

Correspondents' dinner firing

World leaders say political violence has no place in democracy

WASHINGTON, APR 26: World leaders expressed relief that US President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania and other guests were unharmed after a shooting incident at the White House Correspondents' dinner here on Saturday night and asserted that political violence has no place in a democracy.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who has had frequent run-ins with Trump, described the shooting incident at the Washington Hilton hotel as a "disturbing event".

"I am relieved that the President, the First Lady, and all guests are safe following reports of gunfire at the White House correspondents' dinner in Washington tonight. Political violence has no place in any democracy, and my thoughts are with all those who have been shaken by this disturbing event," Carney said in a post on X.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, said it was "good that President Trump and his wife are safe following the recent events".

"We send them our respect. Violence must never be the way," Sheinbaum



said. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he was pleased to hear all attendees were safe. "We applaud the work of the Secret Service and law enforcement agencies for their swift action," he said in a statement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was relieved that US President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump and Vice President J D Vance were safe and unharmed after a security incident at the White House Correspondents' dinner in Washington.

Modi said violence has

no place in democracy and must be unequivocally condemned.

"Relieved to learn that President Trump, the First Lady and Vice President are safe and unharmed following the recent security incident at a Washington DC hotel. I extend my best wishes for their continued safety and well-being. Violence has no place in a democracy and must be unequivocally condemned," Modi said in a post on X.

Delcy Rodriguez, the acting President of Venezuela following the capture of

Nicolas Maduro by US forces, condemned the attack against Trump.

"We extend our best wishes to them and to all attendees of the Correspondent's dinner. Violence is never an option for those who uphold the values of peace," she wrote on X. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also took to social media to condemn the incident, stating he was "deeply shocked" to hear the news.

"Relieved to know that President Trump, the First Lady, and other attendees are safe," Sharif said. (PTI)

Syria's first public trial of Assad-era officials opens in Damascus

DAMASCUS (SYRIA), APR 26: The first public trial in Syria of officials linked to the rule of former President Bashar Assad opened in Damascus Sunday.

Atef Najib, a former Syrian army brigadier general who was head of the Political Security Branch in southern Syria's Daraa province under Assad, appeared in the courtroom to face charges related to "crimes against the Syrian people," state-run news agency SANA reported.

Najib was in that position in 2011 when teenagers who scrawled anti-government graffiti on a school wall in Daraa were arrested and tortured. The case became a catalyst for mass



protests against the repressive policies of Assad's government security forces.

The protests were met by a brutal government crackdown and spiralled into a 14-year civil war that ended with Assad's ouster in December 2024 in a lightning rebel offensive. Assad fled to Russia, while most

members of his inner circle also escaped Syria.

Assad himself and his brother, Maher, former commander of the Syrian military's 4th Armoured Division – which Syrian opposition activists have accused of killings, torture, extortion and drug trafficking, in addition to running

its own detention centres – were charged in absentia, along with a number of other former high-ranking security officials.

Najib was the only one of the defendants who was arrested and present in person in court on Sunday for a preparatory session in the trial, which will continue next month.

The government of interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa has faced criticism over delays in launching a promised transitional justice process.

Syria is struggling to heal following 14 years of civil war that left an estimated half a million people dead, millions more displaced, and the country battered and divided.

Amit Sharma Highlights Digital Census 2027 Roadmap at Rotary Event

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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Amit Sharma, Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director Census Operations (DCO), Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, highlighted the roadmap and significance of Census 2027, terming it a transformative national exercise aimed at strengthening data-driven governance.

Delivering a keynote address as Chief Guest at a Health Talk organised by Rotary Club Jammu City in association with Fortis Hospital Gurugram, Sharma stated that Census 2027 will be India's first fully digital and paperless Census, designed to generate accurate, real-time and granular data for effective policy planning.

He informed that the Census in J&K will be conducted in two phases, with the House Listing Operations (HLO) and Housing



Census scheduled from June 1 to June 30, 2026, preceded by a self-enumeration window from May 17 to May 31, 2026. The Population Enumeration (PE) phase will be carried out in February 2027, while snow-bound areas will be covered earlier in September 2026.

Elaborating on the digital framework, Sharma said data collection will be done through mobile applications with in-built validation checks to ensure accuracy and consistency. He added that citizens will also

be able to participate through a dedicated self-enumeration portal, making the process more inclusive and transparent.

Highlighting the importance of Census data, he said it forms the backbone of governance and plays a key role in policy formulation, targeted delivery of welfare schemes, and efficient allocation of resources across sectors such as health, education and infrastructure.

Sharma further informed that key preparatory activities, including freezing of

administrative boundaries, development of digital platforms and training of field staff, have already been completed. On data security, he assured that robust safeguards like end-to-end encryption and secure transmission protocols have been put in place, ensuring confidentiality under the Census Act, 1948. He also cautioned citizens not to share sensitive personal details such as bank account or Aadhaar numbers beyond the prescribed Census questions.

Calling for active public participation, Sharma urged citizens and members of Rotary across J&K and Ladakh to spread awareness and cooperate with enumerators, as well as utilise the self-enumeration facility.

On the occasion, the Rotary Club Jammu honoured the officer for his insightful address and efforts in making people aware about Census 2027.

Excise Commissioner Inspects Liquor Manufacturing Units in Samba

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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Excise Commissioner, Jammu & Kashmir, Vaibhav Kohli conducted surprise inspections of several liquor manufacturing units in Samba district to review their functioning and ensure strict adherence to the provisions of the J&K Excise Policy and Distillery Rules.

The inspection was part of the department's ongoing efforts to strengthen regulatory oversight and enforce compliance across the excise sector. During the visit, the Commissioner examined operational procedures, production records, storage facilities, and documentation maintained by the units.

Special emphasis was laid on verifying whether manufacturing processes conformed to prescribed norms, including quality control measures, stock ac-



counting, and adherence to licensed capacities. The inspection team also assessed compliance with safety standards and measures aimed at preventing revenue leakage.

Interacting with unit managements, Kohli

stressed the need for complete transparency in operations and directed them to maintain accurate, real-time records of production

and dispatch. He reiterated that strict adherence to the Excise Policy is essential not only for regulating the industry but also for safeguarding government revenue and ensuring quality-controlled production.

Warning against any lapses, the Commissioner stated that non-compliance would invite stringent action, including penalties,

suspension, or cancellation of licenses. He further asserted that the department would intensify regular inspections to ensure strict monitoring.

The inspection drive reflects the Excise Department's firm commitment to enforcing regulatory standards and ensuring responsible functioning of manufacturing units in the region.

LG Ladakh visits Pashmina Goat Farm

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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With an aim to strengthening and promoting Ladakhi Pashmina and positioning it as a global brand, the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, visited the Pashmina Goat Farm at Upshi. The visit underlined the Administration's commitment to establishing Ladakh as a premier hub for world-class Pashmina wool.

Noting that Ladakh had immense potential to emerge as a global Pashmina hub, the Lieutenant Governor emphasised the need to ensure better value realisation for local farmers and artisans. He stressed the importance of minimising wastage of raw wool and utilising by-products for value-added items. He also emphasised the need to improve processing, branding, new design interventions and market linkages for the Ladakhi Pashmina products that would not only strengthen the local artisans and enterprises but also secure higher income for farmers and self-help groups engaged in Pashmina-related activities.

During the visit, the



Lieutenant Governor was informed that Ladakh is home to some of the finest Pashmina wool in the world, renowned for its exceptional softness and superior quality. He was apprised that there are three Pashmina farms across Ladakh, with the Upshi farm alone producing around 150 kg of raw Pashmina annually. The wool is extracted through a traditional combing technique and subsequently

processed at the dehairing plant in Leh, where approximately 35 percent fine dehaired Pashmina is obtained from one kilogram of raw wool. The average fibre diameter ranges be-

tween 13 to 15 microns, while Pashmina from baby goats measures as fine as 12 microns, making it among the most luxurious natural fibres in the world. The farm, with over 50,000 wild willow and poplar trees and around 2,000 quintals of alfalfa fodder, also serves as a major green zone in Ladakh.

Shri Saxena emphasised the Farm's potential to be developed as a unique tourism destination. He asked for introducing guided tours to educate visitors about authentic Ladakhi Pashmina and dispel misinformation in the market. He also called for the creation of visitor-

friendly amenities, including canteen, to offer a complete experiential visit. He further directed that the farm be integrated into Ladakh's tourism circuit and that existing infrastructure be upgraded. The Lieutenant Governor assured full support from the UT Administration to promote Ladakhi Pashmina as a globally recognised brand.

The Lieutenant Governor also visited the Changluk Breeding Farm and the Intensive Fodder Development Farm at Stakna, reviewing ongoing efforts to strengthen livestock and fodder resources in the region.

Natrang stages Hindi play 'Rehearsal'

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
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Natrang featured 'Rehearsal', a play in Hindi written by Lakshmi Kant Vaishnav and directed by Neeraj Kant here today at Natrang Studio Theatre Kachi Chawni in its weekly Theatre Series, Sunday Theatre. Today's presentation was showcased with the collaboration of MIER Jammu. Director MIER Dr. Adit Gupta was the Chief guest on the occasion who appreciated this new initiative of Natrang aimed at introducing theatre amongst youth for their holistic development. Earlier Director Natrang Balwant Thakur dwelt in length about the role of theatre in transforming and elevating personalities with multiple abilities.

This followed the presentation of 'Rehearsal' in which the writer has very satirically mocked the people who want to do something without its proper knowledge and also without possessing the basic eligibility of the field.

The play 'Rehearsal' very interestingly portrays the rehearsal scenario of a play where the cast is all women. Though they (Kitty-mates) want to present a good show, their ap-



proach is not good enough and too much immature. The basic ingredients which are required to mount a professional theatre production like discipline, punctuality, team spirit, self-motivation, neutrality of the mind etc were all missing in these ladies and they were instead full of the traits like jealousy, gossip, lack of coordination and egotism.

The rehearsal becomes a free for all situation where everyone reveals her mind in a dramatic manner. Though there is a director

also but because of her own limitations and lack of mettle, she is not able to control the team. Where these ladies were required to act with compassion towards their fellow artists they had their own whims and fancies, few of them even had proud in their mind as their husbands are at higher posts resultantly they seek pampered treatment. Finally the rehearsal which was shown in the play Rehearsal ended up to be a chaos leaving a stern message that we need to be disciplined and committed

to create a meaningful work of art.

Natrang artists who performed in the play included Divya Sharma, Charu Rajput, Mehak Mattoo, Saloni Sharma, Aarzoo Sharma, Esha, Shriya Mantoo and Aman Sharma.

The lights of the play were operated by Neeraj Kant whereas the music of the play was scored by Navvy Verma. The presentations were done by Aatifa Nisar and the show was coordinated by Mohd. Yaseen.