts to urge the multiple World Cup-winning skipper to move on.

"I am still playing the IPL and it is one year at a time for me. I am 43 now and by the end of this IPL season, I will be 44," Dhoni said on entrepreneur Raj Shamani's podcast recently.

"So, I have 10 months to decide whether I want to play one more year and it's not me to decide as it is my body that decides whether I can play or not," he added.

However, the former Chennai Super Kings skipper, who led CSK to five IPL titles, said he is quite

content with his achievements on the field.

"It is not about whether I am happy or unhappy. Whatever has happened has happened. It cannot be changed. It's about accepting all of it. You know, whatever happens I will not be able to add one more run to my international runs, and no one will be able to reduce them," he said.

Dhoni has always been a man of the present. But, for once, he set aside that pragmatic side to reveal his wish of seeing legends like Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Virender Sehwag and Yuvraj Singh assemble in the same team once again.

"I will stick to Indian players. Viru pa opening the innings, Sachin, Dadau and now you imagine everyone at their prime. Then you will get this feeling that there can't be anyone better than them."

"It's tough to pick an all-time eleven. Now, when you see Yuvi hitting six sixes, you will feel that I don't want to watch any other batsman. It's all about enjoying what they have done for India. Some of those talents we have seen are mind-blowing," he added. (PTI)

## Harry Brook appointed as England's white ball captain

**LONDON, April 7:** Harry Brook was on Monday appointed England white-ball captain following Jos Buttler's exit from the role after a poor ICC Champions Trophy campaign last month.

Brook, who was signed up by Delhi Capitals during last year's auction, had withdrawn from the IPL 2025 to focus on his England career, and was subsequently slapped with a two-year ban from playing in the league.

The 26-year-old has been a key part of England's white-ball set-up since making his debut in January 2022, and has spent the past year as the vice-captain in both ODIs and T20Is. He also led England in the ODI series against Australia last September in Buttler's absence.

"It's a real honour to be named England's white-ball captain. Ever



since I was a kid playing cricket at Burley in Wharfedale, I dreamed of representing Yorkshire, playing for

England, and maybe one day leading the team. To now be given that chance means a great deal to me."

## OPTOMETRIST WANTED

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## Pak openers Saim Ayub, Fakhar Zaman set for comeback from injuries

**KARACHI, April 7:** Pakistan openers Saim Ayub and Fakhar Zaman are set to return to action in the Pakistan Super League after recovering from injuries, which forced them to miss the Champions Trophy and the white-ball series against New Zealand recently.

A PCB source confirmed that both the left-handed batters had been cleared by the Pakistan Cricket Board's medical panel to return to competitive cricket in the PSL, which begins on April 11.

Saim has been out of action since early January when he fractured his ankle while fielding on the first day of the second Test against South Africa in Cape town. The more seasoned Fakhar, after returning to action in the tri-nation tournament, injured himself in the opening match of the Champions Trophy.

Fakhar has been grappling with a knee problem in the last two years and had returned to the national side in February after being out of the ODI squad since the 2023 World Cup.

The source said that Saim had joined the Peshawar Zalmi training camp in Islamabad while Fakhar was also with the Lahore Qalandars side. (PTI)