



**A woman performs rituals at the Sheetla Mata Temple on the Ram Navami festival, in Gurugram**



**Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and chess legend Viswanathan Anand during a meeting, in Chennai**



**Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw during inauguration of the Pamban Bridge by PM Modi, in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu**



**8-year-old Gungun Kashyap, a resident of the Kot Garvi area, inaugurates a police outpost near the Shahi Jama Masjid, in Sambhal, UP**

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**President Droupadi Murmu greets as she emplanes for a state visit to Portugal and the Slovak Republic, in New Delhi, on Sunday**

**House of BJP Minority Morcha's Manipur president torched for supporting Waqf Act**

**IMPHAL:** The house of the BJP Minority Morcha's Manipur president, Asker Ali, was set on fire by a mob on Sunday night allegedly for supporting the Waqf Amendment Act, officials said. The incident happened at Lilong in Thoubal district, they said. Ali had expressed his support for the Act on social media on Saturday. An irate mob gathered outside his residence around 9 pm, vandalised it and later set it on fire, officials said. Following the incident, Ali posted a video on social media, apologising for his earlier statement. He also expressed opposition to the Act. Earlier in the day, protests were held in different parts of Imphal Valley against the Act.

**Badminton trainer held on charges of raping minor in Bengaluru**

**BENGALURU:** The Bengaluru police Thursday arrested a badminton trainer for raping a minor girl. The accused has been identified as Suresh Balaji, 26, a native of Tamil Nadu. A case was registered against him after the mother of the 16-year-old victim lodged a complaint. The complainant has also alleged that Balaji recorded videos and photos of her daughter in a compromising position. According to the police, the accused started working as a badminton coach in Bengaluru two years ago. Balaji allegedly befriended the teenager, took her to his residence multiple times and raped her on several occasions. In the complaint, the mother also alleged that Balaji recorded nude videos and photos of her daughter. The alleged crime was discovered after the girl's grandmother found her nude photos on her mobile phone. The girl revealed her ordeal after the grandmother informed the victim's parents about the photos.

**Drug peddler nabbed with cocaine, MD in south Delhi's Saket**

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Police has arrested an interstate drug peddler with high-end narcotics in south Delhi's Saket area, an official said on Sunday. Acting on a tip-off, the team apprehended 29-year-old Vishal Singh with 29.70 grams of cocaine and 5 grams of methamphetamine (MD) during a late night operation on April 4, he said. The accused, a former taxi driver from Noida, was linked to a Nigerian-based drug syndicate and had been delivering drugs across Delhi-NCR.

# Fresh plea in SC challenges validity of Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** A fresh plea has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, claiming it was a "blatant intrusion" into the rights of a religious denomination to manage its own affairs in the matter of religion.

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday gave her assent to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was earlier passed by Parliament after heated debates in both Houses.

Several petitions have been filed in the apex court challenging the validity of the bill.

The fresh petition has been filed by Samastha Kerala Jamiathul Ulema, a religious organisation of Sunni Muslim scholars and clerics in Kerala.

The plea, filed through advocate Zulfiker Ali P S, said these amendments would distort the religious character of Waqfs while also irreversibly damaging the democratic process in the administration of Waqf and Waqf Boards.

"Hence, it is submitted that the 2025 Act is a blatant intrusion into the rights of a religious denomination to manage its own affairs in the matter of religion which is protected under Article



**Congress supporters take part in the black flag protest against Waqf (Amendment) Bill and other issues, in Chennai, on Sunday**

26 of the Constitution of India," the plea said.

It alleged that the 2025 Act was against the federal principles of Constitution as it takes away all powers of the state governments and State Waqf Boards in connection with Waqfs and accumulates all powers into the hands of the Central government.

"The cumulative effect of these provisions will be highly detrimental to Waqfs at large and the Muslim community will be de-

prived of large tract of Waqf properties on account of operation of these provisions," the plea said.

Several pleas, including those by Congress MP Mohammad Jawed, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi and AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan, were filed in the top court challenging the validity of the bill.

Besides them, an NGO -- Association for the Protection of Civil Rights -- has also filed a petition in the apex court challenging the

**BJP gov't wants to acquire land through Waqf Act: Maha Cong chief**

**PTI, NASHIK:** Maharashtra Congress president Harshvardhan Sapkal on Sunday alleged that after rolling out the Waqf Act for 'acquiring land', the BJP government has set its eyes on "grabbing" huge amount of gold in the famous Lord Padmanabh temple.

Sapkal said, "When the British decided to make Delhi their capital, there was a demand that places of worship be kept safe while acquiring land.

"For this purpose, the Waqf Board was formed in 1913 through the Rehabilitation Act. It was formed to keep places of worship of all religions safe, and special rights were given to temples, mosques, and gurdwaras."

He alleged the BJP government is trying to acquire land after passing the Waqf Amendment Bill.

"They want to grab the huge amount of gold in the Padmanabh temple".

Notably, the Padmanabh-

wamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram is considered the sacred abode of Lord Vishnu in the Sri Vaishnava tradition.

Earlier in the day, Sapkal visited the famous Kalam temple in Nashik holding the Constitution book and offered prayers on the occasion of Ram Navami.

He said Lord Ram is an integral part of the Indian culture.

He said Babasaheb Ambedkar had protested to gain entry into the historical Kalam temple in Nashik, but the then system resisted his attempts.

"I entered the Kalam temple holding the sacred Constitution written by Babasaheb to have darshan of Lord Ram," he said.

Sapkal said Lord Ram belongs to everyone and is an integral part of the Indian culture.

"I wished the thought of equality, brotherhood, and Constitutionalism spread in India and Maharashtra," he added.

constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Jawed's plea alleged the bill imposed "arbitrary restrictions"

on Waqf properties and their management, undermining the Muslim community's religious autonomy.

## Kerala leader M A Baby elected CPI(M) general secretary

First from a minority community

**PTI, MADURAI:** Veteran leader **M A Baby** was on Sunday elected **CPI(M)** general secretary at its 24<sup>th</sup> All India Party Congress.

A former state minister, Baby is the second leader from the party's Kerala unit to be elected to the top post, following in the footsteps of CPI(M) stalwart EMS Namboodiripad. While Prakash Karat — who served as general secretary between 2005 and 2015 — hails from Kerala, he belonged to the party's Delhi unit. Baby is also the first CPI(M) general secretary from a minority group.

A section of leaders had put their weight behind All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) president Ashok Dhawale for the top post.

Sources said Surya Kant Mishra, Nilotpal Basu, Mohd Salim and Ramchandra Dome were among those who backed Dhawale. Karat, who served as in-

terim coordinator in the run-up to the congress following the passing of general secretary Sitaram Yechury, said, "The congress has chalked out a political line for the future, the organisational steps needed to take the party forward and, on that basis, it has elected a new leadership, a new Central Committee, a new Politburo and a new general secretary."

Baby, who has been a member of the CPI(M) Politburo — its highest decision-making body — since 2012, called himself an "obedient soldier" of the party.

Speaking to reporters, the veteran leader admitted that there had been a decline in the party's strength and said every CPI(M) member needed to come together to achieve the goal of strengthening it.

In his message to the delegates after his name was announced as general secretary, Baby called for consolidating the strengths of the party's different committees as well as mass organisations.

## OPERATION BRAHMA



**Humanitarian aid being loaded onboard the Indian Air Force's C-17 plane for Mandalay in the earthquake-hit Myanmar, on Sunday**

## India sends more humanitarian aid to Myanmar

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** India on Sunday sent 31 tonnes of humanitarian aid, including replenishment stores for an Indian army field hospital unit deployed in Myanmar, to augment New Delhi's efforts to provide succour to the quake-hit neighbouring country.

The aid was sent in a C-17 Globemaster heavy-lift aircraft.

It took off from the Hindon air force station in Ghaziabad early Sunday, a senior official said.

#OperationBrahma@IAF\_MCC  
C> C-17 plane departs for Mandalay

with 31 tons of humanitarian aid, including replenishment stores for the Indian army field hospital unit," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar posted on X.

India mounted its relief mission named 'Operation Brahma' as a swift response to the devastation caused by the earthquake that hit Myanmar as well as Thailand on March 28.

The field hospital, under 'Operation Brahma', continues its humanitarian mission in Myanmar as the local government and its agencies

also soldiered on with their efforts in relief and rescue work.

The hospital unit comprising 118 personnel was deployed in Myanmar using two C-17 heavy-lift aircraft of the IAF which had taken off from Agra on March 29.

The field hospital has been set up by the Indian Army in Mandalay.

Meanwhile, an Indian Navy spokesperson said that INS Gharial with 442 tonnes of relief material, including 405 tonnes of rice, arrived at Yangon early Saturday.

## Farmer leader Dallewal ends hunger strike after 130 days, says fight is on

**PTI, CHANDIGARH:** Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Sunday ended his hunger strike which he had started on November 26 last year to press for various demands of agitating farmers including a legal guarantee on the minimum support price for crops.

The announcement came a day after Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Singh Bittu appealed to him to end his fast-unto-death.

Dallewal announced that he was ending his indefinite fast at a 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' organised at the grain market in Sirhind in Fatehgarh Sahib district of Punjab. At the same time, he asserted that their fight for the legal guarantee on MSP for crops and other demands continues.

"You all have said (to me) to end the fast-unto-death. For me 'sangat' (people) is 'rabb da roop' (a form of God). I am indebted to you for looking after the agitation the way I had said. I respect your sentiments," said Dallewal, who addressed the gathering from a stretcher.



**Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal speaks with the media after ending his hunger strike in Punjab, on Sunday**

"The 'morchha' (agitation) continues. Even today I do not want to end the indefinite fast but you have asked me time and again (to end fast) and I respect it.

"But I want to ask you and get an assurance that we will have to put up a stronger 'morchha'. The fight is on. The

MSP (guarantee) has to be taken and a bigger 'morchha' has to be put up. Do you agree on holding a bigger 'morchha'," he asked the gathering.

"The government is alert and it knows farmers can fight. The way you took care of the 'morchha', the government has seen it," he said.

## Justice Arun Palli recommended as CJ of J&K and Ladakh HC

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court collegium has recommended the appointment of Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Justice Arun Palli as the chief justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, held its meeting on April 4.

"The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on April 4, 2025 has recommended appointment of Justice Arun Palli, judge, High Court of Punjab & Haryana, as Chief Justice of HC of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh," a statement uploaded on the apex court website said.

Justice Palli was elevated to the bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court on Dec 28, 2013.

## Time to replace collegium system: Former Law Minister Kumar

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** Former Union law minister Ashwani Kumar on Sunday said the time is ripe for replacing the present collegium system of judicial appointments and "processes of public opinion are moving robustly" in favour of an alternative mechanism for judges' appointment.

He also called upon the Supreme Court to put in place a robust in-house mechanism to address the issues ailing the judiciary including charges directed at judges.

The former Union minister of Law and Justice spoke on several issues, like mechanisms for the judiciary to address ailments within, judicial appointments and National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), and laws passed by Parliament being increasingly challenged in courts.

"The time for NJAC was ripe in 2014-15 when it was first mooted and put to vote. It is certainly ripe today. And now, I am convinced that the processes of public opinion are moving robustly in favour of an alternate mechanism for the appointment of judges. It could be on the lines of the proposed NJAC, it could be something better," Kumar told PTI.

The former Congress leader said the government is fully within its rights to bring a revised constitutional amendment for the

**"I am convinced that the processes of public opinion are moving robustly in favour of an alternate mechanism for the appointment of judges. It could be on the lines of the proposed NJAC, it could be something better"**

— **Ashwani Kumar, Former Union Law Minister**

appointment of judges that will satisfy judicial scrutiny.

It was during Kumar's tenure as Law Minister that the NJAC bill was drafted under the UPA rule, but it was later passed in an amended form after the NDA assumed power only to be quashed by the Supreme Court in October 2015.

On why he believed that it was time for NJAC to be brought in, Kumar said he had a serious issue with the validity of the judgement whereby the NJAC was struck down as unconstitutional, even though it had the "supreme will and majority of the Parliament".

He said the principal reason for the court to strike down the NJAC system was that the government representatives and eminent persons to be appointed by the Government on the NJAC could compromise the independence of the Judiciary.