

World Bank President Banga, actor Alia, Olympian Sakshi on Time's 100 most influential people list

NEW DELHI, APR 17: World Bank President Ajay Banga, Bollywood actor Alia Bhatt, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, Olympian wrestler Sakshi Malik and actor-director Dev Patel are among the Indians who have made it to the prestigious Times's list of 100 most influential people in the world released on Wednesday.

Time's '100 Most Influential People of 2024' also includes US Department of Energy's Loan Programmes Office director Jigar Shah, Professor of Astronomy and Professor of Physics at Yale University Priyamvada Natarajan; Indian-origin restaurateur Asma Khan; as well as Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's widow Yulia Navalnaya.

Time's profile of the former Mastercard CEO, written by US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, said, "It's not easy to find a leader with the skill and drive to take on the monumental task of transforming an essential institution, but since becoming World Bank president last June, Ajay Banga has done just that." She said Banga comes to the World Bank after leading a global organisation through which he brought millions of unbanked people into the digital economy. At the World Bank, he set forth a new vision to create a world free of poverty on a livable planet and moved boldly to make good on it — from pioneering innovative financial tools to reimagining partnerships across the multilateral development banks and with the private sector.

"His sharp wit consistently enables him to cut through the noise. With unprecedented challenges



such as climate change threatening our collective future, I cannot imagine a better partner with whom to take decisive action on behalf of people around the world," Yellen said.

Describing Bhatt as a "formidable talent", director, producer and writer Tom Harper said in the Time profile that she is "not only one of the world's leading actors, admired for her work in the Indian film industry for over a decade — she is also a businesswoman and a philanthropist who leads with integrity".

"Alia's superpower is her ability to mix movie-star magnetism with authenticity and sensitivity. As an actor she is luminous, and as a person she brings the grounded assurance and creativity that make a truly international star," Harper, who directed Bhatt in his movie 'Heart of Stone' said.

On Nadella, Time said he is "profoundly influential in shaping our future. And that's a good thing for humanity".

"Microsoft's significant investment in OpenAI and partnership with Mistral AI puts him at the forefront of the artificial intelligence revolution. A technologist with heart, Satya sees AI as a tool that will empower humans. Still, there's rightful concern about unintended conse-

quences and misuse. That's why it's so reassuring that Satya is one of AI's stewards. His thoughtfulness and humility should make us safer," it said.

On Malik, Oscar-nominated documentary filmmaker Nisha Pahuja writes that she was among India's "most celebrated wrestlers" who had gathered at Jantar Mantar in Delhi in early 2023 to demand the immediate arrest and resignation of chief of the Wrestling Federation of India Brij Bhushan Singh, accused of sexually harassing female athletes.

"What began as a small, targeted protest to demand decisive government action in favour of the wrestlers ballooned instead into a yearlong battle unprecedented in Indian sport, drawing support from across the country and attention from across the world," Pahuja writes in her profile of Malik for Time.

"This fight is no longer only for India's female wrestlers," she said, of the movement Malik helped spark, "it is for the daughters of India whose voices have been silenced time and again".

"Shortly after Singh's successor, a close ally and business partner, was elected to oversee the Wrestling Federation of India, Sakshi Malik — in

an emotional, public, and very brave act of defiance — quit the sport. She did not, however, quit the battle. Her light, and the light of all those standing against harassment, continues to shine," Pahuja said.

On Patel, the Time profile by Oscar-winning actor Daniel Kaluuya said that he "radiates goodness. His humanity shines through every time he graces the screen, leaving you no choice but to root for him even when his character is doing something foul; his presence makes you understand where he's coming from".

Patel made his directorial debut with 'Monkey Man'. "Dev sets the pace. He's limitless. He's fearless. Our responsibility as a generation is to go into familiar spaces and see them through new perspectives, thus creating, finding, and sharing a space that has never been touched before. He has that gift. He continues to surpass himself and surprise us, and we are all waiting for where he'll take us next," it said.

Shep Doeleman, an astrophysicist and the founding director of the Event Horizon Telescope, wrote in the profile for Natarajan that a novel approach developed years ago by her "brought us closer to understanding a basic mystery in astronomy: How do the supermassive black holes that lurk at the centres of most galaxies form?" "Priya has a knack for pursuing the most creative research, and as a fellow astronomer, I am always inspired by her work. Her latest result takes us one step closer to understanding our cosmic beginnings," Doeleman said.



Women immersing 'Saakh' on the eve of Ram Navmi in Tawi river in Jammu on Wednesday.

Storm dumps a year and a half's worth of water on parts of UAE, flooding roads, Dubai's airport

DUBAI, APR 17: Heavy thunderstorms lashed the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, dumping over a year and a half's worth of rain on the desert city-state of Dubai in the span of hours as it flooded out portions of major highways and its international airport.

Meanwhile, the death toll in separate heavy flooding in neighbouring Oman rose to 18 with others still missing as the sultanate prepared for the storm.

The rains began late Monday, soaking the sands and roadways of Dubai with some 20 millimetres (0.79 inches) of rain, according to meteorological data collected at Dubai International Airport. The storms intensified around 9 a.m. Local Tuesday and continued throughout the day, dumping more rain and hail onto the overwhelmed city.

By the end of Tuesday, more than 142 millimetres (5.59 inches) of rainfall had soaked Dubai over 24 hours. An average year sees 94.7 millimetres (3.73 inches) of rain at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel and a hub for the long-haul carrier Emirates.

At the airport, standing water lapped on taxiways as aircraft landed. The airport ended up halting arrivals Tuesday night and passengers struggled to reach terminals through



the floodwater covering surrounding roads.

Police and emergency personnel drove slowly through the flooded streets of Dubai, their emergency lights shining across the darkened roads. Lightning flashed across the sky, occasionally touching the tip of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. The city's driverless Metro saw disruptions and flooded stations as well.

Schools across the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms, largely shut ahead of the storm and government employees were largely working remotely if able. Many workers stayed home as well, though some ventured out, with the unfortunate stalling out their vehicles in deeper-than-expected water covering some roads.

Authorities sent tanker trucks out into the streets and highways to pump away the water. Water poured into some homes, forcing people to bail out their houses.

The country's hereditary rulers offered no overall damage information or injury information for the nation, as some slept into their flooded vehicles Tuesday night. In Ras al-Khaimah, the country's northernmost emirate, police said one 70-year-old man died when his vehicle was swept away by floodwater.

Fujairah, an emirate on the UAE's eastern coast, saw the heaviest rainfall on Tuesday with 145 millimetres (5.7 inches) falling there. Authorities cancelled school and the government instituted remote work

again for Wednesday.

Rain is unusual in the UAE, an arid, Arabian Peninsula nation, but occurs periodically during the cooler winter months. Many roads and other areas lack drainage given the lack of regular rainfall, causing flooding.

Rain also fell in Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

In neighbouring Oman, a sultanate that rests on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, at least 18 people had been killed in heavy rains in recent days, according to a statement on Tuesday from the country's National Committee for Emergency Management. That includes some 10 schoolchildren swept away in a vehicle with an adult, which saw condolences come into the country from rulers across the region.

Kalpana Soren continues outreach programme in Gandey Assembly segment ahead of bypoll

JAMSHEDPUR, APR 17: Kalpana Soren, the wife of former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren who is at present in judicial custody, continued the outreach programme in Gandey Assembly segment, scheduled for bypoll on May 20 even as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) continued search operation in the alleged land scam involving Hemant.

Kalpana, who is tipped to be the JMM candidate on behalf of the INDIA bloc for the Gandey bypoll, met villagers of Gandey on Tuesday and urged them to vote consciously during the Lok Sabha and bypoll to safeguard their water, forest and land.

Kalpana, who is managing the social media handle



of Hemant after his arrest on January 31 this year, by the ED following his resignation before the governor not only interacted with tribal women of villages in Santhali (local language) sitting with them on the

ground listening to their problems but also urged the villagers to attend the April 21 Ulgulan Nyaya Rally schedule at Ranchi on April 21.

"Though she is yet to be officially announced as our

party candidate for the Gandey by-poll, it is confirmed that she would be fighting from this seat and enter the Jharkhand Vidhan Sabha. She has been reaching out to masses not only in Gandey but also in different parts of Jharkhand highlighting that the BJP misusing the ED to arrest Hemant in false cases. Being a Santhali woman she wants to connect with tribals in their own language," said a JMM leader.

The bypoll for the Gandey Assembly seat became necessary as it fell vacant following the resignation of the JMM MLA Sarfaraz Ahmad on December 31, 2023.

Ahmad was later elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi 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 elec-



toral 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.

Elgar Parishad case accused Shoma Sen walks out of Mumbai prison

MUMBAI, APR 17: Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case accused and former Nagpur University professor Shoma Sen was released from a prison here on Wednesday afternoon, an official said.

The 66-year-old professor of English literature had obtained bail from the Supreme Court on April 5.

Sen, arrested in the case on June 6, 2018, walked out of the Byculla jail in central Mumbai after the completion of all formalities, the senior prison official told PTI.

Her lawyer Indira Jaising tweeted about her release on X, saying, "She is finally out, Shoma Sen with her daughter outside Byculla jail." Sen was one of the 16 persons including activists and academics arrested in the case, related to the Elgar Parishad conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017. Pune Police had alleged that the conclave was backed by Maoists, and the



'inflammatory' speeches made there fuelled caste violence near the Bhima Koregaon war memorial in Pune district next day.

Of the accused, P Varavara Rao, Sudha Bharadwaj, Vernon Gonsalves, Arun Ferreira and Anand Teltumbde are already out on bail, while Gautam Navlakha is under house arrest after initial incarceration. Father Stan Swamy, another accused, died in prison while his bail application on medical grounds was before the court.

On April 5, the apex court granted bail to Shoma Sen.

She shall keep the location status (GPS) of her mobile phone active round the clock while on bail and her phone shall be paired with that of the investigating officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to enable him ascertain her exact location, the bench of Justices Aniruddha Bose and Augustine George Masih said while granting her relief.

Sen shall not leave Maharashtra without the leave of

the special NIA court, it added.

"The (applicant's) ailments by themselves may not be serious enough for granting bail on medical ground. But taking cognisance of the composite effect of delay in framing charge, period of detention undergone by her, the nature of allegations against her vis-a-vis the materials available before this court at this stage in addition to her age and medical condition, we do not think she ought to be denied the privilege of being enlarged on bail pending further process subsequent to issue of chargesheets against her," the bench said.

Regarding the allegation against Sen of raising funds for a terrorist act, the bench said at this stage, on the strength of the material produced before it, the prosecution has not been able to corroborate or even raise a hint of corroboration of the allegation.