

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

## Nepal PM directs universities to scrap party-based student unions

**KATHMANDU, APR 20:** Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah on Monday instructed the universities and health institutions to dismantle the political party-based student and employee unions.

PM Shah issued the directives during a three-hour-long discussion with the vice chancellors of universities and heads of health institutes at his office in Singh Durbar secretariat.

In their response, vice chancellors had mentioned that initiatives are being taken to dismantle such organisations, as student poli-



PM Shah stressed that no politics should be entertained in any academic institutions and that no law

tics has become irrelevant after the Gen Z movement, according to the PM's secretariat.

stands as a barrier to implementing the decision. He said those willing to engage in politics should disassociate from professional obligations as the government will not tolerate political parties' flags, influence or organisations in places such as hospitals, colleges and universities.

Shah also assured that the government will provide full security to enforce its decision. The ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party, in its 100-point commitment paper, promised to scrap political party-based students' unions. (PTI)

## China denies links to Iranian cargo ship seized by US in Gulf

**BELJING, APR 21:** China on Tuesday denied any links to the Iranian cargo ship seized by the US in the Gulf allegedly containing chemical materials to manufacture missiles.

"To my knowledge, this is a foreign-flagged container ship. China opposes any malicious linking and hype," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a press briefing here reacting to allegations by former US envoy to the UN Nikki Haley.

In a post on X, Haley claimed that the ship seized by the US was headed from China to Iran and is linked to chemical shipments for missiles.

"It refused repeated orders to stop. Another reminder that China is helping prop up Iran's regime — a reality that can't be ignored," Haley said.

A US naval ship enforcing the blockade of ships going to Iranian ports fired at the cargo ship when it reportedly failed to heed calls to stop.

The US Marines later boarded the ship and seized it.

The Iranian military warned that it would respond to the US' action against the container ship.

"The aggressor United States,' by violating the ceasefire and engaging in maritime highway robbery,



attacked an Iranian commercial vessel in the waters of the Sea of Oman," CNN quoted Iran's military as saying. The Iranian military said that the US had destroyed the ship's navigational equipment and deployed troops on the deck, "effectively carrying out an act of aggression against it."

Following the incident, Iran also declined to confirm its participation in the second round of peace talks with the US in Pakistan this week. Last week, China denied

aiding Iran's military with defence and satellite support. US President Donald Trump also threatened to impose heavy tariffs against China if it supplied weapons to Iran.

Responding to allegations, Guo last week said that China always acts prudently and responsibly on the export of military products, and exercises strict control in accordance with China's laws and regulations on export control and due international obligations.

On the tariff threat, he said, "If the US goes ahead with the tariff hikes on China on the basis of these accusations, China will respond with countermeasures."

China, a major importer of Iranian oil, shares strategic and defence ties with Iran.

Also, a CNN report earlier this month said US intelligence indicates that China is preparing to deliver new air defence systems to Iran, including shoulder-fired anti-air missile systems known as MANPADS. (PTI)

## Canada court sentences killer of Ghaziabad student Kartik Vasudev to life imprisonment

**TORONTO/GHAZI-ABAD, Apr 21:** A court in Toronto has sentenced a man to life imprisonment after rejecting his plea of not being criminally responsible due to a mental disorder in the killing of Indian student Kartik Vasudev, his family said on Tuesday.

The Superior Court of Toronto, presided over by Justice Jane Kelly, on Monday found Richard Edwin guilty on two counts of first-degree murder for the killings of two strangers on April 7 and April 9, 2022, according to the Global News Toronto.

While Edwin admitted to shooting the 21-year-old Vasudev, a resident of Ghaziabad and a student of Seneca College, his defence argued that he should be declared not criminally responsible (NCR) as he was suffering



from a mental disorder and could not distinguish right from wrong.

The court acknowledged that Edwin was suffering from schizophrenia at the time of the incident but rejected the NCR plea and awarded him life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

The judgment, published in the Global News Toronto and shared with PTI by the

victim's father, detailed the sequence of events leading to the killing. It stated that Vasudev was walking past Sherbourne station towards the Bloor Street East staircase when Edwin rushed past him, turned back and fired multiple shots at his back.

Speaking to PTI from Toronto, the victim's father Jitesh Vasudev said he and his wife had remained in Canada to attend the final

hearing. "After a legal battle of four years, we have finally received justice," he said.

Vasudev had moved to Toronto in January 2022 to pursue management studies but was killed within months. His body was later repatriated to Ghaziabad and cremated on the banks of the Hindan river, where his younger brother performed the last rites.

Earlier, speaking to PTI, Jitesh Vasudev had expressed concern over the lack of official assistance during the transportation of the body from the Indira Gandhi International Airport and the absence of district officials at the time of cremation.

The family resides in Rajendra Nagar in the Trans-Hindan area, and Vasudev was an alumnus of DAV School in the locality. (PTI)

## Hong Kong government seeks to seize millions from jailed activist Jimmy Lai

**HONG KONG, APR 21:** The Hong Kong Government is seeking to confiscate millions of dollars in funds and corporate shares it says are linked to crimes committed by jailed former media tycoon Jimmy Lai, according to a court document seen by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The filing does not explain how the property, which it estimates to be worth over 127 million Hong Kong dollars (USD 16 million), is linked to Lai's crimes. The government previously announced that it was seeking asset forfeitures in the case but did not disclose the amount.

Lai, an outspoken critic of China's ruling Communist Party who founded the now-defunct newspaper Apple Daily, was convicted in December of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and conspiring with others to publish seditious articles. Newspapers

He was sentenced to 20 years in prison in February, the toughest sentence given so far under a Beijing-imposed national security law.

Critics say his conviction reflected the decline of press and other freedoms in the city, a former British colony



that returned to Chinese rule in 1997. The government insists the case has nothing to do with a free press, saying the defendants used news reporting as a pretext for years to commit acts that harmed China and Hong Kong.

According to a document sent to the city's court system earlier this month, the Department of Justice is seeking an order for Lai to forfeit to the government money held in 15 bank accounts under his name, money held in bank accounts under various companies, as well as shares

in various companies held by him or others.

The money the government is seeking to seize also includes bail money deposited in the court system and a fine of 2 million Hong Kong dollars (USD 255,440) imposed on Lai for fraud convictions in 2022, which could be refunded to him after the convictions were quashed in February.

The government said it had applied to seize the properties linked to Lai's crimes on April 2 in a statement. At that time, the government

cited the security law, saying that the funds and tools used or intended to be used in committing an offense shall be confiscated, as well as proceeds obtained in the commission of an offense.

The government said an order made for the purpose of safeguarding national security can prevent convicts, their accomplices or agents from continuing to use their offense-related properties to engage in acts and activities endangering security.

A hearing on the case is scheduled for July. (AP)

## King Charles marks 'darling mama' Queen Elizabeth II's 100th birthday

**LONDON, APR 21:** In a moving tribute to mark what would have been Queen Elizabeth II's 100th birthday on Tuesday, Britain's King Charles III said his "darling mama" would be affected by the troubled times but also believed that goodness will prevail.

The broadcast message was recorded earlier this month in the library of Balmoral Castle, the royal residence in Scotland, where the late Queen passed away on September 8, 2022, aged 96.

Her son and heir's message came at the start of a day of events to commemorate the birth centenary, which will conclude with a special reception hosted by the King at Buckingham Palace in London.

"Much about the times we now live in I suspect may have troubled her deeply, but I take heart from her belief

that goodness will always prevail and that a brighter dawn is never far from the horizon," said Charles.

"For as a young Princess Elizabeth put it in her first ever public broadcast, aged just 14, we can each play our part 'to make the world of tomorrow a better and happier place'. It is a belief which I share with all my heart.

"So young or old, and whatever our differences, let us therefore seek to follow this example as we make today not the marking of a milestone felt by absence but the celebration of a life well-lived, and a legacy of hope, as we strive together towards a 'better, happier tomorrow' — one rooted in peace, justice, prosperity and security.

"In this, I renew my own solemn pledge of duty and service to you all. God bless you, darling mama; you remain forever in our hearts

and prayers," he said.

The 77-year-old monarch opened the address by noting that the birth anniversary was an opportunity to reflect on the "life and loss of a sovereign" and to celebrate the many blessings of the memory of Britain's longest-serving Queen.

"Queen Elizabeth's 'promise with destiny kept' shaped the world around her and touched the lives of countless people across our nation, the Commonwealth and beyond. Her near-century was one of remarkable change and yet, through each passing decade, through every transformation, she remained constant, steadfast and wholly devoted to the people she served," he said.

"Millions will remember her for moments of national significance; many others for a fleeting personal encounter, a smile, a kind word

that lifted spirits... or for that marvellous twinkle of the eye when sharing a marmalade sandwich with Paddington Bear in the final months of her life," he added, alluding to Queen Elizabeth's famous televised sketch with the popular children's literature character marking the platinum jubilee of her reign in June 2022.

The birth centenary events included the formal unveiling of the design recommendations for a permanent Queen Elizabeth Memorial, which will be made up of a bronze statue to be sculpted by Martin Jennings showing the late Queen in her younger years in ceremonial robes.

The 9.84-foot-tall sculpture overlooking the Mall near Buckingham Palace is inspired by a 1955 painting of Queen Elizabeth II by Pietro Annigoni.

## Attempts Being Made To Divide People On Religious, Linguistic Lines: Bhagwat

**AGARTALA, APR 21:** RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday alleged that attempts were being made to create divisions among people on religious and linguistic lines, asserting that India's strength lay in its unity amid diversity.

Addressing a gathering after the consecration ceremony of Maa Chinmayi Soundarya Temple at Fakrimgura, around 23 km from Agartala, Bhagwat said certain "evil forces" were worried that their "shops" would shut down if India progressed by drawing on its centuries-old civilisational strength.

"They are trying to engineer a quarrel among people



along the lines of religions and languages. I don't need to give examples," he said.

Tripura Governor Indrasena Reddy, Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma and Chief Minister Manik Saha were among those present at the event.

Emphasising that diversity has long been India's defin-

ing feature, Bhagwat said the country had advanced through centuries despite having multiple languages, faiths, traditions and cultures.

"Nations that do not have a history of more than 4,000 or 5,000 years can have one religion and one language, but India is completely dif-

ferent, possessing a long history, tradition and culture," he said.

He urged people to remain united and defeat attempts to sow discord. "There should be no reason for fear, whatever situation may arise," he said. The RSS chief also said that in the present world order, power often overshadows what is right.

"If you have power, your might will be proven, and no one will pay heed if you are on the right path. Therefore, acquire knowledge and power," he said.

Bhagwat said temples were not merely places of worship but had historically served as centres of social life and enlightenment. (Agen-

## VP Radhakrishnan meets Indian-origin Tamil beneficiaries of Indian Housing Project in Sri Lanka

**COLOMBO, APR 20:** Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Monday met with Indian-origin Tamil beneficiaries of the houses built with assistance from India during his visit to the central tea plantation district of Nuwara Eliya in Sri Lanka.

Radhakrishnan, who is on a two-day visit to Sri Lanka, met the Indian-origin Tamil community and people of India have a deep commitment to the welfare of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

The vice president visited the Liddlesdale Estate, Ragala, in Nuwara Eliya, also called the tea capital of Sri Lanka, in the Central Province.

He noted that the Govern-

ment of India has so far provided 50,000 houses for the Tamil families in Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, as well as to Indian origin Tamil families in plantation regions, a social media post by the vice president said.

He added that an additional 10,000 houses will be delivered under the fourth phase of the Indian Housing Project.

While interacting with Indian-origin Tamils in Nuwara Eliya, Radhakrishnan also expressed his "deep sorrow" over the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwa and discussed India's prompt relief and rescue operations launched under 'Operation Sagar Bandhu'.

Radhakrishnan's visit is the first ever by an Indian vice president to Sri Lanka.

Later, the vice president will visit the Sita Amman Temple in Sitha Eliya and from there he will return to Colombo.

On Sunday, during talks with Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya, who is also the education minister, Radhakrishnan discussed cooperation in the field of education. An announcement regarding the enhancement of the Ceylon Estate Workers Education Trust scholarship scheme was also made.

The number of scholarships under this scheme is being doubled from 350 to 700 and the monthly stipend is being increased from LKR

2,500 for A-level students and to LKR 7,500 for those pursuing higher education.

During talks with leaders of the Sri Lankan Tamil and the Indian-origin Tamil parties on Sunday, he announced that the Overseas Citizen Card will now be extended to the fifth and the sixth generation of the diaspora.

This is expected to benefit, in particular, the Indian-origin Tamil community. Up to now the privilege had only been limited to the fourth generation diaspora.

The vice president also announced the completion and handing over of the final tranche of houses under Phase 3 of the Indian Housing Project.