

SHORT TAKES

Court extends stay on probe against Mishra

New Delhi: A city court on Monday extended the stay on further investigation into law minister Kapil Mishra's alleged role in the 2020 northeast Delhi riots till May 7. Special judge Kaveri Baweja passed the order after she was told that the notice issued by the court to some of the respondents on April 9 could not be served. The judge had, on April 9, stayed the probe against Mr Mishra till April 21 on an application filed by the minister against a magisterial court order. The judge issued notice to Mr Ilyas and others on April 9 and directed them to respond by April 21. Senior advocate P.K. Dubey appeared for Mr Mishra. Additional chief judicial magistrate Vaibhav Chaurasia said on April 1 that a cognisable offence was "prima facie" found that needed to be investigated.



Kapil Mishra

L-G orders probe in building collapse

New Delhi: After a 20-year-old four-storey residential building collapsed in Dayalpur, killing 11 people and injuring as many, Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena on Monday ordered a magisterial enquiry into the incident. The district magistrate of northeast Delhi has been assigned the responsibility of conducting the enquiry and has been asked to submit a detailed report within 15 days. The rescue operations are currently ongoing, with teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Delhi fire service (DFS) working tirelessly to clear debris and locate any remaining individuals trapped under the rubble. As part of the ongoing investigation, the authorities are working to ascertain the cause of the building's collapse.

Woman who jumped from 4th floor dies

Noida: A 34-year-old woman, who jumped off a fire-stricken building in Sector 18 to save herself, died at a private hospital here after 20 days, the police said on Monday. Pooja Gupta, who was severely injured after jumping from the fourth floor of Krishna Apar Plaza, succumbed to injuries on Saturday, they said. The fire broke out at the eight-storey Krishna Apar Plaza on April 1 due to a blast in the compressor of an air conditioner in a shop on the ground floor of the building. Gupta, who was working at a private company running its office in the building, died on Saturday, D.P. Shukla, in-charge at the Sector 20 police station, said. The police said that most of the 22 people who were injured by jumping from the building were sent home after first aid.

— PTI

MURDER CASE: 3 HELD FOR KILLING KEY EYEWITNESS

New Delhi: The Delhi police has arrested three men for allegedly killing a 20-year-old woman who was a key eyewitness in a murder case. They feared that she might turn hostile, officials said Monday. The incident occurred on the night of April 14 when Rizwan (20) shot dead Sayara, alias Parveen, in northeast Delhi's GTB Enclave area. During the initial interrogation, he tried to mislead the police. However, he later confessed that Sayara's murder was part of a conspiracy hatched by Kishan Kumar (39) and Firoz Khan (22). Kumar, previously involved in three criminal cases, is a relative of Rahul, who was murdered in Sunder Nagri four months ago, the police said. A police source said Rahul was killed while trying to rescue Sayara, who allegedly was being beaten up by four men. "Rahul saw the incident and objected to it. However, an altercation broke out and he was killed. Kishan felt that Sayara was the reason behind Rahul's death. He also felt that killing her would establish his dominance in the area," the source said. He feared that Sayara might turn hostile or weaken the case as she had become friendly with the accused in Rahul's case. Following this, Kishan and Firoz planned to eliminate her, the police said.

CM unveils heat action plan, 3K cold water ATMs proposed

Delhi gears up for heatwave, alerts & green roofs in offing

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Ahead of the onset of peak summer, the Delhi government on Monday rolled out a heat action plan to mitigate the weather woes.

An early warning system for heatwaves, green roofs at bus stops and special wards for heatstroke patients at all hospitals are part of the plan launched by chief minister Rekha Gupta.

Health minister Pankaj Singh and PWD and water minister Parvesh Verma were also present.

The government activated the disaster management machinery and proposed 3,000 cold water ATMs to offer respite to people in the sweltering heat.

Apart from involving 1,800 National and Delhi Disaster Response volunteers or 'aapda mitras', the plan talks of setting up shaded, cooling shelters and opening 3,000-4,000 large water RO units attached to boundary walls of Delhi government schools and office buildings to dispense cold



Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta during the launch of the heat action plan 2025 in New Delhi. — G.N. JHA

water round-the-clock for 5 lakh citizens.

The Delhi government will regularly issue heat alerts through SMS and social media for the public to take precautions.

"It is important to develop zero tolerance towards heatwave-related deaths. Every life is precious for the nation and the city, and we are committed to saving it," the CM said, suggesting measures to help even animals.

The plan, aimed at combating the effects of rising temperatures, has also

proposed cooling centres which will be set up in densely populated areas, especially near footpaths and slums.

Other initiatives include green roofs, shaded areas at bus stops, and an early warning system for heatwaves, she said.

Government schools will follow stricter routines to ensure regular water intake among children, and slums will be equipped with cool shelters and have access to chilled drinking water, she added.

The chief minister also

virtually inaugurated three cool roof pilot projects at Kashmere Gate, Anand Vihar, and Delhi Secretariat. The number of such projects will be increased soon, she said.

The government said it would also encourage employers to shift outdoor workers' schedules away from peak afternoon hours (1.00 pm – 5.00 pm) during heat alerts.

It will also ensure that schools do not operate during peak hours (12 noon – 4.00 pm) when a heatwave is declared.

"No open-air class to be conducted. Rescheduling of school timings and vacations as per the heat-wave situation. Ensuring that students avoid outdoor physical activities," the heat action plan states.

The MCD has been directed to ensure that water tankers are made available on call in slums during orange/red alert days.

Additionally, the government said that during peak heat wave periods, power supply companies would be informed to prioritise maintaining electricity to critical facilities such as hospitals and dispensaries.

Child trafficking situation bad to worse in Delhi: SC

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

While prodding the Delhi police to take steps to arrest an accused behind a child trafficking racket in the national capital, the Supreme Court on Monday said the "situation seems to have gone from bad to worse".

A bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan said, "The situation seems to have gone from bad to worse."

The bench made the observations while interacting with a Delhi police inspector entrusted with the probe in a case over trafficking of several newborns in the Dwarka area and directed the

police station concerned to take all necessary steps to arrest gang leader Puja and three missing infants.

Taking a dim view of the alleged involvement of parents in the trafficking of infants, the bench said, "You never know where these children will land. In the case of a girl child, you know where she lands ...

Unfortunately, the parents of the infants seem to have sold off their own children."

The bench posted the case after four weeks and asked the police officer to apprise it of the steps taken in the case at hand.

"You have to find these missing children at any cost and arrest the kingpin," the bench said.

'Tu kya cheez hai': Man threatens woman judge inside courtroom

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

A 63-year-old retired government school teacher and his lawyer recently threatened and hurled abuses at a woman judge inside a courtroom in Delhi after he was convicted in a six-year-old cheque bounce case.

"Tu hai kya cheez ... tu bahar mil dekhte hai kaise zinda ghar jaati hai (who are you even? ... Meet us outside, and we will see how you return home alive)," the convict recently told the judge as per the order passed by judicial magistrate first class (NI Act) Shivangi Mangla of Dwarka court.

The judge convicted the accused under Section 138 (dishonour of cheque) of the Negotiable Instruments Act. She also said in her order that he held an object in his hand, which he tried to throw at her after she passed the conviction order.

After hearing the judgment not in his favour, he "erupted with anger" at the judge in the open court as to how the judgment of conviction could be passed, the judge noted in the order.

He started harassing the judge in "unofficial Hindi language with commentary against the mother" of the judge, she added.

"Then again, they both (convict and counsel) harassed me mentally and

physically to resign from my job, and they both again harassed me to acquit the accused, else they will file a complaint against me and forcibly arrange my resignation," the judge said in her order.

In the order, the judge said appropriate action should be initiated against the convict before the National Commission for Women for the threats and harassment.

She also ordered a show cause notice to be issued to his counsel, Athul Kumar,

to provide in writing the explanation for his conduct and why he should not be referred to the Delhi high court for initiating criminal contempt proceedings for misbehaviour.

'BJP did lot of rigging': AAP to boycott Apr 25 MCD polls

AVINASH PRABHAKAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Ahead of the Delhi mayoral election scheduled for April 25, the Aam Aadmi Party on Monday withdrew from filing nominations and refused to contest.

The Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Atishi, said, "Despite us winning the MCD elections, they threatened and paid our councillors to join their party, which is why today they are in a majority at the MCD."

She said her party does not believe in the "politics of sabotage and horse-trading" and has, therefore, decided to play the role of a strong Opposition in the MCD.

Reacting to this, chief minister Rekha Gupta said, "It is good they have realised well in time that the wind is blowing against them."

The BJP, meanwhile, announced Raja Iqbal Singh, who is currently the Leader of Opposition in the MCD Assembly, as its mayoral candidate. MCD Assembly's deputy LoP Jai Bhagwan Yadav will contest for the deputy mayor position.

"AAP's political base has shifted in Delhi and people



Delhi BJP candidates for the MCD mayor and deputy Mayor election, Raja Iqbal Singh (left) and Jai Bhagwan Yadav (2nd left), along with other party members, during filling of their nomination in New Delhi on Monday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

have completely lost faith in it," said the chief minister, adding that the AAP MLAs and councillors are unhappy with their party leadership for adopting "anti-people" policies while being in power.

Meanwhile, Congress councillors Nazia Danish and Mandep Singh also filed nominations for the post of mayor, while Abul Fazal Enclave Congress councillor Ariba Khan filed the nomination for the post of deputy mayor.

However, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said the city will soon

have a BJP mayor, a triple-engine government, and streamlined municipal services will resume.

AAP councillors, who understand their accountability towards the public, have left the party out of frustration with their leadership's obstruction of the formation of the MCD, he claimed.

A senior BJP leader said that at present, the party has a strength of 117 councillors. Further, 11 nominated MLAs and 7 Lok Sabha MPs of the party are also eligible to vote in the mayoral polls, he said.

4 men in SUV thrash bike riders on e-way, booked

Gurgaon, April 21: Four men in a SUV have been booked for allegedly stopping a group of bike riders near Dwarka expressway and beating them with steel baseball bat which left one of them seriously injured, the police said Monday.

According to the police, the incident occurred on Sunday when Hardik Sharma, along with his friends, was going towards Pachgaon on their luxury bikes.

"We were riding slowly towards Manesar toll when a black Scorpio was moving rashly and tried to disturb or disbalance us. We stopped on the side under Dwarka expressway to let them go, but they stopped their SUV in

front of us," Mr Sharma said.

He said that there were four people in the car and all of them were drunk. They got out of their vehicle, started hitting him and his friends, and destroyed their motorcycles.

"All of this is recorded on videos, photos etc. They tried to hit my friends and when I tried to stop them, they hit me with a steel baseball bat on my head. I survived because of my helmet," Mr Sharma told the police.

"When they saw a lot of people gathered, all four of them fled. Before leaving they threatened me with dire consequences," Mr Sharma added. — PTI

Vances' 1st visit is Akshardham temple: 'Kids loved it'

It is a great credit to India that you built a beautiful temple, says US V-P

New Delhi, April 21: US vice-president J.D. Vance, his Indian-origin wife Usha, and their three children began their India trip on Monday with a visit to the sprawling S w a m i n a r a y a n Akshardham Temple near the banks of the Yamuna. The Vances, who are here for a four-day visit, during which they are also scheduled to travel to Jaipur and Agra, were at the temple complex for about an hour.

The children — Ewan, Vivek and Mirabel, all three dressed in Indian attire — were the cynosure of many an eye.

"Thank you all so much for your hospitality and kindness in welcoming me and my family to this beautiful place. It is a great credit to India that you built a beautiful temple with precision and care. Our kids, in particular, loved it. God bless," the vice-president wrote in the temple guest book.

Once done, the family posed for camera crews outside the imposing facade of the temple.

"They were given a traditional welcome, after which they had a 'darshan'. A carved wooden elephant, a model of the Delhi Akshardham Temple, and children's books were gifted to the family," a priest at the temple said.

Temple volunteer Meera Sondagar added that the vice-president was especially captivated by the intricately sculpted Gajendra Peeth, a plinth adorned with carvings of elephants that symbolises strength and wisdom.

"He was shown the entire Akshardham complex and was deeply moved by the experience. He said he felt a sense of peace here," she said.

— PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with US vice-president J.D. Vance and his children in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

Elaborate security arrangements put in place

Restrictions, diversions: Traffic chokes Delhi, Noida & Gurgaon

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Several roads leading to Delhi from neighbouring Noida, Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana's Gurgaon were jam-packed on Monday during peak traffic hours as commuters headed off to work amid road closures and diversions put in place in the national capital in view of US vice president J.D. Vance's visit.

Elaborate security arrangements were put in place.

Second lady Usha and their three children, who are on a four-day visit to India, landed at the Palam air base around 9.30 am.

"We have already conducted mock drills in line

with security protocols for the high-level visit. Security has been strengthened across several parts of Delhi to ensure that everything proceeds smoothly and without incident," the official said.

After arriving in Delhi, Mr Vance and his family visited the Akshardham temple and later visited a shopping complex that sells traditional Indian handicraft goods.

Delhi traffic police had also made elaborate arrangements to ensure the smooth movement of Mr Vance's convoy.

"Special traffic arrangements were put in place from 6.00 am to 9.00 pm on Monday in view of a special event. The public is advised to avoid specific roads and use alternate

routes during the restricted hours," a traffic police official said.

"Due to exigencies, traffic restrictions and diversions will be in place in both the carriageways and service road around IP Marg, ITO crossing, Vikas Marg, MGM IP flyover and BSZ Marg from W-Point up to A-Point. Commuters are advised to avoid these routes from 9.00 am to 12.00 pm and use alternative roads for a hassle-free journey. Parking will only be allowed in designated areas," an advisory issued by the Delhi traffic police said.

Traffic police advised commuters to use public transport and avoid restricted routes, and plan travel to ISBTs, Railway stations, and airports with sufficient time in hand.

Vance & family visit Cottage Emporium

New Delhi, April 21: US vice-president J.D. Vance, accompanied by his Indian-origin wife Usha, and their three children, on Monday visited the Central Cottage Industries Emporium (CCIE) located in Janpath in the national capital, where they purchased some traditional Indian handicrafts.

The Vances, who landed in Delhi this morning, began their India visit with a morning tour of the S w a m i n a r a y a n Akshardham Temple, situated near the banks of the Yamuna. Later, they stopped by the Cottage Emporium, a government-run showroom known for authentic handloom and handicraft products from across India.

"It was a wonderful visit and he (Vance) enjoyed it a lot. We were quite enthusiastic. He also purchased some items from our showroom," CCIE general manager Meera Somani said.

According to Cottage

US V-P, family to visit Jaipur today

Jaipur, April 21: US vice-president J.D. Vance will visit the Amber Fort in Jaipur and deliver an address on US-India relations at Rajasthan International Centre (RIC) on Tuesday. Mr Vance will arrive in Jaipur in a special plane at 9.30 pm and will stay at hotel Rambagh Palace. He will reach Amber Fort at 9 am on Tuesday. He will address an event at the RIC at 3 pm.

He will be accompanied by his wife Usha Vance, their children and senior members of the US administration. —PTI

Emporium staff, the Vances picked up wooden items, handloom products, and brassware. "They were very happy to see Indian handicraft and handloom products under one roof," Anil Rajak, a staffer, said.

—PTI

Anarkali suit, kurta-pyjama: Vance's children steal hearts

New Delhi, April 21: Dressed in traditional Indian attire chosen especially for their visit to India, US vice-president J.D. Vance's three children won hearts, with their photographs going viral on social media shortly after they landed in Delhi on Monday. Eight-year-old Ewan wore a grey kurta, while his five-year-old brother Vivek was dressed in yel-

low, with both pairing their kurtas with white pyjamas. Mr Vance's three-year-old daughter Mirabel was dressed in a teal green anarkali suit and a jacket.

The trio became a hit among the photographers covering the visit as soon as they deplaned. Mr Vance and his Indian-origin wife Usha arrived in Delhi to a warm welcome early on Monday. — PTI



'Assault' on Sonia, Rahul blatant abuse of power: PC

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Former Union minister, and parliamentarian P. Chidambaram, on Monday, said that National Herald is a product of the freedom movement of India. While addressing a press conference, along with Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav and in-charge Qazi Nizamuddin, Mr Chidambaram said it is elementary that there is no transaction of money. Without the money, there are no 'proceeds of crime.' Without 'proceeds of crime,' there is no money laundering, and without money laundering, the ED has no jurisdiction.

The assault on the integrity and reputation of Congress parliamentary party chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, is a blatant abuse of power. On the facts of this case, it is clear that the ED, at the behest of its political masters, is carrying on a vendetta against the leaders of the principal opposition party, the Congress, he said.

The entire Congress party will resist and fight back and defeat this political assault on its leaders.

SHORT TAKES

SC refers BSY graft issue to larger bench

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday referred to a larger bench the legal issues stemming from a plea of BJP leader B.S. Yediyurappa, including the question whether a prior sanction to prosecute is needed under the Prevention of Corruption Act after a magisterial court order of inquiry. The bench was in the process of dictating its judgment on Mr Yediyurappa's plea against an order of the Karnataka high court reviving a corruption case against him when it found that a matter with similar legal issues was referred to a larger bench. A bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra refrained from passing the judgment and said, "We had reserved the matter for judgment while framing the aforesaid questions for consideration (on April 4).

'Vendetta politics': Cong on ED charges

Bhopal: AICC general secretary and former Union minister Kumari Selja on Monday termed the chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) naming former Congress presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case as "vendetta politics". The ED chargesheet, filed recently, accused the mother-son duo along with some other Congress leaders of money laundering related to the National Herald case. Ms Selja, while addressing a press conference, described the ED action as a ploy by the BJP and the NDA government at the Centre to divert the attention of the people from the failures of the Central government. "It is a diversionary tactic by the BJP and the RSS to shift the attention of the people from the pressing issues facing the country," she said.

Cong-CPM win in WB coop society polls

Berhampore: The CPI(M)-Congress alliance has wrested a cooperative society from ruling Trinamul Congress at Nabagram in Murshidabad of West Bengal. Out of the 12 seats at Achra-Jamaipara Krishi Unnayan Cooperative Society election held on Sunday, the two allies in the Opposition won five seats each, sparing remaining two for the TMC. The results came out at night under tight security arrangements. Earlier the TMC had won the cooperative society in 2020 uncontested. District Congress leader Dharendra Nath Yadav congratulated the voters. He said, "From Nabagram Adhir Chowdhury started his political career in 1996 as an MLA. It is a strong CPI(M) base. But TMC has unleashed a reign of terror. It grabbed the cooperative during the Covid through the back door."

2 HELD FOR WB RIOTS ROLE FROM ODISHA DISTRICT

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 21
In a significant development in the investigation into the recent communal violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, the special task force (STF) of the West Bengal police arrived in Odisha's Jharsuguda on Monday. According to sources, the team began interrogating 14 individuals at the Banharpali police station in connection with the riots that broke out earlier this month. Of the 14 persons interrogated, two persons — Bari Israel and Saif-Ul Haq — were declared arrested after their prima facie links with the communal violence were established. "The STF had come in connection with the double murder of Hargovind Das and Chandan Das and arrested the accused. A pistol and some live bullets were seized from them," inspector-general of police Himanshu Lal said. The detained suspects are believed to have played active roles in the violence, and reports suggest many fled to Odisha to avoid arrest. The unrest in Murshidabad erupted in early April 2025 following protests against the controversial Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.

■ Quraishi targets Dubey for his 'Muslim Commissioner' barb
'For some, religious identities are staple to forward hateful politics'

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Hitting out at BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for his "Muslim Commissioner" barb, former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi on Monday said he believes in an idea of India where an individual is defined by his contributions, and asserted that "for some, religious identities are a staple to forward their hateful politics". Mr Quraishi asserted India "has and will always stand up and fight for its constitutional institutions and principles". "I served in the constitutional post of election commissioner to the best of my ability and had a long and fulfilling career in the IAS. I believe in an idea of India where an

I served in the constitutional post of election commissioner to the best of my ability and had a long and fulfilling career in the IAS. I believe in an idea of India where an individual is defined by his or her talents and contributions and not by their religious identities.
— S.Y. Quraishi, Former Chief Election Commissioner

individual is defined by his or her talents and contributions and not by their religious identities," he said. Mr Quraishi on Monday, in a cryptic post on X, said: "I learned long ago, never to wrestle with a pig. You get dirty, and besides, the pig likes it", quoting George Bernard Shaw. "A very wise quote of the great author!"

The former CEC got support from various quar-

ters, particularly from his bureaucratic colleagues and politicians. K. Mahesh, honorary president of Delhi Administration Officers Academic Forum, backed Mr Quraishi, saying he "was a phenomenon as election commissioner and chief election commissioner". "He held these great assignments with aplomb and distinction and greatly enriched the institution of the Election

Commission by introducing a series of reforms. For example, he established a voters' education division, expenditure control division and he also founded the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management," Mr Mahesh said. Mr Quraishi has held other assignments as a member of the Haryana cadre with great distinction and India is proud to have an IAS officer like him, he added. "This has been acknowledged by Dr Gopalkrishna Gandhi, who has the best pedigree in India being the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and C. Rajagopalachari (first Indian governor general) from his father's and mother's side respectively," Mr Mahesh recalled.

Pope is a beacon of love, compassion: PM

Modi condoles Francis' demise, says his love for India will be cherished

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday paid his condolences on the demise of Pope Francis, and said he would "always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world".

Mr Modi said on social media platform X, "Deeply pained by the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. In this hour of grief and remembrance, my heartfelt condolences to the global Catholic community. Pope Francis will always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world. From a young age, he devoted himself towards realising the ideals of Lord Christ. He diligently served the poor and downtrodden. For those who were suffering, he ignited a spirit of hope. I fondly recall my meetings with him and was greatly inspired by his commitment to an inclusive and all-round development. His affection for the people of India will always be cherished. May his soul find eternal peace in God's embrace." "Saddened at the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. His compassion and commitment to building a better world defined his papacy. May his soul rest in peace," external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar said.

Mr Modi had in June last year said he had invited Pope Francis to visit India.

Modi will unveil 1st Namo Bharat train in Bihar dist Apr. 24

SANJAY KAW NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Ahead of the Bihar Assembly polls, Modi-led government in the Centre is all set to give a connectivity boost to the state. Rajya Sabha MP and JDU leader Sanjay Kumar Jha shared that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the first 16-coach Namo Bharat Express for the state on April 24. "Bihar residents will get the gift of a state-of-the-art train. Eastern India's first high-speed 'Namo Bharat Train' will run between Jaynagar (Madhubani) and capital city Patna, and will cover the distance in just 5 hours 30 minutes," Mr Jha said. The Rajya Sabha MP said Mr Modi will be visiting Madhubani on April 24 and will flag off the train. "A new era of regional train connectivity will begin in Bihar. Progress will get a new speed," he added. The first Namo Bharat Rapid Rail, launched between Ahmedabad and



Religious leaders pay tribute to Pope Francis during a condolence meeting in New Delhi on Monday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Leaders pay tribute to Pope, call him voice of poor, needy

New Delhi, April 21: Leaders from across the country offered glowing tributes to Pope Francis who died on Monday, hailing him for his "compassion and humility" and commitment to social justice. Defence minister Rajnath Singh said Pope Francis will be remembered for his remarkable service to human society, especially the poor and the marginalised. Expressing grief over the Pope's death, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee it was a loss for all of humanity. "My heart goes out to all my fellow Christian brothers and sisters in India and the rest of the world and I feel connected with them all in a profound sense of loss and empa-

thy," she said. In a post on 'X', Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah said the pontiff's life was a message of love for the poor and hope for the world. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday expressed sadness over the passing away of Pope Francis, whom he described as a consistent champion of inter-religious understanding and an influential force for global peace and harmony. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said Pope Francis "stood for truth" and spoke out "fearlessly against injustice". Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma said he was a "strong voice for the vulnerable and significant

reforms in the Church". Chief minister of Christian-majority Mizoram Lalduhoma said Francis was a global symbol of humility, compassion, and moral leadership. "May his soul rest in eternal peace," he said. Tamil Nadu CM Stalin lauded Pope Francis as a transformative figure who led the Catholic church with empathy and progressive values. Odisha governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi praised the Pope's compassion for people in distress. Goa CM Pramod Sawant said Francis's unwavering commitment to peace, compassion, and the upliftment of humanity transcended borders. —PTI

Job stir: Protesters gherao SSC in Bengal, seek justice

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, APRIL 21

Hundreds of jobless teachers from various government schools in West Bengal have laid an unprecedented siege to the School Service Commission (SSC) office in Salt Lake from Monday evening for an indefinite period over the SSC's plan to publish a list of so-called "eligible" candidates in wake of the Supreme Court verdict that had cancelled more than 25,000 appointments for corruption in a 2016

recruitment scam. The demonstrators recently lost their jobs in the SC judgment. They have threatened to keep SSC chairman Siddhartha Majumdar gheraoed at his chamber of the building throughout the night to continue their agitation. Earlier they reached the SSC office in a rally from Karunamoyee bus stand in the afternoon. A huge contingent of police personnel has been deployed in and around the location after both sides had a tussle

Wife, daughter booked over murder of ex-DGP of K'taka

FIR registered based on complaint by victim's son

M.B. GIRISH BENGALURU, APRIL 21

The police on Monday registered an FIR against the wife and daughter of slain former Karnataka DGP Om Prakash, who was found dead in a pool of blood at his residence in HSR Layout of Bengaluru city on Sunday evening. The alleged murder case has been transferred to sleuths of the central crime branch. Prakash's wife Pallavi and his daughter Kriti were present in the house during the time of the incident. The FIR against Pallavi and Kriti has been registered based on a complaint by Om Prakash's son Karthikesh, who alleged that his mother allegedly threatened to kill his father about a week back.



Om Prakash

Besides, he alleged that his mother and sister frequently fought with his father and that might have led to the murder. Karthikesh, in the complaint, alleged that his father, fearing a threat to his life, stayed with his sister before he was made to return on the insistence of Kriti. Om Prakash, however, returned to his residence a couple of days back

owing to pressure from Kriti. "On the day of tragedy, I was at the Karnataka Golf Association in Domlur and came to know about my father lying in a pool of blood through one of the neighbours and rushed to the spot only to find a broken bottle and a knife (alleged to have used in the murder of his father) close to the body of his father," Karthikesh said in the complaint. Minister of home G. Parameshwar told reporters in Bengaluru that no arrests have been made so far in connection to the alleged murder, while his wife Pallavi has been detained by the police for questioning. Recalling the service of Om Prakash, Mr Parameshwar said, "He was a good person and a competent officer."

'BJP, Shinde Sena tried to hurt Raj & Uddhav bonhomie'

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, APRIL 21

Amidst the talks of the possible Shiv Sena (UBT) and MNS reunion, the Uddhav Thackeray-led party on Monday accused the BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena of trying to hurt it with the help of Raj Thackeray. However, it said the BJP's strategy to target Uddhav by putting a gun on Raj's shoulder failed. An editorial in Shiv Sena (UBT) mouthpiece *Saamana* said, "The BJP and the Shinde-led Sena took aim at the Sena (UBT) by placing gun on Raj's shoulder. This did not benefit the MNS, but hurt Marathi unity." Calling BJP's Hindutva "fake and hollow", the editorial claimed that Raj got in BJP's trap and started getting sunk into it. *Saamana* Monday described the reunion bid by Uddhav and Raj as a "befitting reply" to those who are anti-Maharash-

tra. It said the possible reunion of the two cousins has caused unease among many. The buzz about alliance between the estranged cousins started after Raj Thackeray said in a podcast interview with filmmaker Mahesh Manjrekar that he had no issues when working with Uddhav in the undivided Shiv Sena. Responding to Raj, Uddhav said he was also ready for reconciliation if Raj swore on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj that he will not entertain BJP in future. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said the formula for a successful rapprochement is "not to peek into the past". "We used to criticise Congress, NCP but then we had to come together in 2019, we did not peek into our past and decided to look at the future. Good politics is not to peek into the past. We will not do anything to muddy the water," he said.

Many villages in J&K hit by floods; CM reviews situation

Ramban (J&K), April 21: The flash-floods and landslides triggered by heavy rain and cloudbursts severely affected nearly a dozen villages in Jammu and Kashmir's hilly Ramban district, a senior government officer said on Monday and added the authorities had mobilised resources to restore essential services and provide relief to the affected people. Chief minister Omar

Abdullah, meanwhile, assessed the ground situation. He said the devastation caused by flash floods and landslides triggered by heavy rain and cloudbursts in Ramban district could not be declared a "national disaster", even as he assured adequate relief to the affected families. Mr Abdullah was speaking to reporters at Kela Morh. —PTI

पावरग्रिड
POWERGRID

NOTICE

1 Approval under regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations '1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations '2019 (i) Truing up of Transmission tariff for 2019-24 tariff block and ii) Determination of Transmission tariff for 2024-29 tariff block for "220 kV Srinagar-Leh Transmission System (SLTS)" in Northern Region.

2 The beneficiaries of the above-mentioned Transmission system are: (a) Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd. (b)Ajmer Vidhut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (c) Jaipur Vidhut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (d) Jodhpur Vidhut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (e) Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board (f) Punjab State Electricity Corporation limited (g) Haryana Power Purchase Centre (h) Jammu & Kashmir Power Corporation Ltd. (i) BSES Yamuna Power Ltd. (j) BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd. (k) Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd. (l) Chandigarh Electricity department (m) Uttarakhand Power Corporation Ltd. (n) North Central Railway (o) New Delhi Municipal council

3 Tariff details:

a) 2019-24 block

Rs. in lakhs

Asset detail	DOCO/ECOC/Notional	Completion Cost as on 31.03.2024		2019-2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Combined Asset	31.10.2019	11215.75	Revised AFC based on truing up	267.61	660.61	687.06	1882.93/3158.63

b) 2024-29 Block

Rs. in lakhs

Asset detail	Completion Cost as on 31.03.2029		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Combined Asset	13697.67	AFC	3255.47	3426.75	3468.81	3458.36	3480.28

4 A copy this notice and of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at www.powergrid.in

5 The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 6th, 7th & 8th floor, Tower B, World Trade Centre, Naoorji Nagar, New Delhi - 110029 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place: Gurugram
Date: 22.04.2025

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PG/CC/Notice-221/Advt-285/2025-26

SHORT TAKES

Jawan dies in Naxal IED blast in C'garh

Raipur: A jawan was on Monday killed in the Maoist IED blast in Bijapur district under south Bastar of Chhattisgarh, police said. The explosion took place four kilometres from Toynar in the direction of Farsegarh, within the Mormed forest area. The deceased was identified as Manoj Pujari, 26, a jawan of the 19th Battalion of the CAF. He was on Road Security Operation (RSO) duty for the ongoing Toynar Farsegarh road construction project when he stepped on the pressure IED during patrolling and died on the spot. Authorities condemned the attack, calling it a “cowardly act by Maoist extremists” targeting personnel who were working to bring development and connectivity to rural tribal communities.

EC compromised, says Rahul in US

■ Continued from Page 1

changed the law so that now we are not allowed to ask for the videography,” Mr Gandhi said. “It is very clear to us that the Election Commission is compromised, and it is very clear that there is something wrong with the system. I have said this multiple times.”

Hitting back, the BJP accused Mr Rahul Gandhi of “treachery” for questioning the EC. Dubbing Mr Gandhi a “traitor” for his alleged remarks against the EC, the BJP accused him of venting his frustration over the ED’s action in the National Herald case on the poll body.

The ruling party claimed that insulting the nation and blaming Indian democracy to “cover up his own electoral failures has become his favourite sport” and that he is “addicted to venting out his political frustration on foreign soil”.

Attacking Mr Gandhi over his remarks, BJP national spokesperson Sambhit Patra said: “You are venting the ire over the ED’s (action in the National Herald case) on the Election Commission. Nothing will happen by doing so..The ED will not spare you because agencies work on the basis of facts and the National Herald matter is an open and shut case. You will not be spared. You and your mother will be caught with the proceeds of crime and sent to jail.”

Mr Patra further said: “You are a traitor; not just because you insult Indian institutions and Indian democracy on foreign soil, but also because you and your mother have embezzled crores of rupees of the country in the National Herald case. You and your mother will not be able to get away with this.”

Taking a dig at the Congress leader, another BJP spokesperson, Jaiveer Shergill, said: “Rahul Gandhi seems to be suffering from ECS – Entitled Child Syndrome. Insulting the nation and blaming Indian democracy to cover up his own electoral failures has become his favourite sport. He is addicted to venting out his political frustration on foreign soil.”

PM, US V-P discuss trade, defence

■ Continued from Page 1

third was a dinner hosted by Mr Modi for the Vance family and the accompanying American delegation. The first was an informal chat, with Mr Modi warmly chatting with Mr Vance and his wife Usha in the company of the couple’s three small children — sons Ewan and Vivek and daughter Mirabel. Mr Modi initially received the Vance family warmly at his residence on their arrival. Footage later showed all of them seated in a living room, with Mr Modi interacting affectionately with the three small children as the Vance couple looked on, expressing delight. Mr Modi also gave the children a peacock feather each. The peacock is India’s national bird. The children were fascinated and footage also showed Mirabel swatting her smiling father on the face with the feather. The children were dressed in formal and traditional Indian attire.

During the formal talks later, the US second lady and the three children reportedly attended a puppet show. The PMO said Mr Modi “extended his best wishes to the vice-president, second lady and their children for a pleasant and productive stay in India”. The US vice-president and his family began their four-day visit to India

Justice Gavai reference to recent attacks on judiciary ‘We’re said to be encroaching on Parl & Executive functions’

RAKESH K. SINGH
NEW DELHI, APR 21

Recent controversial assertions by vice-president Jagdeep Dhankar and some BJP parliamentarians in the wake of the Supreme Court orders or observations involving the Tamil Nadu governor and the Waqf law resonated in the apex court on Monday. “As it is, we are alleged of encroaching upon the parliamentary and executive functions,” top court judge Justice B.R. Gavai said.

Justice Gavai, who is in line to be sworn in as Chief Justice of India on May 14, made the said comments twice while hearing two different cases during the day.

The senior-most judge after Chief Justice of India Sanjeev Khanna

made the comments while hearing a matter over the recent violence in West Bengal during anti-Waqf law protests and another plea seeking a direction to the Centre to take appropriate steps to prohibit streaming of sexually explicit and pornographic content on OTT and social media platforms.

While hearing the plea over online content, Justice Gavai said, “Who can control it? It is for the Union to frame a regulation in that regard.”

“As it is, we are now criticised that we are interfering with the executive’s function, the legislative functions,” Justice Gavai told advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain who was appearing in the matter.

After Mr Jain said it was a “very serious matter”, the bench posted the hear-

ing next week.

Earlier in the day, Mr Jain mentioned an application filed in a separate pending PIL of 2021, which sought President’s Rule in West Bengal in the wake of violence following Assembly polls, and urged the bench to take it up for hearing on Tuesday along with the main petition.

Mr Jain said the 2021 plea was listed for hearing on Tuesday and the fresh application bringing out more incidents of violence in West Bengal also be heard.

“In tomorrow’s list, item

42 pertains to imposition of President Rule in the state of West Bengal. That petition was filed by me. In that petition, I have filed an IA (interlocutory application) for directions and impleadment bringing out certain more incidents of violence which have happened in the state of West Bengal,” he said.

Mr Jain said deployment of paramilitary forces and immediate action was required.

He referred to Article 355 of the Constitution, which pertains to the duty of the Union to protect states against external aggression and internal disturbance, and said the apex court can call for a report as to what was happening in the state.

Mr Jain said the top court had earlier issued notice on the 2021 petition.

Rahman, noted Norwegian DJ to enthral WAVES participants

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Acclaimed Norwegian DJ Alan Walker and Oscar-awarded musician A.R. Rahman will perform live at the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) to enthral participants with diverse and electrifying musical performances.

These live performances are intended to create new opportunities in the concert economy as envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Besides Mr Walker and Mr Rahman, a galaxy of national and international stars will perform live, during WAVES held in Mumbai from May 1 to May 4, to make the maid-

en media and entertainment sector event a grand success.

Earlier this year, pointing to the Coldplay performances in Mumbai and Ahmedabad as evidence of the scope of such live events in India, PM Modi had underscored that major global artists were attracted to India, and the concert economy boosts tourism and creates numerous jobs.

He had urged the states and the private sector stakeholders to focus on the necessary infrastructure and skills for the concert economy. This includes event management, artist grooming, security, and other arrangements, where new opportunities are emerg-

ing.

Following Mr Modi’s pitch for encashing live performances, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has decided to present India’s rich cultural heritage of performing arts during WAVES by organizing a series of live concerts during the four days event.

Several events have been planned under the umbrella of WAVES Cultural and Concerts. “Events under WAVES Cultural and Concerts will be a major highlight of the first edition of WAVES and will be a mix of budding talents and renowned artists, and are aimed at adding heft to the event,” the sources said.

‘Govt policies to shape India’s future’

■ Continued from Page 1

and achievements in space exploration, emphasising the importance of raising India’s flag high in every sector. Underlining the immense responsibility on civil servants to ensure India becomes the world’s third-largest economy at the earliest, he urged them to prevent any delays in achieving this critical objective.

Expressing happiness over the theme of this year’s Civil Services Day, “Holistic Development of India”, Mr Modi emphasised that this was not just a theme but a commitment and a promise to the people of the nation.

“Holistic development of India means ensuring that no village, no family, and no citizen is left behind,” he said, adding that true

progress is not about small changes but about achieving a full-scale impact.

He highlighted that quality in governance was not determined by the mere launch of schemes but by how deeply these schemes reach the people and their real impact.

The PM noted the visible impact in districts like Rajkot, Gomati, Tinsukia, Koraput and Kupwara, where significant progress has been made, from increasing school attendance to adopting solar power.

Highlighting that over the past 10 years, India has progressed from incremental change to impactful transformation, the PM emphasised that the country’s governance model is now focused on “Next Generation Reforms”,

leveraging technology and innovative practices to bridge the gap between the government and citizens.

Underlining India’s achievements over the past decade, emphasising transformative changes and the nation’s attainment of new heights, Mr Modi said: “India is now recognised not merely for its growth but for setting new benchmarks in governance, transparency, and innovation.”

Mentioning efforts over the past 11 years to eliminate delays, introduce new processes, and reduce turnaround time through technology, Mr Modi said that over 40,000 compliances have been removed, and more than 3,400 legal provisions have been decriminalised to promote ease of business.

Top leader among 8 Naxals killed in J’khand encounter

Our march to eliminate Naxalism continues unabated: Shah

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/BOKARO,
APRIL 21



Amit Shah

In a joint operation, the CRPF’s elite commando unit CoBRA and the Jharkhand police on Monday killed eight Naxalites, including a top central committee member of the extremists carrying a bounty of ₹1 crore on his head. Hailing the success of the security forces, Union home minister Amit Shah said his government’s commitment to eliminate Naxalism continues unabated.

“Our march to eliminate Naxalism continues unabated. Today the security forces achieved another significant success in the ongoing operation to uproot Naxalism. In an encounter at Lugu Hills in Bokaro, Jharkhand, eight Maoists were neutralised,

including a top-level Naxal leader, Vivek, who carried a reward of ₹1 crore, and two other notorious Naxalites. The operation is being continued. Applaud our security forces,” Mr Shah wrote on X.

The exchange of fire started around 5.30 am between the security forces and the Maoists in Lugu Hills of Lalpania area in Jharkhand’s Bokaro district as the troops of 209 Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) along

with the state police conducted the operation in which these eight ultras were killed and an AK series rifle, three INSAS rifles, a self-loading rifle (SLR), eight country-made guns and a pistol were seized, the officials said.

Those killed include central committee member of the extremist Prayag Manjhi alias Vivek, special area committee member Arvind Yadav alias Avinash, zonal committee member Sahebram Manjhi alias Rahul Manjhi, Mahesh Manjhi alias Mota, Talu, Ranju Manjhi, Gangaram and Mahesh.

Vivek carried a bounty of ₹1 crore, Arvind Yadav had a reward of ₹25 lakhs and Sahebram Majhi of ₹10 lakhs. They were booked by the police in various cases of violence, the force officials said.

1 held as IAF officer ‘assaulted’ in B’luru

‘No passersby came to sort situation’

M.B. GIRISH
BENGALURU, APRIL 21

A Wing Commander attached to Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), C.V. Bengaluru identified Shilajeetya Bose on Monday alleged an assault on him by a food delivery person, his identity was not immediately known, near a shopping mall in C.V. Raman Nagar of Bengaluru city.

However, eyewitness accounts say that the Wing Commander retaliated to the food delivery person and was “unstoppable” in his assault on the delivery person. Police, based on a complaint filed by the Wing Commander, had later taken the delivery person into the custody.

The altercation between the Wing Commander and the food delivery person at 6 pm is said to have occurred over a minor collision between the car driven by Wing Commander’s wife and the two-wheeler belonging to the food delivery person.

The Wing Commander is a resident of DRDO, C.V. Raman Nagar, phase 1.

In a video posted by the person on a social networking account of about two-and-half minutes, the Wing Commander alleged a two-wheeler intercepted his car driven by wife Sq. Leader Madhumitha and the person on the two-wheeler started to hurl abuses at his wife before turning to him.

The Wing Commander alleged the person abused him in Kannada which he could not understand.

The Wing Commander claimed none of the passersby came to his rescue. In the video the Wing Commander stated to file a complaint with the jurisdictional police and undergo treatment for his injuries at a hospital.

SC takes note of plea alleging comic Raina ridiculed disabled

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

In fresh trouble for “India’s Got Latent” host Samay Raina, the Supreme Court on Monday said it would examine a plea alleging he ridiculed the disabled, including a person with visual disability and those suffering from a rare disorder like Spinal Muscular Atrophy.

Calling it a serious issue, a bench of Justices

Surya Kant and N. Kottiswar Singh asked senior advocate Aprajita Singh, appearing for NGO Cure SMA Foundation of India to file a proper petition instead of an interim intervention plea in the pending matter of influencer and podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia.

The apex court said: “This is a serious issue. You file a writ petition. We will see what can be done. In writ jurisdiction we have a larger scope.”

Pope Francis passes away at 88

■ Continued from Page 1

he suffered from chronic lung disease. He emerged on Easter Sunday — his last public appearance, a day before his death — to bless thousands of people in St. Peter’s Square, drawing wild cheers and applause.

The death now sets off a week long process of allowing the faithful to pay their final respects, first for Vatican officials in the Santa Marta chapel and then in St. Peter’s for the general public, followed by a funeral and a conclave to elect a new pope.

From his election on March 13, 2013, the Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio signaled a different papacy, embracing refugees and the downtrodden, especially following the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, who surprisingly resigned.

But conservatives grew increasingly upset with Francis’ progressive bent, outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics and crackdown on traditionalists. He badly botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in 2018.

The crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope also navigated the church through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City, declaring it “has shown us that we cannot live without one another, or worse still,

pitted against one another.”

Francis was elected on a mandate to reform the Vatican bureaucracy and its finances, but he went further, shaking up the church itself without changing its core doctrine.

Asked about a purportedly gay priest, he famously responded, “Who am I to judge?” — a welcoming message to the LGBTQ+ community and those who felt shunned by the church.

Francis changed church positions on the death penalty, declaring it inadmissible in all circumstances, and modified its stand on nuclear weapons by saying their possession was “immoral.” In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China on bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican for decades, and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

But his real revolutionary change came in emphasising the church should be a refuge for those on society’s fringes: migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts.

Francis lived in the Vatican hotel rather than the Apostolic Palace, wore his old orthotic shoes rather than the traditional red loafers, and used compact cars.

If being the first Latin

American and Jesuit pope wasn’t enough, he was the first to name himself after St. Francis of Assisi, the 13th century friar known for personal simplicity, his message of peace, and care for society’s outcasts and nature.

His first trip as pope was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, epicenter of Europe’s migration crisis, and he consistently visited countries where Christians were persecuted. But over a year passed before Francis met survivors of priestly sexual abuse. Victims’ groups questioned whether he understood the scope of the problem.

His papacy’s greatest crisis came in 2018, when he discredited Chilean victims of abuse and stood by a bishop linked to their abuser, a notorious pedophile. Francis later invited the victims to the Vatican for a personal mea culpa and summoned the leadership of the Chilean church to have them resign. Another crisis erupted over ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington and a counselor to three popes.

Francis had sidelined McCarrick after an accusation he had molested a teenage altar boy in the 1970s. The Vatican’s one-time U.S. Ambassador,

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, still accused Francis of rehabilitating McCarrick early in his papacy. Francis eventually defrocked McCarrick after an investigation determined he sexually abused adults as well as minors.

Francis’ election after Pope Benedict XVI’s stunning decision to resign and retire — the first in 600 years — created the unprecedented reality of two popes on Vatican grounds. Despite the potentially uncomfortable shadow, Francis embraced Benedict as an elder statesman and adviser until his Dec. 31, 2022, death.

Francis didn’t pursue the anti-abortion agenda of Benedict or St. John Paul II, although he starkly likened it to “hiring a hit man to resolve a problem.”

But he reversed Benedict’s signature liturgical legacy by reimposing restrictions on celebrating the Latin Mass. He said he was healing divisions, but conservatives and traditionalists blasted the move as an attack on them and the old liturgy.

Francis slowly shifted the balance of power from doctrinaire church leaders to more pastoral ones, appointments reflected in choosing cardinals who will elect his successor.

— AP

THE ASIAN AGE

22 APRIL 2025

Balance of powers: Govt, judiciary must act calmly

The tussle over the balance of powers among the legislature, the judiciary and the executive, has surfaced again leading to much rancour. There is much to be said about all sides involved in this latest battle though the genesis lies in the ruling that virtually dictated to the President that he/she takes a decision on Bills passed in state Assemblies upon which governors may have sat or referred to the President or simply refused to give assent despite the Bills having been passed twice.

Criticism pointed at the judiciary appears to have gone a bit overboard too, considering that the holder of a Constitutional post like the Vice-President had virtually declared war while hinting at aiming for a political consensus to hit back at the judiciary by floating the idea of a national commission to appoint judges in which the executive will also have a say.

It is moot whether the Vice-President, who holds a largely ceremonial post, is not overstepping his powers in calling for action on an NJAC. And yet no one is to be denied his opinion on even most sensitive matters and the Vice-President may only be exercising his freedom of speech in broaching the subject of judicial overreach, though he does it in an adversarial tone, as is his wont.

The order, by a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court, does hint at overreach as the order spelt out how the President, a Constitutional authority who is head of state and who must give his/her assent to the appointment of all members of the highest judiciary, has had a deadline thrust upon her regarding decisions on Bills passed by the legislature.

Let it be said that the issue of governors' action or inaction, however irksome they have proved by raking up too frequently the issue of balance of powers, should ideally have been ruled upon by a Constitutional bench rather than just any two members of the Supreme Court. Of course, the right to seek a remedy lies with the Union government that can appeal against the order in the top court.

It is in threatening to take the issue to the court of the people in the typical fashion of those who get a mandate from the voters to rule and hence assume a moral superiority in wielding power — as has been shown frequently in Indian political history, including at the time of the worst ever crisis faced by democracy during the Emergency — that all such arguments contribute to a malevolent atmosphere.

Logic may be seen to prevail in the matter of the Collegium of the Supreme Court appointing judges, even though it may offer scope for nepotism and favouritism. The government of the executive, which is a party to around 80 per cent of all litigation in the country, can hardly be seen to be fair if the absolute power to appoint judges were to devolve upon it.

A system in which Judges appointed by the executive adjudicating on legal disputes involving the state can hardly be passed off as fair. Remember the golden principle that justice must not only be done but be seen to be done. And yet these important Constitutional matters must be worked upon in a calm atmosphere free of acrimony.

Adieu Pope Francis: An era ends

The passing of the head of the Catholic Church Pope Francis, marks the end of an era in which an institution as old as the Christian era made all-out efforts to renew itself to meet the exacting ideals of its founder.

The Argentine-born Francis with an Italian ancestry was deeply rooted in the essentials a Pope, or the Vicar of Christ, should have been: deep faith in god and a firm connect with the realities of an inequitable world. In every given occasion, Francis would remind the world of the uncomfortable comparisons about the fate of the poor and the indulgences of the rich. To buy small cars and think of the children dying of hunger, the Pope, who made papal limousine and palace unoccupied during his term, would advise the priests.

The Pope consistently questioned the logic of capitalism and its promise of trickle-down economics. He demolished the excuses of its apologists by showing them the mirror of reality: "The promise was that when the glass was full, it would overflow, benefiting the poor. But what happens, instead, is that when the glass is full, it magically gets bigger; nothing ever comes out for the poor."

The Pope embraced the refugees and asked the West, where most of his faithful lived, to give them shelter at a time when they were growing suspicious of the influx. He would speak consistently against wars and the misery they bring to the lives of the have-nots. He reminded the world of the unjust wars that are happening in Gaza and Ukraine even in his Easter message a day before his passing.

The Pope tried to clean up the mess created by the Vatican bureaucracy largely made of senior priests and introduced more transparency in an organisation with a flat structure with just two layers of authority. He sought forgiveness on behalf of church for children wounded by the sexual abuse of the priests and bishops while it remains a fact that he avoided punishing the guilty.

The Pope was said to be keenly interested in visiting India, but it appears he did not wait enough for an official invite and the attendant procedures that would have made his touch down in the land that nurtured one of the ancient cultures possible.

While the faithful would grieve the loss of their father figure, the humanists would feel the loss of a credible figure which rendered their voice louder. The world has been, for sure, rendered much poorer by the passing of Pope Francis.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER

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Subhani



Chronicle of a strategic retreat: Waqf Act shift



Shikha Mukerjee

Retreat is certainly a masterly war manoeuvre if the commanding officer is a brilliant strategist. As a default choice in tight situations, created by a mismanagement of the variables in the field, it points to its use, not as a strategy but as a disorderly and embarrassing scramble to get out of trouble.

To fulfil its promise to its voters, a vote bank committed to the BJP-RSS cause of establishing a State defined by its religion, a Hindu Rashtra, of identifying, investigating and rectifying misdeemeanours of Muslim-managed properties and endowments, including mosques, graveyards, madrasas, tombs, orphanages and more, the Narendra Modi 3.0 government had to push through the amendments to the Waqf Act. The pattern was set when the Modi 2.0 government abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution and cancelled the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, changed the law to make "triple talaq" illegal; it was at par with the BJP keeping its promise to build and consecrate the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya.

The hitch was a gap between the letter and the spirit of promises and laws that was revealed when the Supreme Court stepped in; the Modi 3.0 government has walked back from the brink of acute embarrassment had it continued to defend the law modifying Waqf Act 1995, as it did in the Article 370 case and the sedition case. This retreat to avoid an adverse order by the apex court is intriguing.

What is part of a strategy that the Modi 3.0 government conceived, anticipating that first, there would be a deluge of cases filed by interested parties against the Waqf Act of 2025, and second, the Supreme

Court would step in and stay implementation of the law?

Was the Modi Sarkar prescient or did it have a premonition that its design for significantly changing the way waqfs are listed, registered and managed would almost immediately be tested for its validity in terms of the Constitution's protection under Article 26 over fundamental rights? Either way, if the Modi 3.0 government had doubts, it may have been better off postponing its time line to fulfil its campaign promise. It knew well in advance that its proposals for amending the Waqf Act 1995 would be deemed a hostile move by the Opposition as well as the Muslim Personal Law Board. It knew the amendments would be perceived as proof of deepening the polarisation between the majority Hindu community represented by the BJP and the minority Muslim community represented by a rainbow of political and civil society organisations, all of who are in opposition to what they see as attacks on the basic structure of the Constitution and the independence of institutions.

Boiled down to basics, the Waqf Act amendments seem to have been designed to galvanise voters, polarised and those who could be polarised in favour of the BJP, in the poll-bound states of Bihar in 2025 and Kerala, Assam, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu in 2026. All these states have substantial Muslim minority populations and in some of them, like West Bengal, Kerala, Bihar and Assam, there are significant properties controlled/managed as Waqf properties.

The schedule of public protests against the amended Waqf Act was known; the likelihood of heightened tensions and

The Modi 3.0 government has walked back from the brink of acute embarrassment had it continued to defend the law modifying Waqf Act 1995, as it did in the Article 370 case and the sedition case.

probable confrontations in certain parts of India was not unexpected. The violence, and three deaths, of two Hindus and one Muslim, in West Bengal's Murshidabad was the worst of it; there were angry protests in other parts of the state as well as across the country, but no deaths. It was easy to connect the violence in West Bengal to polarisation as the dominant divide to its highly competitive politics, where the Trinamul Congress has been branded as synonymous with Muslim appeasement, accused of converting areas into "Bangladesh" along the international border, and the BJP has appointed itself as the protector of the endangered Hindus likely to be reduced to a minority. By invoking the emotionally charged memory of Direct Action Day 1946 in the context of the Murshidabad violence, which in the BJP's telling was a portent of things to come, the Waqf Act has been weaponised. It will be deployed in the next 11 months before the 2026 Assembly elections.

And then there is the "waqf by user" and management of Waqf Boards' issues. Where there is property, there is trouble. The link between Waqf and property, especially valuable real estate, is not a canard spread by the Opposition. On the contrary, the link was made public after a series of media reports highlighted that waqfs are the third largest entity to control property in India, after the Railways and the armed forces. The Supreme Court seems to have been especially conscious of the danger, since it warned that it would stay the amended law as it applied to "waqf-by-user" and the appoint-

ment of non-Muslims for better management of the properties. Why will a government, that too a minority one that survives on the goodwill of allies, choose to engage in a fight, where retreat is a better option to save face? The politics of polarisation is propelled by a logic of its own. It is trapped in a feedback loop; to appeal to a polarised public, political actors or parties and political institutions behave in more polarised ways.

In the Waqf Act 2025 case, it began with a campaign promise to an already polarised electorate in the hope of scoring better with the support of new converts to the polarisation platform. In the Lok Sabha, an institution where politics is intensely polarised, the way in which the Joint Parliamentary Committee was set up, its conduct and its recommendations to the Modi government was a dead giveaway that polarisation would be welcomed, instead of being considered undesirable. Clearly, the outcome that was expected would be further polarisation that could then be deployed politically for increasing polarisation among the electorate.

The BJP's unresisting slide towards deepening polarisation based on divisive identity politics of the majority threatened by the minority as a method of consolidating its voter base and increasing its appeal in states that it has failed to capture spells trouble for the Modi government. In the Waqf Act amendments instance, by retreating after the Supreme Court said it would step in, it positioned itself as a victim of the Constitution and the rule of law. It cannot credibly do it again and again, even as pressure will no doubt increase from the already polarised over mosques built on top of temples, Waqfs encroaching on "government" land and the Uniform Civil Code that hangs like a sword over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's head.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

LETTERS

SAY NO TO PLASTIC

The World Economic Forum predicts that by 2050, our oceans will contain more plastic than fish, leading to significant plastic consumption. As a fossil fuel product, plastic doesn't biodegrade but breaks down into particles that contaminate our food chain when ingested by fish. Furthermore, plastic waste in landfills pollutes groundwater with toxic chemicals. Therefore, we must commit to ending plastic pollution daily as a simple and cost-effective way to protect our planet. This year, the Earth Day theme is "Our Power, Our Planet". Let's embrace this theme and eliminate plastic pollution altogether.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

GOLDEN GIMMICK

LIKE EVERY year, gold buyers will flock the jewellery stores in large numbers on Akshaya Tritiya, April 30, with a superstitious notion that buying gold on this day will bring them unending prosperity. This is just a big marketing gimmick and a perfect example of how jewellery shops take advantage of people's sentiments and weaknesses. Unfortunately, people fail to realise that nowhere in the scriptures it is said that buying gold this day is like inviting Goddess Lakshmi into your home. This gold rush is nothing other than a clever scam concocted by corporations to drive big sales. Let's not, therefore, fall prey to this deceptive marketing and help them earn big bucks from our collective ignorance.

R. Sivakumar
Chennai

GOVERNOR OUT OF LINE

APROPOS THE news report "Call me directly: Bose to kin hit by anti-waqf law clashes" (April 20), I would like to say that West Bengal governor C.V. Ananda Bose seems to be acting like an administrative head of the state, knowing well his limitations on exercising such powers under the Constitution. How can he openly defy Mamata Banerjee and reach Murshidabad to see the trouble-hit areas in the district and start probing the incident on his own? He had even advised victims to talk to him directly. I suppose there is no constitutional safeguard against the governor's wilful defiance of Ms Banerjee's request not to visit Murshidabad at this juncture. It is necessary to remind the governor not to violate the federal spirit of the Constitution.

Arun Gupta
Kolkata

Aakar Patel



China's GDP will outstrip US soon: Tariff war last bid to check Beijing?

China's crime is that in the next few years, perhaps as soon as 2035, it will be the world's largest economy. Its Gross Domestic Product will be larger at that point than that of the United States, if the average growth rates of both nations over the last 15 years hold.

This is unacceptable to the US, as it has been the dominant global power for the last century. This power has come mostly because of its economy, which is poised before our eyes to go from number one to number two. That is China's offence and that is the reason for the tariff tantrum President Donald Trump is throwing.

What is called "the West", meaning Europe and its settler colonies in North America, Australia and Israel has no memory of a world where it has not been the ruler and the rest of us ruled. What they refer to as the global "rules-based order" is the manner in which what was once direct rule through colonialism and its forms has been replaced by institutions such as the UN Security Council, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank. Informal groupings like the G-7 are used to further coordinate action.

In the 18th century, the two largest global economies were China and India. This was a function of a world without many machines, in which national productivity and output depended on population and most people were occupied in agriculture. The more people a nation had, the larger

its economy. The Industrial Revolution changed that and productivity began to separate itself from physical human input. From the 1800s to the present time, "the West" was at the forefront of this technological change. China has caught up. China will soon go past. Citigroup published a paper in January 2023 titled "When Will China's GDP Surpass the US? And What Will It Mean?", which concluded: "So across a range of parameters, catch-up is likely to occur sometime during the 2030s, probably during the middle of the decade."

"When it eventually does occur, it will be widely noted in the press and, likely, in the political discourse. It may be largely symbolic, but there may also be some geopolitical heft and prestige that accrues to the largest country in terms of GDP. For example, an economy's overall size enters the IMF's quota formula and helps determine voting shares. Also, certain activities — Olympic teams, space programmes and (most important) the military — are funded at the national level, and a larger economy means increased resources. In each of these endeavours, the world's largest economy may reap non-linear influence, strength, and other benefits."

Much of this has already happened. The Chinese Navy has more ships than the US Navy, China built and operates an independent space station that rivals the International Space Station led by the US and Russia. China, including Hong Kong, won more gold medals (42) than the US (40) in the

Paris Olympics last year. Even before its ascension as the largest economy, China has for the last decade unrolled the biggest infrastructure project in the world, the Belt and Road Initiative, and it is the largest trading partner for 120 nations, as opposed to 70 for the US.

A series of internal reports resembling Citigroup's have crossed the desks of Presidents Barack Obama, Trump in his first term and then Biden. Their response has been to try and handicap China, first by restricting its access to Taiwanese-made semiconductor chips designed in the US. The aim was to preserve the US lead in artificial intelligence, seen by many as a technology that will be as transformational as electricity.

This has not worked, as Deep Seek, the elegant AI produced by an obscure Chinese firm, showed.

For good measure, this firm made Deep Seek open-source, meaning free, stymieing US efforts to monopolise the technology. Huawei was banned by the West in 2019, denied access to markets and hardware, but it went into manufacturing and is by some estimates only a few years behind the two leaders in the semiconductor field, Taiwan's TSMC and Dutch firm ASML, in making the most advanced chips. What is required here is industrial design and manufacturing, and these are the two things Chinese companies have shown themselves to be superior, at so we should not be surprised if they catch up soon.

The tariff war, trying to totally decouple the West and its economies from China, is the latest and perhaps last attempt to try and stop the East. If this fails, the only option will be to use military power and many in Washington are talking about this casually.

Chinese ships have begun to turn away from US ports after the raising of tariffs to an absurd 245 per cent. In less than two weeks' time, on 2 May, the duty-free exemption granted to packages from China under \$800 ends. At that point, with trade at a standstill, the impact of few intermediate and finished goods arriving from China will be felt through the US economy. Yes, China will be hurt by this, but not much: exports to the US are two per cent of its GDP. The US will be hurt more.

Say's Law of Market tells us that supply creates its own demand. This means an economy that is focused on producing goods will ultimately find some market for sale, including an internal market, because the workers producing the goods can buy them. That is China, the world's largest producer of goods and the sole manufacturing superpower. The US is a consumer. It has the hard task of now beginning to produce what it wants to consume, and go through economic pain and uncertainty in doing so, all because it cannot bear to see someone else as number one.

The writer is the chair of Amnesty International India. Twitter: @aakar_patel

SHORT TAKES

CHINA-OWNED POWER PLANT IN CHILE ATTACKED

Santiago, April 21: Gunmen attacked a Chinese-owned hydroelectric plant under construction in Chile on Sunday, setting fire to dozens of trucks and heavy earth-moving equipment, police said.

The Rucalhue power plant is being built by Rucalhue Energia Spa, a unit of China International Water and Electric Corporation (CWE), and is projected to cost \$350 million.

It is being built along the Biobio, one of Chile's main rivers, and is opposed by Indigenous people who say it will harm the environment.

CANADA TEMPLE DEFACED BY KHALISTANIS

Toronto, April 21: A temple in Canada's Surrey has been defaced by vandals with pro-Khalistan graffiti at its entrance and the pillars, authorities said.

The incident took place on April 19 at the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey, the temple said in a statement.

"It is with deep sorrow that we inform the community of a disturbing incident that took place in the early hours of April 19, 2025, at approximately 3.00 AM.

Two unidentified individuals vandalised the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey.

B'DESH ISLAMISTS SEEK ABOLITION OF WOMEN PANEL

Dhaka, April 21: Bangladesh's influential Islamist coalition has demanded the abolition of a government women's commission, a further indication of how hardline, religiously fuelled activism is strengthening after years of suppression.

The women's commission is part of efforts to reform systems installed during the iron-fisted rule of Shiekh Hasina, who was overthrown by student-led mass protests in August 2024. Hefazat-e-Islam, a platform of religious seminaries, wants the cancellation of the Women's Affairs Reforms Commission.

WEF FOUNDER STEPS DOWN FROM THE BOARD

Geneva, April 21: The World Economic Forum said on Monday that its founder Klaus Schwab has stepped down from the board, turning a page in the history of the organisation that hosts the annual meeting of wealthy, famous and influential global elites at the luxury Swiss ski resort of Davos.

Schwab informed the WEF's board that "as I enter my 88th year, I have decided to step down from the position of Chair and as a member of the Board of Trustees, with immediate effect". Schwab stepped down as executive chairman last year.

SL CATHOLICS STIR ON EASTER BOMBING ANNIV.

Colombo, April 21: Sri Lanka's Catholics marked on Monday the sixth anniversary of the Easter bombings that killed 279 people with a silent march and demands for justice.

Several probes into the April 21, 2019, bombings concluded that the attacks were carried out by homegrown jihadists who claimed affiliation with the Islamic State group.

But, the Catholic Church has accused governments of protecting those behind the attack and several high-level investigations have identified links between military intelligence units and the bombers.

INSTAGRAM AI TO FIND IF TEENS TRY TO BE ADULTS

Washington, April 21: Instagram is beginning to test the use of artificial intelligence to determine if kids are lying about their ages on the app, parent company Meta Platforms said on Monday.

Meta has been using AI to determine people's ages for some time, the company said, but photo and video-sharing app will now proactively look for teen accounts it suspects belong to teenagers.

If it is determined that a user is misrepresenting their age, the account will automatically become a teen account.

KEY DATES IN THE LIFE OF POPE FRANCIS

DEC. 17, 1936: Jorge Mario Bergoglio is born in Buenos Aires, Argentina to Mario Jose Bergoglio, an accountant from Italy, and Regina Maria Sivori, the daughter of Italian immigrants.



MARCH 13, 2013: ELECTED 266TH POPE.

JULY 30, 2013: Declares "Who am I to judge?" when asked about a gay priest during a news conference, signalling a more welcoming stance toward LGBTQ+.

June 8, 2014: Hosts Israeli and Palestinian presidents for peace prayers in the Vatican gardens.

FEB. 12, 2016: Meets Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill during a stopover in Havana and declares "We are brothers," in first such meeting between a pope and patriarch in over 1,000 years.

APRIL 12, 2018: Admits to "grave errors" in judgment in Chile's sex abuse scandal.

AUG. 3, 2018: Declares capital punishment "inadmissible" under all circumstances in a change to official church teaching.



Pope washes the feet of 12 people of different religions.

JAN. 24, 2023: Declares in an Associated Press interview that "Being homosexual is not a crime."

MARCH 23, 2025: Is released from the hospital after 38 days of treatment but looks weak and frail.



APRIL 21, 2025: Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the camerlengo, announces that the pope died at 7.35 am.

Pope changed death penalty policy

Francis upheld church policy on abortion, made inroads with Muslims, believers who felt marginalised

Vatican City, April 21: Pope Francis changed the Catholic Church's teaching in areas such as the death penalty and nuclear weapons, upheld it in others such as abortion, and made inroads with Muslims and believers who long felt marginalised.

Francis upheld church teaching opposing abortion and echoed his predecessors in saying that human life is sacred and must be defended. He described abortion, as well as euthanasia, as evidence of today's throwaway culture and likened abortion to hiring a hit man to resolve a problem.

But he didn't emphasise the church's position to the extent his predecessors did, and said women who had abortions must be accompanied spiritually by the church.

Francis also allowed ordinary priests — not just bishops — to absolve Catholic women who had intentionally terminated a pregnancy. He didn't approve of attempts by US bishops to deny Holy Communion to President Joe Biden because of his abortion-rights stance, saying bishops should be pastors, not politicians.

Francis' greatest scandal of his papacy was when he discredited Chilean sexual abuse victims by siding with a bishop whom they accused of complicity in the abuse.

After realising his error, he invited the victims to the Vatican and apologised in person. He then brought the entire Chilean bishops conference to Rome where he pressed them to resign.



People pray in front of a memorial to Pope Francis at the Basilique du Sacre-Coeur de Montmartre following his death, in Paris on Monday.

In his most significant move, Francis defrocked former US Cardinal Theodore McCarrick after a Vatican investigation determined he abused minors as well as adults.

Francis later passed church laws abolishing the use of pontifical secrecy and establishing procedures to investigate bishops who abuse or cover up for predator priests.

But he was dogged by some high-profile cases where he seemed to side with accused priests.

In 2013, Pope Benedict XVI resigned in the first such papal retirement in 600 years, and Francis was elected to replace him.

But, with Benedict living on the Vatican grounds until his 2022 death, Francis said it was like having a wise grandfather at home.

Rites, rituals after death of a pope

Vatican City, April 21: The death of a pope sets in motion a series of carefully orchestrated rites and rituals well before the conclave to elect his successor begins.

They involve the certification of death and public display of his body for the faithful to pay their respects, followed by the funeral and burial.

Pope Francis, who died on Monday, revised various rites last year, simplifying the funeral rituals to emphasize his role as a mere bishop and allowing for burial outside the

Vatican in keeping with his wishes. But the core elements remain, including the three key moments that must be observed between the death of a pope and his burial.

The reforms are incorporated into the slim red volume "Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis," Latin for "Rite of Burial for Roman Pontiffs."

While popes often tinker with the rules regulating the conclave that elects their successor, a revision of the papal funeral rites hadn't been undertaken since 2000.

WORLD REACTS

"He knew how to give hope, ease suffering through prayer, and foster unity."

— Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian President

"With the death of Pope Francis, the Catholic Church and the world lose an advocate for the weak."

— Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor

"His Holiness will be remembered for his compassion, his concern for the unity of the Church and for his tireless commitment to the common causes of all people of faith, and to those of goodwill who work for the benefit of others."

— Charles, Britain's King



"Throughout the years of his pontificate, he actively promoted the development of dialogue between the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, as well as constructive cooperation between Russia and the Holy See."

— Vladimir Putin, Russian President

"Despite differences that seem minor today, having been able to know him in his goodness and wisdom was a true honour for me."

— Javier Milei, Argentina's President



"Throughout his pontificate Pope Francis had always sided with the most vulnerable and the most fragile, and that he did this with a lot of humility."

— Emmanuel Macron, French President

Pope with global leaders



Pope Francis interacts with world leaders: (From L) With Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump and former German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

CHINA SLAMS U.S. APPEASEMENT OVER TRADE DEAL

Beijing, April 21: China on Monday hit out at other countries making trade deals with the United States at Beijing's expense, vowing countermeasures against those who "appease" Washington in the blistering tariff war as its neighbours rush to secure favourable terms from the White House.

While the rest of the world has been hit with a 10 per cent tariff, China faces levies of up to 145 per cent.

US DefSec secrets in 2nd Signal chat

ISRAELI SPY CHIEF HANDS COURT REBUKE OF BIBI BID TO SACK HIM

Washington, April 21: US defence secretary Pete Hegseth created another Signal messaging chat that included his wife and brother where he shared similar details of a March military airstrike against Yemen's Houthi militants that were sent in another chain with top Trump administration leaders, *The New York Times* reported.

A person familiar with the contents and those who received the messages, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, confirmed the second chat to

Jerusalem, April 21: The head of Israel's domestic intelligence service said on Monday that PM Benjamin Netanyahu's bid to sack him followed his refusal to fulfil requests that included spying on Israeli protesters and disrupting the leader's graft trial. In an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court, the head of Shin Bet, Ronen Bar, said that the move to dismiss him was prompted by unmet expectations of personal loyalty to the PM.

The Associated Press. The second chat on Signal — which is a commercially available app not authorised to be used to communicate sensitive or classified national defence information — included 13

people, the person said.

They also confirmed the chat was dubbed "Defence Team Huddle." *The New York Times* reported that the group included Hegseth's wife, Jennifer, who is a former *Fox News* producer, and his brother Phil Hegseth, who was hired at the Pentagon as a department of homeland security liaison and senior adviser. Both have travelled with the defence secretary and attended high-level meetings. The White House late on Sunday dismissed the report as a "non-story."

Russia resumes attacks after Easter ceasefire

Moscow, April 21: Russia resumed military operations in Ukraine after the expiration of an Easter truce announced by President Vladimir Putin that each side accused the other of violating. The 30-hour ceasefire ordered by Putin has expired, Russia's defence ministry said in a statement on its Telegram channel.

The Russian President ordered the pause in hostilities during a televised meeting on Saturday with Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, saying it was a humanitarian gesture at the holiday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed the announcement as a Kremlin publicity stunt and called on Russia to accept a 30-day truce instead. On Sunday, both sides accused each other of violating the ceasefire though neither reported the kind of missile attacks or large-scale drone swarms that have taken place regularly since the start of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine that's now in its fourth

year. Russia acknowledged that "during the daytime, the intensity of fire and combat operations" by Ukraine along the front line had significantly reduced, according to the state-run *Tass* news.

While he has offered brief halts to the fighting in the past, notably a proposal to cease hostilities during the Orthodox Christmas period in 2023, Putin has made clear that he won't agree to a full truce until there is progress toward a final peace deal that meets Russia's war demands and an end to weapons deliveries to Kyiv by Ukraine's allies.

US President Donald Trump on Friday signalled he could walk away from White House efforts to broker a deal to end the war unless agreement is reached soon, as Russia said a one-month pause on targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure had ended. Russia has refused to join a moratorium on attacks in the Black Sea unless it gets concessions on easing sanctions.

