

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

## Biography revisits defining moments of the Dalai Lama's life

**NEW DELHI, JUL 4:** A new biography of the Dalai Lama revisits the defining moments of his life, tracing his journey from his early years in Tibet to becoming one of the world's most respected spiritual leaders.

Ahead of the Dalai Lama's 91st birthday on July 6, Westland Books announced the publication of "Eternal Light: The Life and Legacy of the 14th Dalai Lama" by Arvind Yadav.

The book, set to release on July 30, also chronicles significant chapters of his life, from a quiet world of monastic study to the turmoil of global politics, shedding fresh light on relevant historical events.

It examines the Tibetan community's efforts to preserve its culture, identity and faith in exile, while bringing



greater historical context to events that continue to shape the Tibetan narrative.

Speaking about the book, the Dalai Lama said, it will allow readers to gain insight into Tibetan history and also the ongoing challenges Tibetan people face.

"Most importantly, it shares the message I have always sought to spread one of

love, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, kindness, and the oneness of humanity," he says.

According to Yadav, the book brings many lesser-known facts about the Dalai Lama's life.

Minakshi Thakur, publisher and editor at Westland Books, says "Eternal Light" provides fascinating details

from the Dalai Lama's childhood and early life, "setting the record straight on many events described inaccurately in the past".

Yadav mentions in the book how he conveyed his idea of writing this biography to the Dalai Lama when he met him in 2002.

"Please write my biography. My blessings are with you. However, there are three things you must definitely add in the book," the Tibetan spiritual leader apparently told him.

These three things were - his teeth being in excellent condition, his radiant skin without any wrinkles, and the child within him.

When Yadav assured that he would include these three elements in his biography, the Dalai Lama gave the final nod.

## Venezuela FM visits Indian field hospital; expresses gratitude for earthquake relief work

**CARACAS, JULY 4:** Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yvan Gil visited the Indian field hospital in Caracas and thanked New Delhi for its earthquake relief work.

The field hospital, set up by the Indian Army at the International La Rinconada Race-track, provides comprehensive care to those affected by the devastating earthquakes that took place in Venezuela last month, which killed more than 1,700 people.

"On behalf of the Bolivarian (Venezuelan) Government and the people of Venezuela, we express our most sincere gratitude to the Government and the people of India, especially to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for extending a helping hand to those who have suffered as a result of this calamity," Gil said on Saturday in a post on X.

Indian Ambassador PK Ashok Babu accompanied the Foreign Minister during the visit.

"The Foreign Minister, Yvan Gil, visited the field hospital and met with our doctors and the public. He



expressed his gratitude to the Government of India for its relief efforts following the earthquakes that occurred in Venezuela," the Indian Embassy in Caracas said on X.

Under the mission, referred to as "Operacion Amistad" in Spanish, two Indian Air Force C-17 Globemaster aircraft transported 66 tonnes of aid, including

the Indian Army field hospital, over 35 tonnes of relief supplies, medicines and medical equipment, and two BHISHM Cubes.

Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri (BHISHM) cubes are mobile hospitals aimed at providing emergency medical care.

Working alongside Venezuelan authorities, In-

dian rescue and medical teams are providing emergency medical care and conducting search and rescue missions, the Indian embassy said earlier.

The 7.2 and 7.5-magnitude earthquakes were among the strongest in Venezuela in more than a century and were felt throughout the region. (PTI)

## Day 15 of CJP Protest: Fasting Wangchuk's Health Worsens; 'Why Pradhan Not Sacked Yet,' Dipke Asks

**NEW DELHI, JUL 4:** Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk entered the seventh day of his hunger strike at Jantar Mantar on Saturday, with the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) saying he has lost five kilograms and that his health is deteriorating fast.

The outfit insisted on its demand for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged examination irregularities.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke on X said Wangchuk's condition was worsening with each passing day and wondered why Pradhan has not been sacked yet.

"Sonam Sir has lost 5 kg, and his health is deteriorating with each passing day. How much longer will the Prime Minister wait before sacking Dharmendra Pradhan?" Dipke said.

"Why is Dharmendra Pradhan so important to PM Modi that, despite the deaths of 20 students, he still refuses to remove him?" he asked.

In another post, Dipke said the government would be responsible if anything happened to the activist.

"If the government doesn't act fast and take action against Pradhan, it will be responsible if anything happens to Sonam Sir. Despite his rapidly deteriorating health, he has made it clear that he will not end his hunger strike until action is taken," he said.

Dipke also shared a satiri-



cal cartoon depicting a man attempting to eat papers labelled "Exam Paper" while being restrained by two cockroaches, with the caption: "Go back Dharmendra Pradhan."

In a post on X late Friday night, Wangchuk welcomed progress in talks between the Centre and Ladakh representatives over the region's demands and urged the government to now focus on accountability in education. Tourist Destinations "Thank you government for steps taken today to resolve the Ladakh issue, now please pay attention to accountability in education," he said.

Wangchuk's remarks

came after representatives of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) said they had resolved differences with the Ministry of Home Affairs over the minutes of an earlier meeting, paving the way for the next phase of formal negotiations on Ladakh's proposed governance framework.

The leaders of the two bodies also credited Wangchuk's fast for the breaking of the stalemate with the Centre.

Meanwhile, six students associated with the All India Students' Association (AISA) also continued their hunger strike at a separate stage at Jantar Mantar.

The protest, which entered

its 15th day on Saturday, has drawn support from several political leaders and civil society members, including CPI(M) general secretary MA Baby, CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat, CPI general secretary D Raja, CPI(ML) Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, social activist Yogendra Yadav, Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan, CPI leader Annie Raja, transparency activist Anjali Bhardwaj, RTI activist Nikhil Dey and TMC MPs Sagarika Ghose and Mahua Moitra.

The CJP protest began on June 20 over irregularities in several exams, including NEET, the premier medical entrance. (Agencies)

## Iran begins dayslong funeral for late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, killed in war

**TEHRAN, JULY 4:** Iran began a dayslong funeral Saturday for the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, months after an airstrike killed him at the start of the war. He was 86.

Authorities unveiled the casket containing Khamenei's body in a glass case at the Grand Mosalla in Tehran, Iran's capital. Mourners wept at the sight, with some chanting: "Our word is one! Revenge! Revenge!"

Some carried banners and flags, while billboards across the city bore Khamenei's image. Crowds of men rhythmically beat their chests in mourning, a common practice at Shiite funerals.

"I am here to say goodbye to my beloved leader Ali Khamenei," said a weeping Hananeh Mousavi, 27, who attended the funeral alongside her mother. "I never expected to see such a day. I wish I had died before this tragedy."

An outdoor stage set up at

the Grand Mosalla resembled the stage where Khamenei once gave his speeches at a husseiniyah at his compound in downtown Tehran. That site was destroyed in the Israeli airstrike that killed Khamenei and some of his family at the start of the Iran war on February 28. The caskets of his dead family members sat beneath his, which had his black turban atop it, identifying him as a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

Iran's government expects to see millions flood the streets of the capital in scenes reminiscent of the burial of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989. Organisers sprayed water on the crowds and offered cold drinks to help those with the summertime heat.

"We attended the funeral to show that we are all committed to defend our country and religion," said Ali Kazemi, who came from the northwestern city of Tabriz,

some 530 km away from Tehran.

A large turnout could provide a boost for Iran's government, particularly as it tries to leverage its hold on the Strait of Hormuz in negotiations with the United States over a permanent end to the war, and as concern still lingers that Israel could attack yet again.

Iran chose July 4, the 250th anniversary of the creation of the US, to begin the funeral. While authorities did not acknowledge the timing, crowds at the ceremony in Tehran chanted: "Death to America!" - reprising a cry that's been common in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and US Embassy takeover and hostage crisis.

"We knocked the hell out of Iran," US President Donald Trump said in a speech at the same time in South Dakota in front of Mount Rushmore. "They want to settle so badly. We gave them a week off for a funeral." The American president

was not forgotten in Tehran. In the crowd in Grand Mosalla, several mourners held a large flag that read: "#Kill-Trump."

Khamenei's body will be transported to cities in both Iran and neighbouring Iraq. Authorities have shut down streets, airspace and daily life in Tehran for the mourning.

It remains unclear whether Iran's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, will appear at his father's funeral. The late supreme leader appeared in 1989 at Khomeini's funeral, weeping visibly, as he began his journey to lead Iran for decades with an iron fist while confronting the West. Mojtaba Khamenei's late wife was one of the dead on display at the Grand Mosalla.

Israel's repeated threats to kill Mojtaba Khamenei drew a warning from Iran's joint military command Thursday, which told Israel and the US "to avoid any miscalculation" over the coming days. (AP)

## Pope marks July 4 by praying in Lampedusa for migrants who died seeking freedom, prosperity

**SICILY (ITALY), JULY 4:** Pope Leo XIV, who has sparred with the Trump administration over its immigration crackdown, spent the Fourth of July on Saturday in the epicentre of Europe's migration debate to honour the tens of thousands of people who have died trying to reach Europe to find freedom and prosperity.

While the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence with rallies, parties and fireworks, history's first US-born pope travelled to the Sicilian island of Lampedusa to pray at a migrant cemetery and celebrate a solemn Mass for the island's newest arrivals.

In doing so, Leo was sending a powerfully symbolic message to the United States and Europe of the Christian obligation to uphold the dignity of every human being, migrants and the most vulnerable especially, while reminding the United States that it was founded by immigrants.

In a letter sent to Americans on the July 4 anniversary, Leo insisted that protecting the unborn and all human life also means "welcoming, protecting and assisting immigrants, whose hopes, sacrifices and contribution have formed part of the history of this country from its very beginning."

"To receive them with compassion and generosity is not only an act of charity, but also a recognition of the dignity that belongs to every human person," Leo wrote.

A treeless, strip of rock 9 kilometres long, Lampedusa is closer to Africa than the Italian mainland and is the main port of entry into Europe for hundreds of thou-



sands of migrants smuggled by boat from Libya or Tunisia.

In recent years, Lampedusa has become Ground Zero of Europe's migration debate as the continent struggles to police its borders while honouring its legal obligations to welcome refugees fleeing conflict, climate change and poverty.

The International Organization of Migration has recorded more than 35,000 missing migrants in the Mediterranean since 2014, though the actual number of dead is believed to be far higher given the untold number of "invisible" shipwrecks that are never recorded.

Leo has strongly emphasised the need to uphold the dignity of migrants, especially amid the Trump administration's mass deportation program in his native Chicago. But he has also directed his message to Europe's Christian leaders.

Last month, Leo visited another European migration hot spot, in Spain's Canary Islands, to shame leaders who turn migrants away differently while also warning people smugglers they will face God's wrath for exploiting the desperation of migrants.

After arriving in Lampedusa by plane, Leo was to pay homage to the dead at the island's migrant cemetery and unveil a plaque, dedicated to Pope Francis, on the main dock before celebrating Mass in the main piazza.

The gestures send a "strong message" of solidarity, said Tareke Brhane, a migrant from Eritrea and president of the October 3rd Committee, a nonprofit founded by relatives of victims of a 2013 shipwreck in Lampedusa that left 368 people dead.

"It is a strong sign for our battle with Italy and with Europe in order to register the deaths, because as of today we still do not have a registry (of those deceased)," he told The Associated Press.

Leo's visit both honours the dead and "gives a message to the relatives, so many of them still waiting and suffering," he said.

With his visit, Leo followed in the footsteps of Pope Francis, who made the plight of migrants and refugees a priority of his pontificate. For the Catholic Church, welcoming and accompanying people fleeing hardship is part of the Gospel-mandated call to "welcome the stranger."

Francis travelled to

Lampedusa in July 2013, on his first trip outside Rome after his election. He tossed a wreath into the sea in memory of migrants who had died and denounced the "globalisation of indifference" that the world shows migrants.

Salvatore Sortino, the IOM's head of mission for Italy and Malta, said there had been a decrease in arrivals in the central Mediterranean route this year. But he said the number of dead had increased proportionally, "in the sense that the diminishing numbers of arrivals hasn't resulted in a lower number of deaths at sea."

"That speaks about the vulnerability that remains," he said. "So the visit of the pope here, where all this happens, I think is a very important reminder of that element."

The International Rescue Committee estimates that there are 118 million people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced this year alone.

The pope's visit comes just two weeks after the European Union began implementing a new set of rules governing how each of its 27 member states will deal with irregular migration and asylum seekers.

Under the new rules, foreigners will be screened at EU borders for up to seven days before they are admitted, with those deemed to pose a "security threat" or from countries listed as "safe" getting a faster process. One of the pillars of the new pact is to speed up voluntary and forced returns of rejected asylum seekers by automatically issuing return orders when an application is rejected.

## Far-right Alternative for Germany party elects leaders as protesters and police clash

**ERFURT, JULY 4:** Thousands of protesters aimed to disrupt the national convention of Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany party on Saturday, with some clashing with police in riot gear outside the meeting.

Alternative for Germany, or AfD, is meeting in the eastern city of Erfurt to elect its leaders, which German parties do every two years. The party seeks to show unity while extending the terms of leaders Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla, who have run the party together for four years.

The demonstrations outside the convention reflect how AfD has divided

Germany even as it is the nation's biggest opposition party nationally.

The weekend convention has drawn additional controversy by coinciding with the 100-year anniversary of a Nazi Party meeting held nearby that consolidated Adolf Hitler's power over the fascist movement. Historians and political opponents say the timing carries powerful symbolism, an accusation the AfD rejects. Political Commentary Blog

Weidel said recently that "2026 is a year of destiny for AfD." Mainstream parties say they won't work with it, a stance often known as a "firewall."

But AfD is capitalising on the unpop-

ularity of a government that is trying to reform the sluggish economy. The party has become adept at harnessing discontent with issues well beyond its signature theme of curbing migration, which powered its rise in the mid-2010s.

AFD hopes to win 40 per cent or more of the vote in a Sept. 6 state election in the eastern region of Saxony-Anhalt. That could put the party on course for an absolute majority or in a position where it might try to attract defectors from other parties, paving the way for its first state Governor. (AP)