

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Tamil Nadu-born Rini Sampath in race to become Washington DC mayor

WASHINGTON, APR 4: Tamil Nadu-born Rini Sampath has become the first South Asian candidate to be on the ballot for the primary for the election for the mayor of Washington DC.

The 31-year-old government contractor from the Democratic Party has based her election campaign on the theme 'Fix the Basics' and the promise of "A new DC".

"I'm not a politician. I don't owe any special interest groups. It's time for an outsider who is relentlessly focused on fixing our basic city services," Sampath says on her campaign website.

Born in Theni in Tamil Nadu, she came to the US as a seven-year-old and has been a resident of Washington DC for more than a decade.



"It's clear we have a real path to victory. In just four weeks, we made the mayoral ballot as the first South Asian candidate in DC history to do it.

That's what a lean, people-powered campaign can accomplish. Imagine what

we could do with the resources to reach every voter across the city," she said.

Washington DC is dominated overwhelmingly by Democrats and the city never has had a Republican mayor since the elections to the post began in 1975. Be-

fore that, the city was administered by a Board of Commissioners appointed by the US president.

The District of Columbia is administered by a popularly elected mayor and a 13-member district council.

"As Mayor of DC, my priority will be to make sure our city lives up to its basic commitments to our residents.

Fill the potholes. Stop the catastrophic wastewater spill in the Potomac. Lower prices. Improve 911 wait times," Sampath said.

The primary is scheduled for June 16, while the general election will be held on November 3.

Others in the mayoral race are Janeese Lewis George, Kenyan McDuffie, Gary Goodweather, Robert L Gross and Rhonda Hamilton. (PTI)

Stalin alleges Centre's 3-language formula 'covert' mechanism to impose Hindi

CHENNAI, APR 4: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, referring to the CBSE's recently unveiled curriculum framework, on Saturday alleged the "so-called three-language formula" is in reality a "covert" mechanism to expand Hindi into non-Hindi speaking regions.

Stalin, also the president of the ruling DMK, alleged the curriculum framework by the CBSE, aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, was not an innocent academic reform. It was a calculated and deeply concerning attempt at linguistic imposition that vindicates our long-standing apprehensions.

The chief minister alleged that under the guise of promoting "Indian languages", the BJP-led NDA government was aggressively advancing a centralising agenda that privileges Hindi while systematically marginalising India's rich and diverse linguistic heritage.

"The so-called three-language formula is, in reality, a covert mechanism to expand Hindi into non-

Hindi speaking regions," he alleged in a statement.

For students in southern states, this framework effectively translates into "compulsory Hindi learning." He alleged: "Yet, where is the reciprocity? Will students in Hindi-speaking states be mandated to learn Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam—or even languages like Bengali and Marathi? The complete absence of such clarity exposes the one-sided and discriminatory nature of this policy.

The irony is stark and unacceptable."

The same Union government that has "failed" to make Tamil a mandatory language in Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan schools—and has consistently failed to appoint adequate Tamil teachers, now seeks to lecture states on promoting Indian languages. "This is not commitment, this is rank hypocrisy."

Stalin wondered if the Union government had any understanding of ground realities; of avail-

ability of teachers, training capacity, and infrastructure? He asked: "Where are the qualified teachers to implement this sweeping exercise. And crucially, where is the funding to support this enormous burden on the education system? Hence, this appeared to be yet another ill-conceived policy announced without planning, resources, or accountability. This was not merely a question of language, it was a question of fairness, federalism, and equal opportunity."

By structurally privileging Hindi-speaking students, this policy risks creating entrenched advantages in higher education and employment, further widening regional disparities.

At a time when the world is moving forward at an unprecedented pace, our children must be prepared for the future. The priority should be to equip them with skills in emerging sectors like artificial intelligence, AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics), and to

strengthen scientific temper and critical thinking. Instead, this regressive and rigid language burden threatens to derail their progress, the CM claimed.

The Union government appears determined to impose Hindi, brushing aside the legitimacy, consistent, and democratic concerns raised by Tamil Nadu and several other states. This approach is a direct affront to the principles of cooperative federalism and an insult to the linguistic identity of millions of Indians. India's strength lies in its diversity and not in "enforced uniformity."

Any attempt to disturb this delicate balance is not just misguided, it is dangerous. "Such policies strike at the very foundation of our pluralistic nation and will be firmly opposed."

Further, he asked: Does the Edapadi Palaniswami-led AIADMK and its NDA allies in Tamil Nadu subscribe to this imposition? Or will they, for once, stand up for the rights, identity, and future of our students? (AGENCIES)

Govt Hiding Reality Of Foreign Surveillance Via CCTVs, Apps; People's Security At Risk: Rahul

NEW DELHI, APR 4: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged that the Modi government is putting the security of every Indian at risk by attempting to "cover up its own failures" and concealing the reality of foreign surveillance through Chinese cameras installed at vital locations.

"This is a deliberate conspiracy to keep India in the dark," he said in a post in Hindi on Facebook.

Gandhi said the government recently banned the public use of Chinese CCTV cameras. "Yet, Chinese cameras remain installed inside government buildings. Banned Chinese apps are resurfacing under changed names. Foreign AI platforms are processing sensitive data. And the government has absolutely nothing to say about this," he said.

The leader of opposition in Lok Sabha said he asked these questions in Parliament to the Ministry of Electronics and IT "The response offered plenty of verbiage, but provided no answers to the specific questions asked," he claimed.

"From which countries did our cameras originate? How many of them are certified from a security point of view? Which foreign AI platforms



are processing government data? Which banned apps continue to operate under altered names? "The ministry's response contained no figures, no answers — not even the name of a single platform," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader said five years after acknowledging that the ten lakh Chinese cameras used by the government posed risks regarding data transfer, the government has still failed to disclose whether the cameras monitoring us today are secure or not.

"By attempting to cover up its own failures and conceal the reality of foreign surveillance, the Modi government is putting the security of every single citizen at risk,"

Gandhi said.

Gandhi had asked an unstarred question in the Lok Sabha on March 25 and the Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Jitin Prasad responded that the Government of India is conscious of the cybersecurity risks posed by digital technologies.

"In last 12 years, numerous efforts have been made to strengthen India's digital ecosystem, outlined below," Prasad said.

He had listed several steps taken by the government on the "use of technology for espionage" in response to Gandhi's question, which included protecting India's telecom networks, strengthening the legal framework on

network security and data protection and strengthening the security of CCTV systems. The minister said telecom networks are the most critical part of digital infrastructure. "In 2021, the government undertook a decisive step to implement the National Security Directive on Trusted Sources. It ensures that telecommunication equipment only from the trusted sources is deployed in the telecom networks in the country."

"The government has strengthened the legal framework pertaining to network security and data protection. The government has notified the Telecommunication Act, 2023, containing extensive provisions for security of telecommunication networks in the country and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2022, containing legal framework to ensure protection of personal data," he said.

On the strengthening security of CCTV systems, the minister said, "The government has undertaken major reforms for strengthening the security of CCTV systems and notified the mandatory Essential Requirements required for CCTVs in the Indian market." (Agencies)

Authority Carries Accountability, Says SC; Restores Bank Manager's Dismissal

NEW DELHI, APR 4: The Supreme Court has reinstated the dismissal of a bank's senior manager, underscoring that authority comes with accountability, and his position carried with it an increased degree of responsibility and integrity.

The top court noted allegations that the senior manager had connived with an officer and a gunman to misappropriate the money of customers for personal gain and steal bank records.

The apex court set aside the Delhi High Court order, which had modified the punishment of dismissal from service to compulsory retirement.

The high court had noted that for similar charges, different punishments were imposed on the co-delinquents — the officer and the gunman — with the senior manager having been given the most severe punishment without any difference in their roles.

However, the apex court disagreed with this reasoning.

"Quite apart, equating a branch manager of a bank with its gunman seems to us to be in outrageous defiance of logic and reason," a bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma said in its April 2 judgement.

The bench delivered its verdict on an appeal filed by the bank challenging the September 2024 order of the high court.

The top court noted that the disciplinary authority had imposed the penalty of



dismissal from service on the senior manager.

The bench further noted that the disciplinary authority had imposed the penalty of compulsory retirement on the gunman, while the co-delinquent officer was awarded "lowering by two stages".

"Whether the imposition of lighter punishment on the co-delinquents while imposing the punishment of 'dismissal from service' upon the respondent (senior manager) is in outright defiance of logic? We think not," the bench said.

It said that when he committed the offence, the respondent was holding the post of "senior manager in MMGS-III scale", which was obviously much higher than the two co-delinquents.

"Authority carries accountability; the higher the authority, the higher the accountability. The rank of the respondent was not merely titular; it carried with it an increased degree of responsibility and integrity.

"The role of the respondent not only necessitated personal obedience but also supervision of the actions of the subordinates," it said.

The bench said the co-delinquents, having limited powers and authority, could not have been equated with the respondent. It also said that the gravity of misconduct necessarily had to be measured with the nature of the misconduct.

"Thus, the grant of the benefit of parity to the respondent by the high court merely because the co-delinquents were given lighter punishment was entirely misconceived.

"The differentiation in rank coupled with the increased trust of the employer on the respondent certainly constituted a compelling ground for a more stringent punishment to be imposed on him," the bench said.

The top court said taking an overall view, the fact that the disciplinary authority found it prudent in the circumstances to impose a harsher punishment on a higher-ranking official was "neither disproportionate, nor shocks our conscience."

"Considering the facts of the present case, we do not find any perversity or irrationality with the punishment imposed," it said.

While allowing the appeal,

the bench said, "The punishment imposed by the disciplinary authority (namely dismissal from service) imposed on the respondent is restored".

The bench referred to several apex court verdicts delineating the circumstances in which judicial interference was warranted in matters concerning the imposition of punishment by disciplinary authorities.

It noted that courts should exercise restraint while interdicting orders of punishment and normally, no court in the exercise of its power of judicial review should interfere with an order of punishment imposed on a delinquent as a measure of disciplinary action by the competent authority and substitute its own judgment for that of the former.

"This is premised on the reason that the disciplinary authority is the best judge of the situation, and the requirements of maintaining discipline within the work force," the bench said.

It said interference could be warranted if it appeals to the court that the disciplinary authority has "used a sledgehammer for cracking a nut".

"A punishment, which is strikingly or shockingly disproportionate and is not commensurate with the gravity of misconduct, proved to have been committed in the course of inquiry or otherwise, would border on arbitrariness and offend Article 14 of the Constitution," it said. (Agencies)

Blast Outside Punjab BJP Office In Chandigarh: 5 Arrested Part Of Pak's ISI-Backed Module

CHANDIGARH, APR 4: Five individuals, part of a module backed by Pakistan's ISI, have been arrested in connection with the blast incident outside the Punjab BJP headquarters in Chandigarh, said Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav on Saturday.

The Counter-Intelligence wing of Punjab Police, in a joint operation with Chandigarh Police, solved the Chandigarh grenade attack case, DGP Yadav said. Police recovered one hand grenade and one .30 bore Zigana pistol along with ammunition from their possession, the officer mentioned further.

Those arrested have been identified as Balwinder Lal alias Shami of village Majari in SBS Nagar, Jasvir Singh alias Jassi of village Bharaipur in SBS Nagar, Charanjit Singh alias Channi of village Sujawalpur in SBS Nagar, Rubal Chauhan of village Thana in Shimla and Manddeep alias Abhijot Sharma of Dhuri in Sangrur.

According to DGP Yadav, preliminary investigations revealed that the module was backed by Pakistan's spy



agency Inter-Services Intelligence and operated under the directions of foreign-based handlers located in Portugal and Germany. The accused were part of a structured network involving multiple operatives to execute the attack.

Furthermore, the DGP stated that two key perpetrators involved in the attack have also been identified, and ongoing investigations aim to establish both forward and backward linkages in this case.

Sharing further details, Assistant Inspector General, State Special Operations Cell (SSOC), SAS Nagar, Deepak

Pareek said the investigation further revealed that the accused had transported a consignment containing hand grenades, arms and live cartridges. This consignment was circulated through multiple operatives before reaching the final perpetrators.

The AIG stated that, acting on the instructions of a handler based in Portugal, the accused coordinated the delivery and execution of the attack. Police teams are currently conducting raids to apprehend the absconding individuals involved in the incident. An FIR has been registered under relevant

Sections of the Arms Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Police Station SSOC SAS Nagar. The explosion occurred around 5 pm on Wednesday when a suspected crude explosive device was hurled near the office, officials had said. No casualties were reported.

The Punjab BJP headquarters is located in Sector 37 in Chandigarh. An unverified video that surfaced on social media on Wednesday evening shows a man pulling the pin from a blue-coloured grenade and throwing it, while another person records the act. The duo is seen fleeing just moments before the blast.

Their faces were not visible in the 10-second video, and the authenticity of the footage has yet to be verified. CCTV camera recordings also captured suspects running across the road immediately after the explosion. In a separate unverified social media post attributed to Sukhjinder Singh

Babbar of the banned Babbar Khalsa International, the outfit claimed responsibility for the incident. (Agencies)

'I go to Parliament to create impact, not ruckus': Raghav Chadha rubbishes AAP's allegations

NEW DELHI, APR 4: "I go to Parliament to create impact, not ruckus," said Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha on Saturday as he rejected allegations levelled against him by the Aam Aadmi Party, calling them "false" and part of a "coordinated campaign".

In a video, Chadha dismissed claims that he did not join opposition walkouts, terming the charge a "blatant lie".

He challenged his detractors to cite even a single instance where he failed to participate and said parlia-



mentary proceedings are recorded through CCTV cameras.

Refuting another allegation that he refused to sign a motion related to the Chief

election Commissioner, Chadha said no party leader had asked him, either formally or informally, to sign it. He added that several other MPs from his

party had also not signed the motion.

The MP said his focus in Parliament has been on raising public issues such as GST, income tax, air pollution in Delhi, water concerns in Punjab, public healthcare, education, railway passenger issues, menstrual health, unemployment and inflation.

Chadha said that he goes to Parliament to "create impact not ruckus" as it runs on taxpayers' money and it is his responsibility to highlight their concerns. "Every lie will be exposed," he said. (PTI)