

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

## Will repeal NRC, CAA if INDIA bloc voted to power: Mamata

**SILCHAR (ASSAM), APR 17:** Alleging that the BJP has made the entire country a "detention camp", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said the CAA and NRC will be scrapped if opposition bloc INDIA forms government at the Centre.

Addressing an election rally here in support of four TMC candidates in Assam, she alleged that there will be "no democracy and elections if Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns to power" for the third consecutive term.

"They (BJP) made the entire country a detention camp... I have never seen



such a dangerous election in my life," Banerjee said. She asserted that her party TMC loves all religions and does not want people to be divided on religious lines.

"If the INDIA bloc wins, there will not be the National Register of Citizens (NRC), Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and Uniform Civil Code.

We will repeal all discriminatory laws," Banerjee said at the rally.

She appealed to people to vote for all four Trinamool Congress candidates in Assam in the Lok Sabha polls and announced that her party would contest all 126 assembly seats in the 2026 state polls.

"This is just a trailer and the final is yet to come. I will come again," Banerjee added.

## PM is champion of corruption: Rahul Gandhi

**GHAZIABAD, APR 17:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged the electoral bonds scheme was the biggest "extortion scheme" in the world and that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the "champion of corruption".

Addressing a joint press conference with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav here, Gandhi said there is a strong undercurrent in favour of the opposition INDIA bloc in the Lok Sabha elections and the BJP will be limited to 150 seats.

Yadav said the winds of change will start blowing from Ghaziabad in western Uttar Pradesh to Ghazipur and the BJP will be given a grand farewell in the Lok Sabha elections.

"We have to ensure that not a single vote is divided in the Lok Sabha polls," Yadav said.



Criticising the now-scrapped electoral bonds, Gandhi said the prime minister claims that the scheme was brought to bring transparency in poll funding but then why was it struck down by the Supreme Court.

"The electoral bonds scheme is the biggest extortion scheme in the world. India's businessmen know it very well. No matter how much the prime minister clarifies, it will have no impact because the entire nation knows that the prime minister is the champion of corruption," Gandhi said.

On Modi's criticism of his remarks that the Congress will end poverty in no time,

Gandhi said no one said that poverty will end in one go but we can make strong efforts for it.

To questions on contesting the Lok Sabha elections from Uttar Pradesh's Amethi, the former Congress chief said he will abide by his party's decision on this.

Such decisions are taken by the Central Election Committee of the party, he said.

The SP and the Congress are fighting the Lok Sabha polls in alliance in Uttar Pradesh. The Congress is fighting on 17 seats while the SP and some other allies are contesting the remaining 63 seats in the politically crucial Uttar Pradesh, which sends 80 members to the Lok Sabha.

The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls will begin on April 19 and the counting of votes will be taken up on June 4.

## Shivakumar, a corrupt politician, don't need his certificate: Rajeev Chandrasekhar

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APR 17:** A day after senior Congress leader D K Shivakumar questioned the contribution made by Rajeev Chandrasekhar to the development of Kerala, the BJP leader on Wednesday hit back by saying he does not need the certificate of a "corrupt" politician who is out on bail.

Chandrasekhar, who is facing off against Congress' Shashi Tharoor in the Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha constituency, said ever since he began his poll campaign, he has stated what he will do if he wins and will follow through on that.

He further said in the next couple of days he would be releasing a vision document on bringing development and investment to the southern state.

"Once I become an MP



and a minister from here, for the next five years I will work to implement that vision document," Chandrasekhar, also the Union Minister of State for Information Technology and Electronics, told a TV channel.

Regarding comments by Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar against him, Chandrasekhar

Shivakumar, also the Karnataka Congress chief, was in Kerala on Tuesday and at a press conference had questioned what contribution Chandrasekhar had made to Kerala's development.

He had also said Chandrasekhar was morally obligated to resign as a minister before contesting the elections.

Shivakumar had also claimed there was no BJP or Modi wave in the country and asserted that the INDIA bloc will form the government at the Centre.

The Karnataka Congress chief had taken part in the roadshows of Tharoor and KPCC chief K Sudhakaram in Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur, respectively.

The Lok Sabha elections will be held in Kerala on April 26 and the results will be declared on June 4.

## Noida's Wardah Khan who quit corporate job makes it into UPSC top 20

**NOIDA, APR 22:** Noida resident Wardah Khan who quit her corporate job to prepare for the civil services secured the 18th rank in the UPSC exam 2023, opting for the IFS as her first preference to further the image of India at global platforms.

The exam results were announced on Tuesday by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

The 24-year-old UPSC exam qualifier says she opted for the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) as her first preference as she wishes to make the country proud at global platforms.

"Like every other aspirant, when we start our journey, we dream of finding our name on the result list. But getting into the top 20 was unimaginable, I had not imagined to be able to be in the top 20. It's a dreamy feeling right now. Everyone in my family is very happy and beaming with pride," Khan told PTL.

"I have opted for the Indian Foreign Service as my first preference, so I would like to further the image of India across global platforms and multilateral institutions



and help our Indian diaspora abroad," she added.

A resident of Vivek Vihar in Noida's Sector 82, Khan pursued her Bachelors in Commerce (Honours) from the Khalsa College of Delhi University. The only child of her parents, she lives with her mother. Her father passed away nine years ago.

On how she got inclined towards UPSC, Khan said that during her college days, she always had an interest in geopolitics, in subjects such as history and polity.

She used to participate in debates and MUNs (mock United Nations) during her college days but even then the idea of taking up civil services as a career path had not come to her. It was during her job tenure that Khan realised she wanted to become a civil servant.

"I worked for a corporate firm for eight months. That didn't sort of satisfy me. I wanted to give back to the society and wanted to work for my country and transform the lives of the people," she said.

"I realised the kind of syllabus and opportunities that this career (civil services) offers aligns with my interest and I decided to pursue it and quit my job," she added.

Khan said she prepared at home but also took online coaching from a private insti-

tution for a year.

Sharing her tips for UPSC exam aspirants, Khan said there are a few postulates that every candidate should keep in mind.

"First and foremost, you have to be very thorough with the basics like NCERT and Polity by Laxmikar. These are the basic books that you have to be thorough with," she said.

"You also must have made proper syllabus heads of your mains and your optional should also be prepared with notes before the cycle communities. These are some of the things that must be kept in mind," Khan added.

A total of 1,016 candidates - 664 men and 352 women -- have qualified in the examination and have been recommended by the UPSC for appointment to various services.

Aditya Srivastava, a trainee Indian Police Service officer, has topped the civil services examination.

Animesh Pradhan, Donuru Ananya Reddy, PK Sidharth Ramkumar and Ruhani have secured the second, third, fourth and the fifth ranks, respectively.

## BJP wants to take away right to vote: Akhilesh

**MORADABAD (UP), APR 17:** Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday claimed that the BJP has given the '400 par' slogan for the Lok Sabha polls as they want to "change" the Constitution of the country and "take away" the right to vote from people.

Addressing an election rally here in support of Ruchi Veera, the SP candidate from Moradabad, Yadav said, "If the government works as per the Constitution, no prejudice can be done against any community or group. But ever since the BJP has come to power, the government has not done justice with people."

Yadav recalled the protest by farmers against the now-



repealed farm laws and said, "The government has taken back the farm laws. But the way BJP leaders are using the '400 par' slogan... If they come to power, it is possible that they will change the Constitution. They can even snatch our right to vote."

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister also attacked the BJP-led Centre over de-

monetisation and electoral bonds.

SP candidate Veera also alleged that the BJP wants to change the Constitution. "The election this time is to safeguard democracy."

Stating that she was born and brought up in Moradabad, Veera sought votes from all sections of society and people of all communities. "I am thankful to my Muslim brothers and sisters who have given me such respect and confidence that, along with Hindu brothers and sisters, will ensure a victory for the SP. We will defeat the BJP," she said.

Polling in Moradabad will be held in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections on April 19.

## Coast Guard seizes Indian fishing boat with 'unauthorised cash' off Maharashtra coast

**NEW DELHI, APR 17:** The Indian Coast Guard has apprehended an Indian fishing boat with "unauthorised cash" off Maharashtra coast, the defence ministry said on Wednesday.

The operation revealed a "carriage of Rs 11.46 lakh which was meant to be given to some Indian OSV (Offshore Supply Vessel) operating from offshore areas in return of smuggled diesel", the ministry said in a statement.

"The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has apprehended an Indian fishing boat carrying unauthorised cash, reported to be involved in the smuggling of diesel, 83 nautical miles (nm) northwest off Mumbai," it said.

The vessel was brought to Mumbai anchorage in the early hours of Wednesday. A joint investigation with Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Customs, and state police is being carried out to trace the linkages and to take further legal actions by respective agencies, officials said. The suspected boat was located and boarded on the night of April 15.

Based on a tip-off from Customs, the ICG Regional



Headquarters (West) had launched an operation, involving a sustained search during challenging night conditions amid considerable fishing and merchant traffic covering an area of 200 square miles including offshore development areas off Maharashtra coast, the statement said.

"In a coordinated operation, comprising a search by two ICG Fast Patrol Vessels and one Interceptor Boat, the suspected boat was located and boarded on the night of April 15," it added.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the boat, with five crew, departed Mandwa port on April 14 to "effect rendezvous with suspected Indian Offshore Supply Vessels (OSV) with an intent to smuggle diesel", the statement said.

It was found out that the boat was operating with modified holds to store fuel up to 20,000 litres and operating with "false/multiple identities", it said.

Correlation with available data on the suspect boat had indicated multiple discrepancies in vessel registration, the statement said.

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## Ramdev, Patanjali MD Balkrishna say sorry for bashing allopathy. Prove it, says SC

**NEW DELHI, APR 17:** Yoga practitioner Ramdev and Patanjali MD Balkrishna appeared in the Supreme Court on Tuesday to tender an "unconditional apology" for disparaging other forms of medicine like allopathy to promote ayurveda.

The duo also offered to tend a "public apology to show contrition" in the contempt proceedings in the misleading advertisements case against Patanjali.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah listed the matter for further hearing to April 23 to enable the two contemnors to convey how they intended to "redeem" themselves and show their "good intentions" to never repeat such mistakes.

The court conceded the plea for adjournment after senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi, Balbir Singh and others -- appearing for Patanjali and the duo -- sought time to place on record their sincere and unconditional apologies along with some "unilateral" measures to demonstrate their sincerity.

The court was dealing with a contempt petition filed by the Indian Medical Association against Patanjali



for putting out misleading ads in the media after assuring the top court in November to desist from indulging in such practices. Responding to queries from the bench, Ramdev said they had no intention to defy the court's directive and everything had happened during moments of "excitement" over promoting Ayurveda.

"I assure that from now on I will be 100 per cent alert and desist from such behaviour. I am also not happy with what has happened. It (media conference) happened in a moment of excitement. We will not do it in future," Ramdev told the bench headed by Justice Kohli.

"You are not so innocent that you did not know what we said in our order," the bench said, adding: "We are not saying at this stage that we are letting them off the hook."

This means the court will consider their apology based on further assurances at the next date of hearing.

Justice Kohli said the court was conscious of the fact that Ramdev had widely promoted yoga and ayurveda in the country, but the duo could not discredit other forms of medicines such as allopathy, homeopathy or unani. Later, the court passed the following order: "Mr Mukul Rohatgi, learned senior counsel appearing for the proposed Contemnors No. 5 to 7, submits that to redeem themselves and demonstrate their bona fides, they propose to take some steps unilaterally.

"He requests one week's time to revert back on the aforesaid aspect. This Court has interacted with the proposed Contemnors No. 6 and 7 for some time and have heard their submissions. Both of them have tendered their unqualified apology for having called a press conference immediately after an order was passed by this Court on 21st November, 2023 and for continuing to issue misleading advertisements and making derogatory statements in respect of other systems of treatment...."

## Enforcement Directorate arrests four more persons in money laundering case against Hemant Soren

**RANCHI, APR 17:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has made four fresh arrests in connection with the alleged illegal land grab-linked money laundering case against former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren and others, official sources said on Wednesday.

Those taken into custody under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) have been identified as Antu Tirkey, Priya Ranjan Sahay, Bipin Singh and Irshad, they said.

The ED had on Tuesday conducted searches at the premises of Tirkey and some others here.

With these arrests, the total number of people taken into custody in this case has risen to eight.

Soren, 48, was arrested by the ED in January shortly after he resigned as the chief minister. He is currently lodged in Birsamunda jail at Hotwar here under judicial custody. Prime accused and former revenue department sub-inspector Bhanu Pratap Prasad, Mohammed Saddam Hussain and Afshar Ali have also been arrested.

The probe against Soren

pertains to an 8.86-acre plot of land in Ranchi that the ED has alleged was illegally acquired by him.

The agency had filed a charge sheet against Soren, Prasad and Soren's alleged "frontmen" -- Raj Kumar Pahan and Hilariyas Kachhap -- and alleged associate of the former CM Binod Singh before a special PMLA court here on March 30.

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