

# TRUMP ARRESTED

## Will be released without bail

WASHINGTON, APRIL 4

In a historic and unprecedented development, former US president Donald Trump has been arrested and will be arraigned at a Lower Manhattan courthouse on criminal charges related to paying hush money to porn star Stormy Daniels before the 2016 presidential election in exchange for her silence.

Trump, who arrived at a specially secured Manhattan courthouse in an eight-car motorcade, is expected to be fingerprinted and processed. Trump's mug shot may be taken.

"Trump is in police custody at the Manhattan district attorney's office ahead of his arraignment in court," CNN reported.

Trump would, however, be released without bail because the charges against him don't require that bail be set, AP reported.

The former US president left the Trump Tower just after 1pm ET with his team of attorneys to head to court to surrender to the criminal charges.



It took just minutes for the former president's motorcade to make the 6.4km drive from his home at Trump Tower to the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse. During the drive, he posted on his social media website: "Seems so SURREAL

-- WOW, they are going to ARREST ME".

Trump looked calm but serious as he walked into the courthouse, pausing to wave at the crowd.

He will appear for his arraignment

before Judge Juan Merchan at 2.15 pm ET, becoming the first current or former US president ever to be charged with a crime.

According to reports, Trump is facing 34 felony charges believed to relate to

falsified business records but will not be handcuffed or put in a jail cell or have his mugshot taken.

American media quoted Trump's attorneys as saying that the 76-year-old Republican leader, eyeing the White House for a second time in 2024, will plead not guilty to the criminal charges he is facing.

Madelaine Lane, a partner and criminal defence attorney at Grand Rapids-based Warner, Norcross + Judd said: "I fully expect that former President Trump will be released on bail."

The arraignment proceeding is expected to be brief. The charges in the indictment will be read to him at the hearing, which is set to last about 10-15 minutes. Trump has denied all wrongdoings in connection with the payments made to Stormy Daniels, 44, ahead of the 2016 presidential election.

Security was tightened in New York, in particular the courthouse in lower Manhattan, as hundreds of Trump's supporters landed in the city to rally behind him. New York City Mayor Eric Adams has warned against any breaking of law and order. **Agencies**

## India rebuffs China claim on AP

### 'Invented' names don't alter reality

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

India on Tuesday outrightly rejected China renaming some places in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of India and assigning "invented" names does not alter this reality.

India's reaction came in response to Beijing announcing Chinese names for 11 more places in Arunachal Pradesh which the neighbouring country claims as southern part Tibet.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said India outrightly rejected China's renaming of the places in Arunachal Pradesh. "We have seen such reports. This is not the first time China has made such an attempt. We reject this outright," Bagchi said.

"Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. Attempts to assign invented names will not alter this reality," he said. It was the third batch of standardised geographical names for Arunachal Pradesh issued by China's civil affairs ministry. The first batch of the standardised names of six places in Arunachal

Pradesh was released in 2017 while the second batch of 15 places was issued in 2021. The official names of the 11 places were released on Sunday by China's ministry of civil affairs.

It also gave precise coordinates, including two land areas, two residential areas, five mountain peaks and two rivers and listed the category of places' names and their subordinate administrative districts, state-run Global Times reported on Monday. China's renaming of the places in Arunachal Pradesh came in the midst of the lingering eastern Ladakh border standoff that began in May 2020.

Following the standoff, India bolstered its overall military preparedness along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Arunachal Pradesh sector as well.

Last month, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the situation along the LAC in eastern Ladakh remained "very fragile" and is "quite dangerous" in military assessment because of close deployments of troops of both sides in some pockets though "substantial" progress has been made in the disengagement process in many areas. **PTI**

## Finland joins NATO, dealing blow to Russia for Ukraine war

BRUSSELS, APRIL 4

Finland joined the NATO military alliance Tuesday, dealing a major blow to Russia with a historic realignment of the continent triggered by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

With the handing over of documents, the Nordic nation officially entered the world's biggest security alliance, doubling its border with Russia. Finland's membership represents a major change in Europe's security landscape: The country adopted neutrality after its defeat by the Soviets in World War II. But its leaders signalled they wanted to join the alliance just months after Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine sent a shiver of fear through Moscow's neighbours.

The move is a strategic and political blow to Putin, who has long complained about NATO's expansion toward Russia and partly used that as a justification for the invasion. The alliance says it poses no threat to Moscow. **PTI**

## Massive avalanche hits Nathu La, 7 tourists killed

GANGTOK, APRIL 4

Seven tourists were killed as a massive avalanche hit Sikkim's Nathu La area on Tuesday morning, burying their vehicles under the snow, officials said.

The avalanche hit the arterial Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, which connects Gangtok to Nathu La at the China border, around 11.30 am, trapping five-six vehicles with around 30 people under the snow, the Army said in a statement. Till 4 pm, seven bodies were brought out of the snow and 23 people were rescued alive, including six tourists from a deep valley, a state government official said, quoting reports from the Army. Among those dead are a woman and a child, he said.

Search operations in the area are underway by the Army, state disaster management teams and police to find if any other person is trapped, officials said. Those injured were admitted to different hospitals in Gangtok, around 55 km away, they said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the Centre was closely monitoring the situation, and the teams of the NDRF will reach the area -- between Milestones 13 and 17 -- soon. "My sincerest condo-



lences to the families of those who have lost their lives in the tragic avalanche in Sikkim. We are closely monitoring the situation and the teams of NDRF will reach the affected area soon. I pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," he tweeted. Nathu La, situated at 14,450 feet above the sea level, is one of the three open trading border posts between India and China. It is a major tourist destination because of its scenic beauty.

The tourists were not permitted to travel beyond Milestone 13 due to inclement weather, but they forced the tour operators and the drivers to take them to the area where the incident happened, a police officer said. The road has been opened for traffic by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) as the snow was cleared, the Army said. Some 350 people in 80 vehicles, stranded on the road because of the snow, were being brought back to Gangtok, officials said. **PTI**

## PUNJAB

Transport Dept income increased by Rs 661.51 cr during FY22-23: Bhullar

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

Punjab Transport Minister Laljit Singh Bhullar on Tuesday said that the transport department has registered Rs 661.51 crore increase in income during financial year 2022-23 as compared to the FY 2021-22.

The Transport Minister said during the previous financial year 2022-23, the department registered 19.01 per cent increased revenue of Rs 4139.59 crore from its three wings i.e. O/o State Transport Commissioner (STC), Pepsu Road Transport Corporation (PRTC) and Punjab Roadways/PUNBUS, which was Rs 3478.08 crore during the financial year 2021-22. Divulging wing-wise details, Bhullar said that the STC office had received a total Rs 2358.96 crore income between April 2021 to March 2022, which has increased to Rs 2631.18 crore during the financial year 2022-23. The increased revenue of Rs 272.22 crore was 11.53 percent, he added.

# Punjab govt will soon act on police-drug traffickers' nexus: CM

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday accused the previous dispensations of ignoring the drug menace in the state and said his government will soon initiate action against those named in three SIT reports on the alleged nexus between police officials and drug traffickers.

His statement came days after the Punjab and Haryana High Court opened three out of four previously sealed reports on the role of police officials in the drug trade in the state. The reports were submitted on February 1, March 15, and May 8 in 2018 by a Special Investigation Team formed by the high court under the leadership of then DGP S Chattopadhyaya. The reports were lying with the high court since then.

During a hearing on March 28, the high court asked the state government to take action with regard to the reports. In



a tweet in Punjabi, Mann said, "(I) have received 3 envelopes related to the drug case in Punjab, opened by the Hon'ble High Court, that had remained closed for many years. Strict action will be taken against those who ruined the youth of Punjab with drugs."

In an official statement later, Mann said strict action will be taken against those who have been named in these reports. He alleged that the drug trade

flourished during the previous Akali-BJP and Congress regimes and ruined the future generations of the state. He said the reports had been hanging fire for a long time as none of the previous governments was sincere to take action against those who ruined the future of Punjab.

During a hearing in February, the state government had told the court that the accusation of the state's failure in acting on the SIT reports was misconceived as these reports were lying with the court. Mann had given his consent to bring into public domain all the sealed reports submitted before the high court pertaining to a nexus between police officers and drug traffickers.

The SIT reports were opened in the high court on March 28 following a petition filed by advocate Navkiran Singh of Lawyers for Human Rights International (LFHRI) in this regard. Singh was an intervener in the 2013 suo motu petition in the drug menace matter in Punjab. **PTI**

Mann, Kejriwal to jointly launch 'CM di Yogshala' today

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

AP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will launch 'CM di Yogshala' programme in Punjab on Wednesday, the party said in a statement here.

The statement came a day after Mann said his government will initially start 'CM di Yogshala' initiative in four cities -- Amritsar, Ludhiana, Phagwara and Patiala. Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh on Tuesday said they have launched a helpline 7669400500 where people can give a missed call to seek a free yoga teacher from the state government.

People will be able to get all kinds of information about diet and yoga exercise, he said. "Today, so many people are suffering from diseases related to the respiratory system, blood pressure, sugar levels and heart issues. Therapeutic yoga can help all these patients a great deal," Singh said. He said 60 people have been trained at Guru Ravidas University to teach yoga under the 'CM di Yogshala' initiative. "With 'CM di Yogshala', people will lead a healthier life, they will easily get yoga instructors and proper guidance," he said. **PTI**

## Edu Min begins Punjab tour to understand ground realities of govt schools

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

To be aware of the ground reality of government schools in the state, School Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains today started a state tour from Fazilka district. The tour will continue throughout April.

Bains will visit Ferozepur on April 5, Ropar and Mohali on April 6, Amritsar on April 7 and 8, Tarn Taran, Kapurthala, Bathinda, Sri Muktsar Sahib on April 12 and 13, Jalandhar on April 17, Fatehgarh Sahib on April 18. He will inspect schools in Patiala, Ludhiana, Malerkotla, Faridkot, Moga and Barnala on April 20,



21 and 22, Sangrur and Mansa on April 24, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr, Pathankot and Gurdaspur on April 27, 28 and 29.

During this visit, Bains will get information about new admissions, books, uniforms, and the basic structure of schools.

## ASI shoots wife, son, dog; kills self in Gurdaspur

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

An assistant sub-inspector of police on Tuesday allegedly killed himself with his service weapon after shooting his wife, son and a pet dog dead in Punjab's Gurdaspur district, officials

said.

After killing his family members, the officer had even abducted a woman at gunpoint while fleeing to Batala, they said, adding that though police managed to rescue her, the cop allegedly shot himself at a house in Batala. **PTI**

## Punjab Police conduct state-wide checking at bus stands

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

To give a loud and clear message to anti-social elements that they have no place in the state, Punjab Police on Tuesday conducted a special operation at all the bus stands across the state for searching and rounding-up suspicious persons for their verification. The operation was conducted on the directions of Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav.

Over 5,000 police personnel under the supervision of Superintendents of Police (SPs), were involved to frisk people at bus stands across the state, while ensuring minimum inconvenience to them. Over 2,000 people were checked during the operation conducted at over 150 bus stands in the state.

The operation was conducted in a synchronised manner from 4pm to 6pm across the state and CPs/SSPs were asked to personally monitor the operation and mobilise a maximum number of officers and manpower to conduct this operation.

Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Law and Order Arpit Shukla said: "We had strictly instructed all the police personnel to deal with every person in a friendly and polite manner while frisking them during the course



**THE OPERATION WAS CONDUCTED IN A SYNCHRONISED MANNER FROM 4PM TO 6PM ACROSS THE STATE AND CPs/SSPs WERE ASKED TO PERSONALLY MONITOR THE OPERATION AND MOBILISE A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND MANPOWER TO CONDUCT THIS OPERATION.**

of this operation."

He said that such operations would continue to make Punjab a safe, secure and drug-free state. These types of operations are also part of the basic policing which includes keeping vigil in vulnerable spots and advance preparation to tackle any untoward situation, he added.

Meanwhile, such operations will also help in showing the police presence in the field and boost confidence among common people.

# PUNJAB

## SC directs Punjab to monitor spurious liquor manufacture, transportation

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

The Supreme Court has directed the Punjab government to continue to take action to stop the manufacture and transportation of illicit home-made liquor and operation of illegal "bhattis" (distilleries) in the state.

A bench of Justices MR Shah and CT Ravikumar reiterated that the local police shall be held responsible if any illegal "bhatti" is found operating within their jurisdiction. "The State of Punjab is directed to continue the steps to stop the illegal manufacture and transportation of spurious liquor and stop the illegal bhattis," the bench said.

**THE TOP COURT HAD EARLIER VOICED CONCERN OVER THE BURGEONING ILLICIT LIQUOR TRADE AND DRUG MENACE IN PUNJAB AND ASKED THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO FIX RESPONSIBILITY ON THE LOCAL POLICE FOR FAILING TO KEEP A VIGIL.**

With regard to earlier incidents of people dying after consuming spurious liquor, the apex court noted that seven FIRs were filed with respect to three

incidents in three districts. "In all those cases, after the investigation, the accused were arrested and charge-sheeted and the trial is going on," the apex court noted and said no further order is required in the matter. The top court had earlier voiced concern over the burgeoning illicit liquor trade and drug menace in Punjab and asked the state government to fix responsibility on the local police for failing to keep a vigil.

"We are not concerned with the A government or B government. As far as Punjab is concerned, the drug problem is increasing. The youth will be finished. It is very unfortunate that this is happening. Who is the sufferer? The poor people. Illegal manufacture and

transportation has to stop because it ultimately affects the health and the society."

"Tell your government to be very serious. They have to take every effort to save the country, it is very easy to ruin the youth," the bench had said.

The top court was hearing a plea arising out of a September 2020 order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court that had disposed of a petition seeking a transfer of certain FIRs registered in Punjab in relation to the distillation of spurious liquor, its sale and inter-state smuggling to the CBI. The August 2020 hooch tragedy in Punjab, in which more than 100 people had died, was also referred to. **PTI**

## Two cops nabbed over bribe charge in Ludhiana

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

The Punjab Vigilance Bureau has nabbed two police officials for allegedly demanding and accepting bribe.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Surjit Singh and Head Constable Jagpreet Singh, both posted at the Delhon police station in Ludhiana district, were arrested on Monday for demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000, a Vigilance Bureau spokesperson said in a statement.

He added that the two police officials were arrested on a complaint from a resident of Saiyan Kalan in Ludhiana. "The complainant had approached the VB unit, Ludhiana range and alleged that the said police officials demanded Rs 20,000 to release the motorcycle of his son, who was arrested in an NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act case but later, the deal was struck for Rs 10,000. **PTI**

## Capt Amarinder for time-bound relief to farmers hit by rains



EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and former Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh has demanded time bound compensation for the farmers whose wheat crop has been damaged by recent rains.

He said, the government should also consider providing interim relief for the farmers till the actual compensation is worked out after special 'girdawari', which is likely to take some time.

The former Chief Minister said the unprecedented rains had caused devastating damage to the standing wheat crops across the state. He said, most of the farmers have been badly hit. This, he added, will also affect the yield and eventually the income of the farmers who are already reeling under severe economic crisis.

Capt Amarinder said, while the government has been claiming to have ordered a special girdawari, the ground reports suggest that no official has reached out to farmers as yet to assess their losses.

"This means that it will take more time and till then the farmers should be provided some interim relief to enable them to sow the next crop and manage day to day affairs", he added, while urging the government to take the relief measures at war footing.

## Jai Inder Kaur visits rain hit farmers of Patiala

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK  
PATIALA, APRIL 4

Bharatiya Janata Party Punjab Vice-President and daughter of former CM Captain Amarinder Singh, Jai Inder Kaur today visited villages of Patiala district to take stock of damage caused to crops due to untimely incessant rains.

Jai Inder Kaur along with party workers visited affected farmers of villages Behal, Binjal, Dudan Gujra, Bibipur of Patiala district's Sanaur and Samana constituencies.

Talking to the media after visiting the farmers, Jai Inder Kaur said, "It's very tragic to see the huge losses that our farmers have suffered due to these untimely incessant rains. The rabi crop of our farmers was ready for harvesting and they would have gotten a good return on their produce. But sadly due to heavy rain, maximum crop in the fields has been dam-



aged." She said, "CM Bhagwant Mann has announced compensation for damaged crops amounting to Rs 15000 per acre which is way less than what the farmers deserve. I urge CM Mann to immediately enhance the compensation to at least Rs 30,000 per acre so that much needed respite can be provided to these farmers."

Talking about Girdawari, the BJP leader said, "After meeting and interacting with several farmers I have learnt that

proper Girdawari of the fields is not being done. I urge the government and the administration to ensure proper, fair and timely assessment of the damage, so that proper compensation can be provided to the farmers." Jai Inder Kaur also urged the administration to promote and educate farmers about Modi Government's flagship Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, which provides insurance coverage to farmers in case of any damages to crops.

## Sukhbir seeks Rs 50,000 per acre compensation for crop loss

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal Tuesday sought immediate release of compensation of Rs 50,000 per acre to farmers whose wheat crop was destroyed by untimely rain and hailstorms. "The complete destruction of the wheat crop in nearly half of the state is there for all to see. It has also been corroborated by agricultural experts," said Badal in a statement here. **PTI**

## Congress intensifies 'Samvidhan Bachao Muhim'

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK  
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

The Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee intensified the 'Samvidhan Bachao Muhim' in Punjab that kick started from Punjab Congress Bhawan in Chandigarh last month on March 26. With an aim to reach out to the party cadre, workers and people of Punjab, the party leadership started the campaign with 'Satyagrah' in Chandigarh followed by various party meetings, press conferences and 'Paidal Yatras' across the state.

PPCC President Amarinder Singh Raja Warring said, "Senior party leadership held zonal meetings at Amritsar,

Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Bathinda covering all zones of Punjab i.e. Malwa-I, Malwa-II, Majha and Doaba and instructed the leaders to hold nukkar meetings and press conferences to reach out to the masses and make them aware of the deteriorating constitutional situation in the country."

"By thwarting the opposition parties from raising national issues in the parliament, which is the highest forum of discussion and debate on public issues and national policy, the central government is disrespecting democracy to fulfil its vicious motives," he added.

Hitting out at the ruling central government, the PCC president said, "Silencing the voice of leader Rahul Gandhi, who



courageously exposed Modi government's undue favours given to con Gautam Adani, had proved that they are thick as thieves."

During a speech at Qila Chowk, Patiala, the PCC president said, "The

incompetent ruling government had failed to address public grievances - unemployment, hunger index, press freedom, falling Indian rupee, rising LPG prices, communal disturbance, China's illegal occupation of Indian territory,

## Eid prayers likely to be held at Sgr Eidgah this year: Waqf Board

SRINAGAR, APRIL 4

The congregational Eid prayers are likely to be offered at the historic Eidgah here for the first time in three years, the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board said on Tuesday.

Talking to reporters at the Eidgah after conducting a review of the preparations for the congregational prayers that are offered after the culmination of the holy month of Ramzan, Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board Chairperson Darakhshan Andrabi said if the weather permits, the prayers would be offered at the Eidgah this year.

"This year, the Eid namaz will be offered at the Eidgah.... There is a good atmosphere in Kashmir now and it is the administration's endeavour to have the Eid namaz at the Eidgah," she said.

Andrabi said all arrangements will be put in place so that the prayer is



offered smoothly. "Today, Kashmir wants peace, development and prosperity. Let us not think about the past," she added. The Waqf board chairperson said the Eidgah is the face of the city and it will be developed and made better with proper facilities.

Eid prayers have not been offered at the Eidgah for the last three years as authorities were apprehensive of law-and-order problems. **PTI**

## IAF personnel dies after car plunges into gorge in Ramban



JAMMU, APRIL 4

An Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel died after his car skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge in Ramban district of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, officials said.

The accident took place at Maroog along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway when Sergeant, Directorate

of Mechanical Transport (DMT) at Air Headquarters, Sarafraz Ahmad Bhat, was heading for Kashmir. A rescue operation was launched soon after the vehicle rolled down into the over 300-foot gorge, the officials said, adding Bhat was found dead on the spot and his body was later retrieved by rescuers. Bhat was a resident of south Kashmir's Kulgam district. **PTI**

## Smuggling of weapons, narcotics

# Majority of Pak attempts foiled, claims ADGP

SAMBA, APRIL 4

A day after the recovery of a cache of arms near the International Border, a senior police officer on Tuesday said Pakistan is making repeated attempts to smuggle weapons and narcotics but majority of these were foiled by the security forces guarding the borders.

"Pakistan is making repeated attempts to smuggle weapons, improvised explosive devices and grenades (in the recent past) but majority of these attempts were foiled as we have full control of the situation (on the borders)," Additional Director General of Police, Jammu zone, Mukesh Singh told reporters in Samba.



On Monday, security forces recovered three pistols, six magazines, four hand grenades and 48 rounds of ammunition from a packet believed to have been dropped by a Pakistani drone near the International Border in Samba district.

"I want to assure all that all the conspiracies hatched across the border will be foiled," Singh said, adding the shortcomings, if any, will be addressed to make the borders fully secure.

Responding to a question about the possibility of terrorists trying to sneak into this side from Pakistan, he said there have been many infiltration attempts in the past couple of years and all such attempts were foiled.

"Our attempt is to foil their plans (to push terrorists) and we are doing our job," he said.

Singh was in Samba district to preside over a police-public meet as part of the efforts to reach out to the public and listen to their problems. **PTI**

## J-K highway to remain closed for repairs on April 7

JAMMU, APRIL 4

The Jammu-Srinagar national highway will remain closed on April 7 for carrying out repairs in landslide-hit areas of Ramban district, officials said Tuesday.

The 270-km-long highway, which is the only all-weather road link between Kashmir and the rest of the country, was blocked several times due to landslides and shooting stones in the past few months and was in need of repairs.

"Based on the direction passed for undertaking important repairs and maintenance works on highway, April 7 has been declared as a traffic dry day between Nashri to Navyuga tunnel", Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Ramban, Mohita Sharma said. **PTI**

## 1,722 schools to undergo safety audit in Rajouri

JAMMU, APRIL 4

Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir have ordered a safety audit of all 1,722 government schools in Rajouri district to identify shortcomings and take corrective measures to ensure safety and security of students, an official spokesperson said on Tuesday.

The decision to go for a safety audit of government schools was taken at a meeting chaired by Rajouri Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal, the spokesperson said.

He said the safety audit will assess the safety and security arrangements in schools, including fire safety, electrical safety, structural safety, toilet and drinking water facilities.

Addressing the meeting, the dep-

uty commissioner said the safety audit would help in identifying safety hazards and shortcomings and corrective measures will be taken to ensure the safety and security of students.

"The audit report will identify any unsafe buildings and that a plan for repair and renovation will be prepared to address the identified issues," he said and asked the officials to complete the audit within 15 days.

Kundal said the safety audit will be carried out in a transparent manner with the involvement of all stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers and community members.

The safety audit is in line with the government's vision of providing safe and secure learning environments to students, he said. **PTI**

## Amid full bloom Spring, rains lash Valley..!

Low temperatures trigger wintry conditions

SRINAGAR: APR 4

In the middle of spring when gardens are in full bloom with riot of colourful flowers and tourists have arrived to enjoy the season, Kashmir valley and isolated places of Jammu region were lashed by light rain for the second consecutive day on Tuesday disrupting normal life and triggering wintry condition all across.

The Meteorological department predicts that intermittent rain and thunderstorm is likely to continue at most places of Kashmir valley and at isolated places



of Jammu today. It predicted brief spell of rain at scattered places of J&K towards late afternoon and evening during the next 24 hours. The weather is likely to remain dry from April 7 to 12.

Srinagar and its adjoining areas experienced widespread light rainfall resulting in drop in temperature that triggered wintry conditions forcing people and tourists to wear warm clothes.

Srinagar experienced 5.2mm of rainfall, Qazigund 4.8mm, Pahalgam 6.5mm, Kupwara 19.5 mm, Kokernag 5.0mm and Gulmarg 10.8mm during the past 24hours till 0830 hours today. **PTI**

## Sgr-Kargil Highway closed due to avalanches

SRINAGAR, APRIL 4

Srinagar-Kargil national highway has been closed for vehicular traffic following avalanches that were triggered due to snowfall at various places on the Zojila road on Tuesday, officials said. "The highway has been closed for vehicular traffic due to avalanches at Panimatha and Kai-pathri areas following snowfall", he said. BRO has pressed its men and machinery to clear the highway to make it fit for traffic movement, he added. **PTI**

# REGION

Dulheri village source of inspiration for cleanliness campaign in country: Khattar

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Tuesday said Bhiwani district's Dulheri village, which was praised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for its cleanliness campaign, has become an inspiration for the 'Swachhata Abhiyan' across the country.

Khattar has been holding a "Jan Samvad" programme at several villages in Bhiwani as part of his three-day tour to the district which began on Sunday from Kharak Kalan village to interact with the ruralites.

This year, the chief minister will visit all the districts of the state and hold these programmes, an official statement said. **PTI**

5 injured as bus overturns in HP's Kullu

SHIMLA, APRIL 4

Five people sustained minor injuries when a Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) bus turned turtle after it skidded on the road amid rain in Kullu district on Tuesday afternoon, police said.

The incident took place near Patli Kuhl 15 Mile in Manali sub-division, they said. The bus was on its way to Delhi from Manali when the accident took place. The bus driver and conductor were among the injured, the police said. The injured are undergoing treatment at the Patli Kuhl Community Health Centre. Further details are awaited. **PTI**

30 units of HP Tourism Development Corporation in the red: Agnihotri

SHIMLA, APRIL 4

As many as 30 units of the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) are in the red while two cafes at Sadhupul and Parwanoo had to be closed after the pandemic, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri told Vidhan Sabha on Tuesday.

In response to a question by Congress' Sudhir Sharama, Agnihotri said the hotels in the perpetual red included those

located at Dharamsala, Manali, Shimla, Kullu Chail, Kufri, Kalpa, Palampur, Keylong, Pongdam, Parwanoo, Chamba, Nurpur, Chindi, Rampur, Fagu, Rohru, Mandi and Kyarighat. The government would take a policy decision regarding leasing out these units, he said.

Replying to supplementary questions, Agnihotri said that Angler Bungalow Hotel at Katrain in Kullu district was leased out on April 8, 2021 and the HPTDC has got more than Rs 3.54 lakh as lease money. **PTI**

## 'Removal' of outsourced employees BJP stages walkout in HP Assembly as discussion disallowed

SHIMLA, APRIL 4

The Himachal Pradesh Assembly witnessed uproarious scenes on Tuesday as the opposition BJP raised slogans and staged a walkout after the speaker refused to allow a discussion on the alleged removal of outsourced employees in government departments.

The BJP has claimed that many outsourced employees in various government departments have been removed, but the government has denied it. Only those whose contract expires have been removed, officials have said.

As soon as the House assembled for the day, Speaker Kuldeep Singh

Pathania said a notice under Rule 67 (adjournment motion) has been received from some BJP members demanding a debate on the issue.

Agitated over the speaker's refusal to a discussion, BJP members started raising slogans and were countered by the ruling party members as bedlam prevailed in the House.

As the speaker proceeded with the Question Hour amid bedlam, the BJP members trooped into the well of the House and squatted on the floor, raising slogans for some time and later staged a walkout. Asserting that so far no directions have been issued for the removal of outsourced employees, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri said the government would

take a policy decision based on the recommendations of the cabinet sub-committee constituted to look into the issue of employment generation.

The government would order a probe into the allegations of irregularities by an outsourced agency which tried to act like an employment agency, Agnihotri said, adding that the agency had been paid Rs 40 crore and there are serious allegations against it pertaining to appointments, deduction of provident fund and other issues.

Taking a dig at the BJP, Agnihotri said the party was frustrated as its wish to rule the state for 25 years has been dashed and asked it to introspect instead of behaving in an irresponsible manner. **PTI**

## Haryana using drones for surveying infrastructure projects, monitoring of crops

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 4

The Haryana government is using drones for surveying infrastructure projects, monitoring agriculture and horticulture crops, and surveillance of sensitive areas for security purposes, a senior official said on Tuesday.

A government-owned body, Drone Imaging and Information Service of Haryana Ltd (DRIISHYA), provides innovative, flexible, and cost-effective drone-based geographical information solutions to the state government.

While inaugurating an event here, Haryana Chief Secretary Sanjeev



Kaushal also said that the Centre has emphasized the need of utilizing drones and capture images to understand the crops yield and crops damage due to inclement weather, so that compensation can be given to farmers accordingly. The Chief Secretary said that DRIISHYA

will impart drone pilot training to the youth in the state which would generate employment opportunities for them. He said the state government is also using drones to curb illegal mining activities and ensure sustainable mining practices in the state.

The government has been using drones to monitor and prevent stubble burning in the state. With this step, stubble-burning cases have come down to 47 per cent as compared to the previous year. Now we are working to bring down the stubble burning cases to zero active fire incidents, he said, according to an official statement. **PTI**

Man arrested for raping teen daughter in Ambala

AMBALA, APRIL 4

A man was arrested here on Tuesday for allegedly raping his 16-year-old daughter, police said. The girl's mother, in her complaint, alleged that in the past two years, her husband raped their daughter several times in her absence, they said.

She told police that once she had also caught her husband assaulting the minor girl, police said. When she along with her daughter came back to Ambala from their native village, the accused again sexually assaulted the teen, police said. The victim's family belongs to Bihar and has been living in Ambala City for the last several years. Following this, she moved to the police and a case was registered against the accused under sections of the POCSO Act. **PTI**

Mild snowfall in upper reaches of Himachal

SHIMLA, APRIL 4

The upper reaches of Himachal Pradesh received mild snowfall while intermittent light to moderate rains lashed the low to mid-hill areas. The MeT office here has predicted a wet spell for April 5 and 6 and dry weather from April 7 onwards. Kothi received 10 cm of snow, Gondhla 4 cm and Keylong and Khadralla 1 cm each. Manali received 43 mm of rain -- highest in the state -- followed by 33 mm in Seobagh, Kothi 23 mm, Bhuntar and Kheri 20 mm each, Sarahan and Rohru 17 mm each. **PTI**

## Sukhu makes connect with children of 'Balika Ashram'

EXPRESS INDIA NEWS NETWORK  
SHIMLA, APRIL 4

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has once again demonstrated his humane bond for destitute children here today, when 69 children of Balika Ashram Tutikandi, including 16 orphans, were specially invited by the Chief Minister to watch the proceedings of Vidhan Sabha. The children, who had never got an opportunity to witness the assembly proceedings earlier, were elated to be there.



The Chief Minister, who has been making continuous efforts for the welfare of destitute children since taking over the reins of the State, interacted with the children during their visit to Vidhan Sabha and also

had lunch with them and asked them about their experience in the assembly.

During conversations with the children, he highlighted the government's initiatives for their welfare, including the Mukhyamantri Sukh Ashraya Yojna and the initiatives to be taken for their higher studies and educational tours out of the State.

Health Minister Dr (Col) Dhani Ram Shandil, Industries Minister, Harshwardhan Chauhan, and other dignitaries were also present on the occasion amongst others.

# OPINION

The Express India NEWS

## Farmers' plight

Farmers across the north, particularly in Punjab and Haryana, have suffered devastating losses to their standing wheat crop due to unseasonal rains, which lashed the region when the crop was ripening. Swaths of land with thousands of hectares of standing wheat, almost ready to mature, have been flattened leading to major losses. At some places, the loss is estimated to be as huge as 80 percent. This comes at a time when the farmers are already reeling under severe economic crisis and when agriculture is not a profit-making venture. Farmers' loss is not theirs alone. It is that of the nation as well, as it leads to loss of food production. Farmers' fate is interlinked with the nation as it concerns the basic need of the country, that is food.

Farmers will need to be compensated. Although both the state governments of Punjab and Haryana have announced compensation to the affected farmers, against their damaged crops, it is thought to be too less and too meagre. The Punjab government has announced Rs 15,000 per acre, which farmers have rejected. This actually does not even meet the input costs. Some opposition parties have demanded as much as Rs 50,000 per acre. The two governments must announce reasonable compensation to the affected farmers. The central government must also chip in with its share.

The farmers will need long-term assurance, which can only come with crop insurance. Most of the political parties have been promising to provide crop insurance for the farmers, but rarely are these promises fulfilled, as a result the farmers are left at the mercy of the government. While that is a long-term policy matter, the farmers right now need immediate compensation. The special girdawari (surveys) will take time. In the meanwhile, the government must provide some interim relief to the farmers to help them survive.

## Vigilantism is unacceptable

Off and on there are reports of vigilantism of different sorts coming from different parts of the country. At times, self-appointed "vigilantes" resort to violence that leads to loss of precious lives. No vigilantism of any sort, for whatever reasons, can be accepted in a civilised society that is governed by the rule of law. There can be no excuse or defence for such lawlessness, and it must be dealt with a firm hand.

Those resorting to vigilantism seem to be copying and imitating ultra-fanatics like the Taliban, who resort to summary trials. There is no social approval for such acts, not even in countries like Afghanistan. But people there cannot protest and raise their voice against such barbaric acts. In India, we must not allow such barbarism to take place. Although these are rarest of the rare aberrations, even those cannot and must not be allowed to happen and remedial measures must be taken immediately to create a strong deterrent.

# Competitive anti-Modism within opposition

BY VIMAL SUMBLY

Recently Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal went all out in the Delhi Vidhan Sabha against the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, leveling serious charges of corruption against him. Quoting "some" anonymous Bharatiya Janata Party leader, Kejriwal claimed that all the money of Adani actually belonged to Modi only. He leveled very serious allegations against the Prime Minister in the Delhi assembly, which provides him immunity from any defamation suit, which such allegations, if made outside the legislature, can invite.

Kejriwal's personal attack on Modi was quite surprising. He had not been criticizing Modi personally for quite some time now. In fact once he snubbed some Pakistan politicians telling them that Modi was his Prime Minister also and he respected him. There can be multiple reasons for Kejriwal taking a totally different stance now about Modi. To be the main protagonist of the anti-Modi narrative appears to be the main reason and motive of Kejriwal's scathing personal attack against the Prime Minister.

The Aam Aadmi Party has been facing strong criticism for allegedly playing second fiddle to the BJP. Kejriwal was among the first politicians in the country, cutting across the political spectrum, who welcomed the abrogation of Article 370. He maintained a distance from the anti-CAA protests that were taking place in his backyard against the BJP led central government. He was seen to be pandering to "soft-Hindutva" with measures like organizing "Ayodhya-tours" for senior citizens free of cost or publicly reciting Hanuman Chalisa.

Kejriwal is an astute politician and an effective communicator. He has a distinguished way of putting across and presenting things in the most

**KEJRIWAL'S PERSONAL ATTACK ON MODI WAS QUITE SURPRISING. HE HAD NOT BEEN CRITICIZING MODI PERSONALLY FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW. IN FACT ONCE HE SNUBBED SOME PAKISTAN POLITICIANS TELLING THEM THAT MODI WAS HIS PRIME MINISTER ALSO AND HE RESPECTED HIM.**

simple and straight manner as if he is conversing 'one-to-one' with his audience like an ordinary person. He also has a firm grip on the political pulse of the country. Not that there is any anti-Modi sentiment prevailing anywhere in the country which Kejriwal might be trying to exploit or capitalize, as there is none so far, but the 2024 General Elections will be centered around Modi only. It will be a clear "black and white" narrative, "for" or "against" Modi.

In the opposition space, there are many and multiple contenders keen to fit in the "against"

The Express India NEWS

narrative. So far, it was only the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who has been vigorously opposing and criticizing Prime Minister Modi and accusing him of "unduly" patronizing, shielding and protecting Adani. Kejriwal went a step further by saying that Adani was only the face and front man for Modi as all his fortune, according to Kejriwal, belonged to Modi. Even if the argument looks quite unconvincing and may hardly appeal to anyone,

Kejriwal knows that the argument is not aimed at the general public or the voters, but at the opposition leadership that is in search of a challenger to Modi.

This is also an irrefutable fact that there is no alternative to the Congress, when it comes to posing a challenge to the BJP. Only the Congress has a nationwide presence and is in a position to fight the BJP. Naturally it will be someone from the Congress only who can be projected as a challenger to Modi. S/he may not necessarily be projected as a Prime Ministerial candidate though. There is a competition for that role among different opposition leaders. They include Mamata Bannerjee and Kejriwal in particular, although there are few others like Nitish Kumar, who may be tired, but not retired from the Prime Ministerial ambitions as yet.

Even Ms Bannerjee is not personally critical of Modi the way Rahul and now Kejriwal have been. She has been a staunch critic of the BJP and its government at the centre, but when it comes to the Prime Minister she has always remained discreet and circumspect. But, she does have the Prime Ministerial ambitions to lead the opposition alliance. Her confidence also stems from the large number of parliamentary seats West Bengal has. Although faced with tough competition from the BJP in the General Elections, she can still hope to have good and respectable numerical strength in the Lok Sabha.

Rahul Gandhi's conviction and two year sentencing in a defamation case, that led to his disqualification also, seem to have provided "some hope" to "other" opposition leaders to aim at the opposition leadership. But, it definitely is going to be a long shot for anyone from outside the Congress, which obviously will not let that space to be grabbed by anyone from outside.

## Strange ways of Sahitya Akademi working

BY SUNIL DATT

India's National Academy of Letters is presently on a 'revadi' distribution spree, throwing all rules and regulations to the winds!

When it comes to Kashmir, Sahitya Akademi seems to have further devalued its stature to such an extent that it has found no person of merit to represent its Advisory board as regards Kashmiri language for the next five years.

In the latest and shocking development, a lady working in Jammu and Kashmir Projects Construction Corporation Limited, (JKPCCL), who seems to have contributed nothing towards the development of Kashmiri literature by way of any publication, whether poetry, prose or research till date, has been nominated as the "esteemed" member of the so called Kashmiri advisory board under the new chairmanship of Shad Ramzan.

In a so-called "Confidential" Letter (interestingly available on all social media platforms!), the Secretary of Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, Dr K Sreenivasarao has requested this Corporation employee to extend her cooperation to the premier literary organisation of the country in implementing the programmes and publications of the Akademi in respect of Kashmiri

language. Ironically, the woman is unaware of even Kashmiri language fonts and who is who of Kashmir!

The worst part of the entire episode is that after nominating this person to the coveted post, Sahitya Akademi has now requested her to forward a "brief CV" in order to complete the formalities. Express India News is in possession of a copy of this 'confidential letter', dated March 29, 2023.

A Sahitya Akademi awardee writer of yesteryears, who preferred to be anonymous, told Express India

The Express India NEWS

News that the standards applied to select this particular lady were totally at variance with the ethos and conventions of Sahitya Akademi. "By this action, all Kashmiri scholars of the valley as well as those living as migrants in Jammu, Delhi or elsewhere, are lamenting the present activities of the newly assembled board", the writer said.

When contacted, many scholars of the Kashmiri language expressed their ignorance about this lady and her contribution towards the language. Who has catapulted her, they questioned.

**THE TREND OF APPOINTING NOVICES AND FAVOURITES IN PRESTIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS ABSOLUTELY DOES NOT GO WELL FOR THE CAUSE OF PROMOTION OF LANGUAGES. THE WRITERS HAVE VOWED TO TAKE THEIR FIGHT TO THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION.**

The experts alleged that this blue-eyed "scholar" has no record whatsoever for promotion, contribution and propagation of the cause of Kashmiri language except one or two event management functions to her credit.

A Delhi based Kashmiri poetess wondered as to how will such a member determine the bestowing of awards and projects to worthy contributors of Kashmiri literature and culture? It is like appointing a student as a Vice Chancellor of a University, she said. The trend of appointing novices and favourites in prestigious institutions absolutely does not go well for the cause of promotion of languages. The writers have vowed to take their fight to the logical conclusion.

# NATION

## Uddhav calls Fadnavis 'worthless', BJP retaliates

APRIL 4, MUMBAI

**U**ddhav Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena (UBT), called for the resignation of Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, whom he dubbed a "worthless" home minister. Thackeray made the call after a woman worker from the Thackeray-led faction was reportedly attacked by activists of the rival Shiv Sena. Thackeray, accompanied by his wife Rashmi and son Aaditya Thackeray, visited the injured woman at a hospital in Thane city, the stronghold of CM Eknath Shinde, who toppled the MVA government last June by joining hands with BJP.

Thackeray claimed that despite the woman's plea that she was undergoing fertility treatment, she was kicked in the stomach by the rival faction. He further criticized Fadnavis for being "helpless" and not acting against the attackers. Thackeray called for the immediate resignation of the state home minister and also targeted the Thane police commissioner, calling him "useless" for failing to act against the Shiv Sena (UBT) workers' attackers.

Fadnavis hit back, calling Thackeray a "weak" chief minister who had sacrificed his ideology for the sake of power. He further criticized Thackeray for not asking two ministers in his cabinet who



were jailed to resign.

Maharashtra BJP President, Chandrashekhar Bawankule, stated that Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray will be prevented from leaving his residence in Mumbai by BJP workers if he continues to use objectionable language against Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Bawankule praised Fadnavis as a responsible Chief Minister who had served as both Home Minister and Opposition Leader. In contrast, he

claimed Thackeray did not understand the problems faced by society's last man and had not left his house when he was Chief Minister.

He also criticized Thackeray for being born with a silver spoon and having no identity other than being Bal Thackeray's son. The BJP leader further claimed that Thackeray's only achievement was using photos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to get elected before joining hands with the Congress and the NCP to become Chief Minister.

PTI

Some people serving 'communal dish' at 'secular shop':

## Naqvi's dig at Opposition over violence in Bihar, WB

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**T**he recent communal violence that erupted during Ram Navami celebrations in West Bengal and Bihar has drawn criticism from senior BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi. Naqvi accused the Opposition parties of playing politics by serving a "communal dish" at their "secular shop". He made these remarks while speaking to reporters about the recent incidents of violence in Bihar and West Bengal.

Naqvi expressed his concern over the communal violence and stated that when riots take place, not only human beings but the entire humanity "bleeds" and the country cannot afford such incidents in today's times. He further added that those who pose as "champi-

ons of secularism" despite having a "stigma of communal crime" are a threat to the country, religion, and humanity at large.

Naqvi also criticized the state governments that turn a blind eye to the issue and do not take action against those involved in communal violence. He urged them to take a cue from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and "teach a lesson to such anti-social elements".

The recent Ram Navami festivities saw communal violence erupt in Sasaram and Bihar Sharif towns, with clashes also occurring in Howrah district in West Bengal during a Ram Navami procession. The incidents have sparked concern over the rising communal tensions in the country.

PTI



## Lord Mahavir showed way to prosperous society: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**P**rime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Lord Mahavir on Tuesday, marking the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti. In a tweet, Modi said that the day is special to recall the noble teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir and hoped that his teachings will inspire people to bring a positive difference in the lives of the poor and downtrodden.

Modi said that Lord Mahavir showed the way to build a peaceful, harmonious and prosperous society. He further added that inspired by him, people should always serve others and bring a positive difference in the lives of the underprivileged.

Mahavir Jayanti is an important festival celebrated by Jains across the world to mark the birth anniversary of Lord Mahavir, the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism.

The day is celebrated with great devotion and enthusiasm as people offer prayers, perform pujas, and undertake charitable activities. PTI

## Rains lash parts of R'sthan, lightning kills 2

JAIPUR, APRIL 4

**T**wo brothers were killed by lightning while working in a field in Gadhwala village of Rajasthan's Bikaner district, as light to moderate rainfall hit several parts of the state over the past 24 hours, according to a spokesperson from the Meteorological department.

The victims, identified as Atmaram (19) and Tejaram (20), were struck by lightning on Monday.

The Meteorological department report-

**THE METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT REPORTED RAINFALL OF 21MM IN UDAIPURWATI, 17MM IN PAOTA, 15MM IN PARBATSAR, AND 13MM IN BOTH LADNUN AND MAKRANA.**

ed rainfall of 21mm in Udaipurwati, 17mm in Paota, 15mm in Parbatsar, and 13mm in both Ladnun and Makrana.

The maximum and minimum temperatures in most parts of the state were recorded below normal, with the maxi-

mum temperature ranging from 25.2 degrees Celsius to 37.2 degrees Celsius, and the minimum temperature ranging from 15.2 degrees Celsius to 23.4 degrees Celsius.

The Jaipur Meteorological Center director, Radheshyam Sharma, has pre-

dicted the possibility of light to moderate rain and thunder in some parts of Jodhpur, Bikaner, Ajmer, and Kota divisions on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, there is a possibility of moderate to intense thunder, sudden strong winds, and light to moderate rain in the Bikaner, Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Churu, and Nagaur districts of western Rajasthan.

The Meteorological department expects thunderstorms and rain activities to reduce by Friday, with the weather likely to remain dry in most areas. PTI

## East Sikkim ranked 9th in Landslide density

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4



**S**ikkim's East District has been ranked ninth in landslide density and risk exposure among all districts in India, according to the Landslide Atlas of India released by the Indian Space Research Organisation's National Remote Sensing Centre. The district saw 1,561 landslides between 2011 and 2017, with most being event-based landslides triggered by earthquakes or heavy rainfall. South District of Sikkim ranks eighth on the list. The

Atlas noted that the Himalayas and Western Ghats are highly susceptible to mass movements due to hilly topography and heavy rainfall. The East District has been experiencing rainfall and snowfall in the higher reaches since Friday, and the weather office had issued forecasts and alerts on rainfall, thunderstorms, and lightning in the northeastern state. On Tuesday, a massive avalanche hit Sikkim's Nathu La area, burying five-six vehicles with around 30 people under the snow and killing seven tourists. PTI

## NATION

## Centre releases 22cr under PMGSY to Arunachal

ITANAGAR, APRIL 4

The Centre has released Rs 22.74 crore as grant-in-aid to Arunachal Pradesh under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) to strengthen rural road connectivity in the northeastern state, according to an official statement released on Tuesday. The grant has been given for the state's "best performance" in implementing the rural road development scheme during the 2022-23 financial year.

The fund will be utilized for periodic maintenance of rural roads that have already been constructed under PMGSY, the statement added. Arunachal Pradesh had constructed 1096.24 km of roads, including 61 bridges, during the last financial year under the PMGSY scheme.

The financial incentives for the state government are based on its efforts to improve road quality with new technology and the funds spent on road maintenance, the statement further said. The Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Pema Khandu, expressed gratitude towards the Centre and assured that the grant would be "optimally and judiciously utilised".

Khandu also emphasized that rural connectivity is a top priority of the state government and stated that the grant would assist in maintaining rural roads that have been constructed under the scheme. **PTI**

# Gehlot approves Rs 736 cr interest-free crop loans

JAIPUR, APRIL 4

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has given his approval for a financial proposal of Rs 736 crore for providing interest-free crop loans to the farmers in the state. The Chief Minister has sanctioned a grant of Rs 560 crore for farmers under the interest-free crop loan subsidy scheme and Rs 176 crore under the compensatory interest subsidy scheme.

As per the statement issued, the farmers who repay their long-term agricultural cooperative loans on time will be given a 5 percent interest subsidy. In addition to this, the Chief Minister has allowed a subsidy on housing loans for farmers who have built houses on their farms. The farmers who have repaid their long-term agricultural cooperative loans on time from April 1, 2014, will receive a 5 percent interest subsidy annually from the state government.

The state government will also provide a 5 percent interest subsidy every year, starting from the financial year 2023-24, to farmers who have taken housing loans



to build houses on their farms. In the budget 2023-24, the Chief Minister had announced the interest-free crop loan distribution scheme and interest subsidy for farmers.

Furthermore, the state government has decided to provide high-quality seeds free of cost to more than 1.25 lakh farmers in the state. The government will

provide 35,000 quintals of high-quality seeds at a cost of Rs 15 crore.

The financial proposal approved by the Chief Minister will benefit a large number of farmers in the state. This move is expected to provide financial assistance to farmers, helping them to meet their agricultural needs and ensuring their overall growth and development. **PTI**

## Social welfare state being created in nation: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has praised the Indian bureaucracy for delivering a range of schemes that are transforming the socio-economic landscape of the country. Speaking at the launch of a book titled 'Transforming the steel frame – promise and paradox of civil service reform' edited by former bureaucrat Vinod Rai, Jaishankar said that the future of the country is dependent on the cooperation between politics and bureaucracy. Jaishankar noted that India is creating a social welfare state with a slew of programs, and none of it would have been possible without the bureaucracy's planning, monitoring, and delivery. He emphasized that India's economic model had "run out of steam" after 40 years of independence and had to undertake a range of deep and broad reforms in the early 1990s. However, he added that the impact of India's high growth rates did not translate into much-needed reforms on the ground, leading to national security consequences. Jaishankar praised the current lot of bureaucracy, which he finds to be more independent, experienced, and diverse. He cited the composition of Parliament, the cricket team, and the bureaucracy as examples of how well democracy works in India. **PTI**

## India, Bhutan resolve to expand ties

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck discussed expanding their "time-tested" relations and mutual national security interests in a meeting on Tuesday. This comes amid renewed attention on the Doklam issue, following Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering's statement that China has an equal say in resolving the border dispute over the strategically-located Doklam tri-junction.

Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra, when asked about the Doklam issue, emphasized the mutual respect, trust, and sensitivity to each other's concerns that underpin India-Bhutan ties. He confirmed that the talks included the entire range of bilateral cooperation, including issues of respective national interests. Kwatra said that the proposed rail link project between Kokrajhar (Assam) and Gelephu (Bhutan) will be expedited, marking the first ever rail link between the two countries.

The five broad points identified for expanding ties include economic and development partnership, trade, connectivity and investment cooperation, long-term and sustainable trade facilitation



measures, cooperation in areas of energy and new sectors such as space and startups. India will also step up its support for Bhutan's upcoming 13th Five Year Plan, extend additional standby credit facilities, and work to shape long-term sustainable arrangements for exports and critical commodities such as petroleum, fertilizers, and coal.

Modi described the meeting as "warm and productive" and tweeted his appreciation for Bhutan's close friendship and the vision of successive Druk Gyalpos in guiding India-Bhutan relations to new heights. Kwatra reiterated that India and Bhutan share an "exemplary" relationship characterized by trust, goodwill, and mutual understanding. **PTI**

## BJP playing OBC card to hide failures, says Congress

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

The Congress party accused the Centre of playing the "OBC card" to divert attention from its failures and demanded the formation of a separate department for reservation of other backward classes. The demand was made by the party's OBC department head Ajay Singh Yadav during a press conference on Tuesday. Yadav also demanded that the central government should release the caste data from the 2011 census and increase the existing limit of 'creamy layer' from Rs 8 lakh to Rs 12 lakh per annum.

Yadav alleged that the Modi government is playing the "OBC card" due to its "failures" such as demonetisation, GST, 'black farm laws', Adani case, Chinese incursions, and the success of 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and is instead accusing Rahul Gandhi of insulting OBCs. He said that a separate department should be made for OBCs so that they can get full benefits of the schemes.

Furthermore, Congress leader Subhashini Yadav alleged that the BJP is being double-faced on the OBC issue and accused the party of describing Lalit

**YADAV ALSO MENTIONED THAT THE CONGRESS HAD DECIDED IN ITS CONVENTION HELD IN RAIPUR TO PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT A CASTE-BASED CENSUS, AND IF THE CONGRESS COMES INTO POWER IN 2024, IT WOULD CONDUCT A CASTE-BASED CENSUS.**

Modi and Nirav Modi as OBCs, which she called an "insult to our entire society". She also demanded separate representation for SC, ST, OBC, and minority women in the proposed 33 percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha.

Yadav also mentioned that the Congress had decided in its convention held in Raipur to pressure the government to conduct a caste-based census, and if the Congress comes into power in 2024, it would conduct a caste-based census. He also said that the increased popularity of Rahul Gandhi after the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' has struck fear in the BJP. **PTI**



## NATION

# Rahul faces flak for 'insulting' media again

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

Rahul Gandhi's counter to a journalist "why do you always say what BJP is saying" after he was asked about the ruling party's criticism of the Congress leader, evoked a sharp reaction on Tuesday from the BJP which accused him of "attacking" the media again.

The former Congress president, who was walking into the Congress headquarters here, was asked about the BJP's allegation that he tried to pressure the judiciary after he was joined by a large number of party leaders and workers while filing an appeal in a Surat court against his conviction in a defamation case on Monday.

Gandhi walked back to the media posse and asked, "Why do you always say what BJP is saying? Every time you say what



BJP is saying." "There is a very simple thing. Who owns the Rs 20,000 cr in Adani ji's shell companies? It is 'benami'. Who owns it," Gandhi said, reiterating his allegations.

In a tweet later, Gandhi questioned

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" and asked why is he "frightened". Targeting him, the BJP said that "insulting the country's backward classes and the media is Rahul Gandhi's mindset" and called him an "arrogant dynast"

"Rahul Gandhi has again attacked the fourth pillar of democracy. Insulting the country's backward classes and the media is Rahul Gandhi's mindset.

"He is following in the footsteps of his grandmother with his audacity to frequently attack the country's democratic system," BJP's chief spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Anil Baluni tweeted.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said, "Rahul is an arrogant dynast." Gandhi's snub to a journalist during a recent press conference had drawn flak after he was asked about the BJP's allegation of insulting OBCs with his "Modi surname" jibe.

Noting that the question was asked to him at the conference twice already, he had accused the reporter of working for the BJP and told him not to "pretend" to be a journalist. **PTI**

## Mentally unstable man kills 2 daughters; injures wife

JAIPUR, APRIL 4

A mentally unstable man allegedly hacked his two daughters to death with an axe and injured his wife and daughter-in-law when they tried to intervene in Rajasthan's Nagaur district, police said on Tuesday.

The accused, Manaram (57), a resident of Parbatsar, has been taken into custody and is being interrogated, they said. Manaram killed his daughters Meera (26) and Rekha (20) with an axe on Monday. He also attacked his wife and daughter-in-law when they tried to save Meera and Rekha, said Superintendent of Police, Nagaur, Ramamurthy Joshi.

The injured have been hospitalised, he said. A case has been registered against Manaram under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) on the basis of a complaint lodged by his son. **PTI**

## G20 artist works to be exhibited in Bihar Museum



PATNA, APRIL 4

The Bihar Museum, one of the largest such facilities in India, has been selected for a two-month-long international exhibition for the artists of G20 countries.

Selected artists of the G20 countries will be displayed in the exhibition, christened 'Together We Art', from August 7, an official said.

"The Bihar Museum is now organising and implementing the project for the G20 Initiative. Together We Art is based on the theme of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, a concept from the Maha Upanishad," state Art and Culture Secretary Bandana Preyashi told PTI on Tuesday.

The exhibition will continue till October 7 after which it will move to a venue in New Delhi, she said.

"The artist selected by the respective governments would work through their medium of expression - paintings, graphics, etching, photography, film, video or even a combination of mediums," said Preyashi. **PTI**

## BJP targets Cong after "fake" candidates' list emerges on SM

BENGALURU, APRIL 4

The BJP on Tuesday dismissed as "fake" a purported list of candidates for the May 10 Assembly elections in Karnataka that is in circulation on social media, and alleged that it was a "lie manufactured in the Congress factory".

The ruling party has not yet released the list of candidates and is likely to come out with one after its Parliamentary Board

meeting on April 8. The "fake" four-page list of candidates for 81 constituencies is in circulation on social media with the claim that it had been released by the Central Election Committee of the BJP on Tuesday after a meeting chaired by party national president J P Nadda. However, the party issued a statement quoting its national general secretary and Karnataka in-charge Arun Singh as saying that the list is fake. **PTI**

## IP fest row: DU panel chief defends Principal

NEW DELHI, APR 4

The current priorities for the five-member committee probing the alleged harassment of women students at Delhi University's IP college is to build back trust between the students and the administration and resume classes hit by the continuous protests, the head of the panel said on Tuesday. Prakash Singh, the South Campus

director who is heading the committee, said the panel will talk to all stakeholders, including the protesting students and the college administration, to understand their positions.

The students have been holding regular protest demanding the resignation of Poonam Kumria, the principal of the Indraprastha College for Women (IPCW), for allegedly failing to ensure safety on the campus. **PTI**

## 'Organiser' opposes equating same-sex relations to marriage

Bats for Indic perspective

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

The RSS-inspired weekly "Organiser" has come out against granting legal validity to same-sex marriage, an issue being heard by the Supreme Court, and argued that the Indic perspective should be central to any deliberation on marital topics.

"Equating same-sex relations to the institution of marriage is going to the other extreme. In the Bharatiya tradition and laws, marriage as an institution is beyond a contract or legal registration. While pursuing and deliberating on marital issues, this Indic perspective should be central," its editor Prafulla Ketkar has written in the magazine's



latest issue. He also cited a statement issued by a group of former judges, including Justice S N Dhingra (retired), in this context.

"Former judges urged the conscious members of the society including those

who are pursuing the issue of same-sex marriage in Supreme Court to refrain from doing so in the best interest of Bharatiya society and culture. They called it a cancerous problems that the West is facing and are sought to be imported into Bharat by vested interest groups through the misuse of judiciary," the editorial stated. It noted that IPC Section 377, which had declared same-sex relations a crime based on "Victorian morality", is already nullified. Incidentally, several minority bodies have also spoken against granting legal validity to same-sex marriage, which many rights group have sought.

The editorial also welcomed the Supreme Court reversing its 2011 ruling reviving the doctrine of guilt-by-asso-

ciation as it upheld Section 10 (a)(i) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The apex court had last month held that mere membership of a banned organisation is an offence liable to be punished with imprisonment under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The "Organiser" took note of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's arguments that the Supreme Court bench, whose verdict has now been reversed, committed a serious error by "straightaway and directly following the US Supreme Court decisions and that too without adverting to the differences and the position of laws in India to arrive at the ruling". **PTI**

## MISC

# Anurag hits out at Mamata, Nitish over Ram Navami violence

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Tuesday launched a fresh attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her Bihar counterpart Nitish Kumar over incidents of violence on Ram Navami, accusing them of indulging in "appeasement politics" for minority votes.

Such kind of vote bank politics creates many problems and poses many challenges before the country, the Information and Broadcasting minister said while

## Home Ministry seeks report

Union Home Ministry on Tuesday sought a detailed report from the West Bengal government on the violence during Ram Navami in Howrah, sources said. This comes days after Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to Governor C V Ananda Bose and took stock of the prevailing situation in the state, particularly in violence-hit areas of Howrah.

addressing an event organised here to observe the World Peace and Harmony Day on the 2622nd birth anniversary of Jain Tirthankara Mahavir.

Parts of West Bengal and Bihar witnessed incidents of violence on Ram

Navami last week. "This is a very relevant topic in the present times. One part of the world has been witnessing a war for a long time. When I see the situation in India, there is an atmosphere of peace but Ram Navami processions are not

allowed to be taken out peacefully," Thakur said. Referring to the violence during Ram Navami processions in West Bengal, Thakur asked whether the chief minister of the state is resorting to dividing the society as she said Hindus should not pass through certain areas.

"This itself is a matter of concern," he said. "A war between two countries is one thing but creating such a situation in our own country, in Bihar and Bengal, where you are not allowed to take out a procession peacefully on Ram Navami and forced to commit arson, stone pelting

and murder, raises many questions," the minister charged. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tells countries around the world that this is not the era of war and the time to discuss, deliberate, be part of democracy and decide, Thakur said.

"And the world accepts this point but the chief ministers of two states of our country talking like that and resorting to partiality raises a big question as to whether a particular community was involved in the violence or politics of appeasement fans their passion," he said. **PTI**

## Kerala train fire: SIT intensifies probe

KANNUR, APRIL 4

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Kerala Police on Tuesday intensified its probe into an incident of arson aboard an express train in Kozhikode district of Kerala, and was verifying information received about the suspect in the case, police said.

Two days after the incident rocked the state, senior officials of various investigating agencies, including the NIA (National Investigation Agency) and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) today inspected the coaches of the Alappuzha-Kannur Express train. On Sunday night, an unidentified man set fire to passengers after pouring petrol on them when the train reached Korapuzhabridge near Elathur. Nine people suffered burn injuries and are undergoing treatment at various hospitals. **PTI**

## Resolution in US House to designate April 14 as National Sikh Day

WASHINGTON, APRIL 4

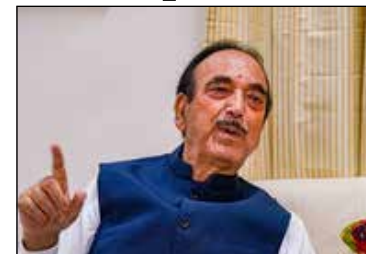
A bipartisan group of lawmakers in the US House of Representatives to designate April 14 as National Sikh Day in a bid to honour and celebrate the important role played by the Sikh community in strengthening and inspiring the people of the United States.

Observing that the US is enriched by the diversity of its residents, who have cultivated a climate of social tolerance and



intellectual pluralism that has sustained the Nation throughout its history, the resolution said that Vaisakhi is a special occasion in which Sikhs remember the founding in 1699 of the Order of Khalsa, which played an important role in shaping the religion's history and identity. Introduced by Congress woman Mary Gay Scanlon, the resolution says that through leading charitable events, the Sikh community embodies the sense of public service that underlies the founding principles of the US. **PTI**

## Azad slams critics over 'Modi praise'



NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

In a sharp retort to his critics after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's praise of him had raised eyebrows, former Congress stalwart Ghulam Nabi Azad said on Tuesday they have a "polluted mind" and need to go back to "kindergarten to learn ABC of politics".

A former leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha, Azad slammed those who could not differentiate between farewell speeches and a routine one, saying their political acumen is "questionable at best".

Mincing no words in a wide-ranging interview to PTI, the former Congress veteran went further to suggest that such individuals should consider revisiting their basic understanding of politics, even suggesting a return to kindergarten to learn the rudimentary ABCs of political discourse. Soon after Azad quit the Congress, several party leaders recalled Modi's lavish praise in his emotional speech in Parliament during Azad's farewell from Rajya Sabha to allege some sort of agenda.

Referring to Azad's scathing resignation letter, Congress Media Department Chairman Pawan Khera had attacked the former Union minister, saying, "We have seen the love between Modi and Azad, it was also seen in the Parliament. That love has been manifested in this letter." In the interview on the eve of his book launch "Azaad -- an autobiography", the former Union minister said his good relations with the prime minister dated back to the period when he was a general secretary of the BJP. **PTI**

## Gehlot, Vasundhara test positive for COVID

JAIPUR, APRIL 4

Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot and former CM Vasundhara Raje were tested positive for corona-

virus. Gehlot, while informing the public that the number of COVID cases has increased in the past few days, said he too has tested positive for it. "I myself have been infected with mild symptoms

of Covid. As per the advice of the doctors, I will continue working from my residence for the next few days. All of you should take care and follow Covid protocols," Gehlot tweeted. **PTI**

## Congress will not come to power in K'nataka: Bommai

BENGALURU, APRIL 4

Congress leaders Siddaramaiah and D K Shivakumar are "dreaming" about the Chief Minister's post, ahead of the May 10 Karnataka Assembly polls, but it will not come true, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Tuesday.

He alleged that the Congress leaders' main focus is power and the chief minister's post, and not the welfare of the people of the state.

"The Congress will not come to power. Both of them (Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar) are fighting for a seat (CM seat), which they will not get.

Power and Chief Minister post are the main aim of Congress and its leaders in this election and not the welfare of the people of Karnataka," Bommai said in response to a question.

Speaking to reporters here, he said on one hand Shivakumar is going around seeking blessings to become

the chief minister, while on the other Siddaramaiah is claiming that he is the next chief minister. "People who have to decide, don't have both of them in mind."

"It is their internal party matter. Both of them are dreaming about the chief minister's seat, but it will not come true," the Bommai added.

Bommai was reacting to certain purported statements made by Siddaramaiah, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly and former Chief

Minister, regarding Congress' probable chief ministerial face.

Both Siddaramaiah and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee President Shivakumar are nursing Chief Ministerial ambitions in the event of the party coming to power, and were often seen indulging a game of political one-upmanship to assert their position in the run-up to the polls, which according to party sources has led to factionalism within the state Congress. **PTI**

## WORLD

## Pakistan rupee falls all-time low against USD

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 4

The Pakistani rupee sank to Rs 287.29 against the US dollar, a record low on Tuesday as the cash-starved country struggles to unlock critical International Monetary Fund (IMF) funding while dwindling foreign exchange reserves become another source of concern for investors, a media report said.

The local unit, in the interbank market, closed at 287.29 against the US dollar, 0.78 per cent or Rs 2.25, down from Monday's close of 285.04, Geo News reported.

Last month, the rupee hit a record low, closing at Rs 285.09 per US dollar on March 2, the data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed.

According to financial experts, financial importers have resumed the panic buying of US dollars, while the supply of foreign currency remained low in the interbank market.

Pakistan's loan programme is yet to materialise months after it raised taxes and energy prices and allowed the currency to depreciate to meet IMF's conditions. The nation has missed multiple deadlines to resume its bailout. The cash-strapped nation secured a USD 6 billion IMF bailout in 2019.

PTI

## UK PM Sunak welcomes Finland to NATO military alliance

LONDON, APRIL 4

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Tuesday welcomed Finland's membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as a "historic day" for the military alliance, as he called on members to agree on the necessary steps to also include Sweden in the fold.

Finland's membership expands the scope of the 30-member NATO and realigns the European security landscape at a time when the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been raging on for over a year.

The UK said it was one of the first NATO allies to ratify the bids of both Finland and Sweden to join the alliance and played a significant role in securing agreement from all NATO allies for Finland's accession.

"This is a historic day for Finland and for NATO," Sunak said.

"Their accession has made our alliance stronger and every one of us safer. All NATO members now need to take the steps necessary to admit Sweden too, so



we can stand together as one alliance to defend freedom in Europe and across the world," he said.

UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly is in Brussels on Tuesday to attend a two-day meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers, marking 74 years to the day since the treaty was signed as a means to promote peace in the aftermath of World War II. Following the Nordic country's

formal accession to NATO, the meeting saw the raising of Finland's flag at the NATO Headquarters in Belgium, and Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto took his seat at the table between Estonia and France.

"Today will go into the history books for NATO as a defensive alliance; 31 countries strong, we welcome Finland to the table," said Cleverly.

PTI

## Nepal-India railway line from Jaynagar to Kurtha completes 1 year of operation

KATHMANDU, APRIL 4

The first broad-gauge passenger railway service connecting Bihar's Jaynagar with Kurtha in Nepal's Janakpur city completed a year of operation and is running profitably, a media report said on Tuesday.

The 35-kilometre railway line started its commercial operation on April 3, 2022, and has been making two round trips between its destinations daily, The Rising Nepal newspaper said. It was virtually inaugurated last year by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his then-Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba.

The Jaynagar-Kurtha section is 35 km long and 3 km of which lies in Bihar and the rest in Nepal. It is part of the Jaynagar-Bijalpura-Bardibas rail link, executed with grant assistance of Rs 548 crore from India. According to the report, the rail service started operations last year after remaining closed for more than a decade. "We were worried about whether we would get passengers or be able to make a profit," General Manager of Nepal Railway Company Limited (NRCL), Niranjana Kumar Jha, was quoted as saying in the report.

PTI

## India hopes for Sri Lanka's early recovery from economic crisis: Jacob

COLOMBO, APRIL 4

India on Tuesday expressed hope that Sri Lanka would soon achieve early economic recovery, with the Indian Deputy High Commissioner here, reaffirming New Delhi's steadfast support to the island nation through the crisis.

Sri Lanka has been struck by a catastrophic economic and humanitarian crisis sparked by years of mismanagement and the raging pandemic.

Vinod K Jacob, the Deputy High Commissioner of India, speaking at the Coordination Forum of Development Partners of Sri Lanka, said that "India had steadfastly supported the people of Sri Lanka through the economic crisis as well as at the IMF," a press release by the Indian High Commission in Colombo said.

Jacob expressed hope that Sri Lanka will achieve early economic recovery.

Explaining the flagship development cooperation partnership between Delhi and Colombo, the Deputy High Commissioner said that the engagement was based on the principles of South-South cooperation between friendly neighbours.

"The projects are selected in line with the priorities of the Sri Lankan side and



pertain to socio-economic sectors," the press release said.

According to the press release, the total development cooperation portfolio between the two neighbours stands at USD 600 million, and in the past eight years, more than 20 projects have been completed.

Jacob emphasised the reliance of Indian projects on Sri Lankan partners for the supply of locally available and

environmentally sustainable materials, calling it a "unique characteristic".

Elaborating on the challenges faced for the completion of projects, Jacob pointed out that during the past few years, import restrictions and capacity issues have impacted the pace of execution.

"India remains confident of jointly resolving these concerns with the Sri Lankan side," the press release quoted him as saying.

PTI

## PoK investigating facts on adoption of resolution to open Kartarpur-type corridor

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 4

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) government has initiated an investigation to ascertain the facts regarding the adoption of a resolution in the region's Legislative Assembly seeking an opening of a Kartarpur-type corridor connecting both sides of Kashmir. PoK "Prime Minister" Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan shared this plan in his speech at a dinner hosted by him in honour of Hurriyat leaders, the Express

Tribune newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Khan expressed his serious concern over the resolution presented in the Legislative Assembly and said a fact-finding inquiry was underway and added it would soon be made public.

Inaugurated in 2019, the Kartarpur corridor links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, where Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev lived and died at the start of the 16th century, to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Punjab's Gurdaspur district.

PTI

## Fire guts clothing market in Bangladesh, eight injured

DHAKA, APRIL 4

A massive fire partly destroyed one of the biggest clothing markets here in the Bangladesh capital on Tuesday, injuring eight people, including two fire personnel.

The fire broke out at the Bangabazar market around 6:10 am and was

brought under control after over six hours of efforts at 12:36 pm, Shahjahan Shikder, officer-in-charge of the media wing of Fire Service and Civil Defence said. However, the fire was seen spreading to neighbouring buildings as a result of strong winds. Flames could still be observed in various locations.

PTI

# ENTERTAINMENT

## ‘Connection with audience is my validation’

Actor Aditya Roy Kapur says he gauges the impact of his work not by box office collections or the views on streamers, but through the appreciation he receives from his fans.

The actor, who is awaiting the release of his next film "Gumraah", is on cloud nine after garnering praise for his debut series "The Night Manager", adapted from John le Carre's novel of the same name.

"There's box office and OTT where you get to understand if something is doing well. The most important feedback or validation is my connection with the audience. The feeling that you get from people who are watching your work is an old-school way to gauge if they liked you," Roy Kapur told PTI.

The 37-year-old actor, known for "Aashiqui 2", "Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani", and "Malang", said he is fortunate to have been given opportunities to experiment with different genres.

"‘Malang’ was the first time I did action and thriller. With ‘Ludo’, it was comedy and romance in light-hearted space, which I did after a long time. I feel fortunate that I have been able to have these films come to me..." he added.

In his next, crime thriller "Gumraah", Roy Kapur stars in dual roles of Arjun and Rahul. Directed by first-time filmmaker Vardhan Ketkar, the Hindi film is a remake of the 2019 Tamil hit "Thadam".

The actor said the two characters look similar but they had to feel different.

"Like, their mental state was different, their background, the way of speaking was different. It was a fun challenge," he added.

Also starring Mrunal Thakur and Ronit Roy, "Gumraah" is scheduled to be released in theatres this Friday. **PTI**



## Maisie, Max under fire over pregnancy prank



Maisie Smith and her boyfriend Max George have made headlines for all the wrong reasons this week, after a pregnancy prank backfired on them.

The 'Strictly Come Dancing' actress and the former 'The Wanted' singer teased fans about 'really exciting news' on social media, with the 21-year-old clutching her belly.

The couple immediately explained that it was in fact a joke, with Maisie revealing she had eaten a five-course meal.

Despite the clarification, the prank did not go down well with many of the couple's fans.

"I'm not quite sure what part of your brain thought it would be a good idea to do a fake pregnancy announcement for April fools... This is extremely triggering not only for me but for others as well!," one follower wrote.

"Disappointed in you both for thinking that pretending to be pregnant is something to joke over. After suffering a miscarriage I can tell you it's definitely not something to joke over and there are people out there that can't even get pregnant at all just insensitive from both your parts," another added.



## Neeru Bajwa's 'Chal Jindiye...' coming this week!

One of the most awaited Punjabi films, 'Es Jahano Door Kitte Chal Jindiye', that was to hit the screens in March this year but got delayed due to unrest in Punjab, is set to release this weekend!

Starring Neeru Bajwa in the lead role, the film is coming to theatres on April 7, the makers

have said. The film, directed by Uday Pratap Singh and written by Jagdeep Warrin, is an emotional tale of love, friendship, struggle and identity.

The film also features Punjabi stars Gurpreet Ghuggi, Kulwinder Billa, Jass Bajwa, and Aditi Sharma in pivotal roles.



# BUSINESS

## Rupee likely to strengthen towards 79 by end-FY24: UBS Securities

MUMBAI, APRIL 4

**N**arrowing current account deficit will help the rupee strengthen against the dollar and appreciate to around 79 by the second half of the current fiscal, says a foreign brokerage report.

The rupee is likely to strengthen towards 79 by end-FY24 from an average of 82 to the US dollar in FY23, Tanvee Gupta Jain, the chief India economist at UBS Securities said in a note.

Even as the rupee is likely to be volatile in the near-term, as global financial stability risks remain elevated, she expects the local unit to gain towards 79 against the greenback by year-end FY24, on a narrowing current account deficit (CAD) and weaker dollar volatil-

**JAIN SAID THE RESERVE BANK WILL CAP ANY SIGNIFICANT RUPEE GAINS TO REBUILD BUFFERS (FOREX RESERVES) TO PROVIDE INSURANCE AGAINST POTENTIAL GLOBAL SPILLOVER.**

ity index. CAD narrowed to 2.2 per cent of GDP or \$18.2 billion in the third quarter and the Swiss brokerage UBS Securities sees it further improving to 1.2 per cent of GDP in the current fiscal from an estimated 2 per cent in the just concluded fiscal.

Jain said the Reserve Bank will cap any significant rupee gains to rebuild

buffers (forex reserves) to provide insurance against potential global spillover.

It can be noted that last year the central bank used up as much as \$115 billion to defend the rupee which was under pressure due to the rising interest rates across the world and the US in particular.

On the FY24 outlook she says even though the global financial market volatility has significantly clouded the growth outlook for all, the domestic economy will suffer limited spillover from the strains of the US/European banking sectors.

The ongoing global Crisis has led to major repricing in global rates volatility and commodities, especially oil. The agency estimates crude price to average at \$80/barrel in FY24 down from \$95 a barrel in FY23. **PTI**

## ONGC stepping up USD 7 bn drive to boost output

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**S**tate-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is stepping up a USD 7 billion investment over the next three-four years to reverse years of decline in oil and gas production, company's director for production Pankaj Kumar said.

Up to 24 field development, enhanced oil recovery (EOR) and improved oil recovery (IOR) projects are currently in progress that will further help reverse the declining trend in oil and gas production.

"Most of our fields are old where natural decline has set in. But we are heavily investing in technology to raise recovery as well as tap isolated reservoirs," he told PTI.

ONGC is investing USD 5 billion-plus in development of the Cluster-II region of its flagship KG-DWN-98/2 asset in the Krishna Godavari basin offshore India's eastern coast. It also

has multiple field developments in the west coast region, including a planned fifth phase of redevelopment of Mumbai High along with the development of neighbouring fields like Daman, he said, adding these ongoing projects involve an investment of Rs 60,000 crore (more than USD 7 billion) over the next three-four years.

"We are investing in multiple enhanced oil recovery (EOR) and improved oil recovery (IOR) projects," he

said. "In the fiscal year ending March 31, we managed to arrest the decline in output after five years and from the current fiscal we will see production rising." ONGC is likely to see output rise from 19.6 million tonnes in 2022-23 to 21.2 million tonnes in the current fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024) on a standalone basis. Natural gas output is projected to rise from 20.6 billion cubic meters in 2022-23 to 23.5 bcm in the current fiscal. **PTI**



## Suzuki Motorcycle India appoints Kenichi Umeda as new MD

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**S**uzuki Motorcycle India Pvt Ltd on Tuesday announced the appointment of Kenichi Umeda as its new Managing Director.

Umeda succeeds Satoshi Uchida, who has completed his term as the Managing Director of the company, Suzuki Motorcycle India Pvt Ltd (SMIPL) said in a statement. He will be responsible for the further growing and strengthening Suzuki Motorcycle India's position in the Indian and overseas markets.

He brings with him over 27 years of valuable industry experience across various global markets, it added. **PTI**

## WagonR, Alto K10 score low safety rating in crash test

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**V**ehicle safety group Global NCAP on Tuesday said it has given one- and two-star safety ratings for adult occupant protection to Maruti Suzuki India's popular models WagonR and Alto K10, respectively after conducting crash tests.

Both the models scored zero stars for child occupant protection as per the Global NCAP's latest round of crash tests. The company, however, said its vehicles meet India's crash safety regulations which are almost similar to the standards in Europe.

Global NCAP rates vehicles from zero to five based on their safety fea-

tures and automobiles with a higher rating are considered safer for occupants. According to its latest test, Global NCAP stated that the Alto K10 showed a stable structure and marginal to good protection for adult chest to head in the frontal impact but showed weak protection to the chest in the side impact.

The WagonR also offered weak chest protection for the driver despite the improvements in the restraint systems by Maruti Suzuki since the previous version of the model was tested by Global NCAP, it added. "We have been delighted with the positive response from Indian automakers and some global automakers as well. **PTI**

## Implementation time of track, trace system for drug formulation exports extended

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**T**he government has extended the date for implementation of track and trace system for exports of drug formulations till August 1 this year.

The decision is applicable for both non-SSI (Small Scale Industry) and SSI-manufactured drugs.

"The date for implementation of track and trace system for exports of drug formulations with respect to maintaining the parent-child relationship in packaging levels and its uploading on central portal has been extended up to August 1 this

year for both SSI and non-SSI manufactured drugs," the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) said in a public notice. Earlier, the dates have been extended from time to time. The manufacturer or the exporter of drug formulations would have to print the barcode as per global standard at different packaging levels -- primary, secondary and tertiary -- to facilitate tracking and tracing of their products. Barcode helps in tracking and tracing origin of drugs, which minimises the chances of genuine medicines being considered spurious, sub-standard or counterfeit. **PTI**

## World Bank cuts India's growth forecast to 6.3 pc in FY24

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**I**ndia's GDP is expected to moderate to 6.3 per cent, as against earlier estimate of 6.6 per cent, due to moderation in consumption in FY24, the World Bank said in a report on Tuesday.

Growth is likely to be constrained by slower consumption growth and challenging external conditions, the World Bank said in its India Development Update. **PTI**

## Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting FY23 sales cross Rs 10,000 cr

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**W**ipro Consumer Care and Lighting on Tuesday said it has crossed the milestone of Rs 10,000 crore in overall sales in FY23, helped by 'significant growth' across geographies, brands, and categories.

The domestic FMCG business grew 17 per cent for the financial year ended March 31, 2023, the company, part of Azim Premji-led Wipro Enterprises, said in a statement.

Its sandalwood soap brand Santoor



has now become the second largest player in the segment in India with sales of over Rs 2,650 crore.

While female toiletries brand of Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting, Enchanteur, has also crossed 1,000 crore,

it added. The company, which operates in FMCG and lighting products, had reported a revenue of Rs 8,634 crore for the financial year ended March 31, 2022.

"FY23 was a special year with the FMCG India business growing at 17 per cent and Malaysia strengthening its No 1 position in personal care with strong growth of over 20 per cent. "Vietnam crossed the USD 100 million revenue mark with double-digit growth. Other markets with double-digit growth included South Africa, the Middle East & Philippines," it said. The company has also expanded its

footprint in homecare across key markets with the launch of liquid detergents, fabric softeners, dish wash and floor cleaners. In FY23, Wipro announced its foray into Foods with the acquisition of Nirapara brand this fiscal year.

Commenting on the development Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting CEO Vineet Agrawal said this is an exciting moment for us. "We have come a long way since 2003, when we were Rs 300 crores to being a global FMCG company growing 33X times in the last two decades," he said. **PTI**

## SPORT

# Chanu banned for 4 years

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**T**wo-time Commonwealth Games champion Indian weightlifter Sanjita Chanu has been handed a four-year ban by the National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) for failing a dope test last year.

Sanjita had tested positive for an anabolic steroid -- Drostanolone Metabolite -- that features in the World Anti-doping Agency's (WADA) prohibited list, during the in-competition testing at the National Games in Gujarat in September-October last year.

Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF)



president Sahdev Yadav confirmed the development. "Yes, she has been handed a four-year ban by NADA," he told PTI.

This is a huge setback for Sanjita, who will be stripped of the National Games silver medal as a result of the positive test. Sanjita had won gold in 48kg ahead of Mirabai Chanu at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. At the 2018 edition in Gold Coast, she was crowned champion in the 53kg category.

The Manipuri still has the option to appeal the decision. However, it is not sure if she will choose to do so.

"I have already experienced this, why will I do again and go through this

again? I don't know if I want to appeal or not. In both cases I will lose.

"If I appeal it will take time to clear my name and I will lose out on the chance to qualify for the Olympics and Asian Games. If I don't I will be suspended," she had told PTI in January.

It is not the first time that the 2011 Asian Championship bronze medallist finds herself embroiled in a dope controversy. She had been banned by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) in 2018 after she tested positive for anabolic steroid testosterone prior to the World Championships in the US in November 2017. **PTI**

## RCB's Patidar ruled out for entire season

BENGALURU, APRIL 4

**R**oyal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) top-order batter Rajat Patidar was on Tuesday ruled out of the entire IPL season due to an Achilles heel injury, dealing a big blow to the team. The 29-year-old was RCB's third-highest scorer last year with 333 runs in eight matches at 55.50, including two fifties. He hit the fastest century by an Indian in IPL in the Qualifier 1. "Unfortunately, Rajat Patidar has been ruled out of IPL2023 due to an Achilles Heel injury," said RCB in a statement. "We wish Rajat a speedy recovery and will continue to support him during the process. **PTI**

## I want to keep winning as long as I am alive: Bhagwani Devi

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**B**hagwani Devi picked up the shot put for the first time at 94. Up until then, she had lived a life of hardship and sorrow.

Born in Haryana's Khedka village, Devi lost her son and husband before she turned 30. She was pregnant with their other son at the time. Four years later, her elder daughter died. She decided not to remarry and worked long hours in the field to fend for her family. She also underwent a bypass surgery in 2007.

All the past sorrows turned to happiness when she embraced sports. Within six months of taking up athletics in January 2022, when her grandson and coach Vikas Dagar gave her a shot put, Devi won three medals at the World Masters Championships (outdoors) in Finland last year.

She won gold in 100m and a bronze each in shot put and discus throw in the 90-94 age category. Soon, word spread about her achievement and people started calling her 'Sprinter Dadi'. Now, at 95, when people are barely able to walk, Devi is 'sprinting' towards her dream of bringing laurels for India.

Last week, she clinched three gold medals at the World Masters Athletics Indoor Championship 2023 in Torun, Poland in 60m sprint, discus throw and shot put. **PTI**



## Buoyed by huge win against SRH, RR ready for PBKS challenge

GUWAHATI, APRIL 4

**R**ajasthan Royals (RR) would be banking on their near-perfect combinations in almost all departments of the game to put up another commanding performance when they take on a strong Punjab Kings (PBKS) side in an IPL match here tomorrow.

The Royals would be buoyed by the

massive 72-run victory against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH), who were outsmarted by last year's runners-up in every aspect of the game on Sunday.

With Yashasvi Jaiswal, red-hot England white-ball skipper Jos Buttler and captain Sanju Samson smashing half-centuries against SRH, the Royals' dominance with the bat was there for all to see, while their bowlers, led by Yuzvendra Chahal (4/17)

and New Zealand quick Trent Boult (2/21), were more than a handful for SRH.

But with Punjab Kings also giving an indication of their immense firepower with both the bat and the ball in their seven-run DLS win against Kolkata Knight Riders at Mohali, the match on Wednesday promises to give the spectators in Guwahati good value for money. **PTI**



## Laser shows, live bands to enthral fans at IPL's Guwahati matches

GUWAHATI, APRIL 4

**F**rom folk dances to laser shows, the IPL matches in Guwahati will have more than only cricket in store for the fans when Rajasthan Royals (RR) play their home' games of this edition here.

The Assam Cricket Association (ACA) Stadium here has been designated as one of the home' venues for RR, which will take on Punjab Kings tomorrow and Delhi Capitals three days later. "The focus is on cricket, definitely. But with that, the fans will also be treated to some quality entertainment on the match day," BCCI joint secretary Devajit Saikia said.

He said a first-of-its-kind laser show will be presented between the two innings in both of the matches.

"The usual visual displays will be there. Along with it, the ACA has planned a laser show which will be among the grandest ever in the entire North East," he added. **PTI**

## Plan to introduce home and away format in WPL season 2: Dhumal

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

**B**uoyed by the success of the inaugural Women's Premier League, IPL chairman Arun Dhumal on Tuesday said that they plan to introduce the home and away format from season two but the number of teams will remain five for the next three years.

The first ever WPL turned out to be a

hit among fans and players but as the tournament was staged within tough timelines and right after the Women's T20 World Cup, the BCCI decided to organise all the games across two venues in Mumbai.

Termining hosting of WPL the biggest challenge of his tenure, Dhumal said having home and away games immensely help teams in building a fan base and

the board wants to take that route as early as next season. "Well begun is half done. It has been a great beginning for WPL and going forward it is going to be much better than what we have seen so far. We have started with five teams but going forward there is scope for additional team given the pool of the players that is going to come in the years to follow.

"We are hoping increase in the number of teams but for the coming three seasons will remain five. We are surely looking at home and away format, we will see which time slot is available considering India's international commitment and take a call." "From a fan engagement point of view it is very important that we go for home and away format," Dhumal told PTI. **PTI**