

# Three dead, over 20 rescued after major fire breaks out in Patna hotel

Patna, Apr 25: At least three persons died in a fire that broke out in a hotel close to the Patna junction railway station on Thursday, a senior official said.

According to Senior Superintendent of Police, Rajeev Mishra, more than 20 people have been rescued from the building, situated in a crowded locality, by fire-fighters.

"Three people have died in the fire. Their identities are yet to be ascertained. Those with injuries are being rushed to hospital," Mishra told PTI.

DIG (Fire), Mrityunjay Kumar Chaudhary, who had rushed to the spot, told reporters, "We have brought the blaze, about which information was received around 11 am, under control. The cause will be ascertained through a proper investigation, and appropriate action will follow".



# Drops of toilet cleaner mixed in Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi's food: Spokesperson

ISLAMABAD, APR 25: Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi was reportedly given at least two to three drops of "toilet cleaner" mixed in an Iftar meal, her spokesperson said on Thursday.

The cleaner was allegedly mixed with her food on Shab-e-Barat on February 24.

"We found out that two or three drops of toilet cleaner were added to Bushra Bibi's Iftar meal," the spokesperson of Bushra Bibi, Mashal Yousafzai, was quoted as saying by the Geo news.

She claimed that after consuming the meal, her health deteriorated and it was getting worse every day.

Khan, 71, the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, has many times claimed that Bushra Bibi, 49, was given food mixed with toilet cleaner.

The spokesperson said before her arrest, she did not have any problems, including blood pressure and diabetes.

"Since her arrest, Bushra Bibi's health has deteriorated, something must have happened," she said expressing her apprehension.

Bushra Bibi, convicted in two different cases, is being held at the Bani Gala home since the couple was sentenced in the 'un-Islamic nikah' case in February. The Bani Gala residence has been converted into a sub-jail for the former prime minister's wife.

Yousafzai, also the advisor to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister, questioned why Bushra's medical tests were not conducted when the court had been directing the authorities for three weeks.

She also wondered who was preventing the authorities from conducting the medical tests. "The court has directed (authorities) to conduct her endoscopy and blood test. Endoscopy revealed ulceration and inflammation in the stomach," said Yousafzai.

She said despite the orders of the court, they did not let the former first lady get her blood tested. She said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) also asked that

the blood test should be done by Al-Shifa Hospital and be cross-checked at the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital.

She said, "The blood test could reveal whether the element of poison was present in her blood or not." Yousafzai said a couple of days ago, Bushra had pain in her chest and left arm. The jail doctor did an ECG and it was not normal, she claimed.

The jail doctor said that she would go and inform the jail administration so that the doctors from the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) could come and conduct her check-up, she said.

"The jail doctor went to inform the administration at 12 pm and came out at 5 pm. While the PIMS doctor came at 11 pm in the night, due to us raising our voice," she said, adding that after 11 pm, Bushra had had another ECG. She said there was a difference between the imprisonment of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz as

Bushra was a housewife and not a politician.

"Bushra Bibi is targeted because she is the wife of the PTI founder," she said.

Last week, a comprehensive medical evaluation of Bushra Bibi was performed under the observation of Khan's family physician. The doctors at a private hospital declared Bushra Bibi, the former first lady, to be in good health.

The former first lady stayed at a private hospital in Islamabad for six hours for diagnostic tests, including endoscopy, but refused to undergo a blood test and did not provide a blood sample, sources told Geo News.

The hospital sources stated that Bushra Bibi also underwent, ultrasound, echo, and ECG tests, while during the check-up, Khan's physician, Dr Asim Yousuf, was also present.

The doctors, according to the sources, cleared all the medical reports of the former first lady. The hospital sources said that Khan's wife only had a minor gastric issue.

# Jai Dehadrai withdraws from HC defamation case against Mahua Moitra as 'peace offering'

NEW DELHI, APR 25: Lawyer Jai Anant Dehadrai on Thursday withdrew from the Delhi High Court his defamation lawsuit against former partner TMC leader Mahua Moitra as a "peace offering".

Dehadrai had last year accused Moitra of taking bribes from businessman and Hiranandani Group CEO Darshan Hiranandani to ask questions in Parliament, which led to her expulsion from the Lok Sabha on December 8.

Following the row, Mahua filed a case against Dehadrai and BJP MP Nishikant Dubey to restrain them from posting, circulating or publishing any "fake" and "defamatory" content against her.

Earlier this year, Dehadrai also moved the present lawsuit seeking damages of Rs 2 crore from the former lawmaker claiming that after he filed a complaint with the CBI over



Moitra receiving illegal gratification for unauthorisedly providing her Lok Sabha login credentials to a third party, she "embarked on a ceaseless campaign of slander and abuse" to disseminate "false, abusive, and defamatory statements" against him.

On Thursday, Dehadrai's counsel suggested that the present case could be put to an end if Moitra was willing to "de-escalate" by undertaking that she would not make "palpably false" statements.

Maintaining that judicial time is "best not spent" on such disputes that can be resolved between the parties, Justice Prateek Jalan said, "If this is something that can stop the crossfire, it is a welcome suggestion." "Maybe personal allegations on both sides can be taken out of the public domain. If there is some possibility of arriving at an agreed protocol of behaviour..." the judge said as he noted that there were several cases pending in the high court in relation to the dispute between the parties.

Dehadrai, who was present in court, subsequently said he would unconditionally withdraw the lawsuit.

"I am willing to withdraw. I will withdraw as a peace offering," his advocate Raghav Awasthi said.

Permitting Dehadrai to withdraw, the court ordered, "The suit is dismissed as withdrawn".

In the lawsuit filed through lawyer Mukesh Sharma, Dehadrai had said Moitra's statements lowered his esteem in the eyes of friends, family and colleagues as they portrayed him as a "person who has become bitter due to a failed personal relationship and is now filing false complaints to take revenge for the said reason".

BJD MP Pinaki Misra has also filed a lawsuit against Dehadrai over his allegedly defamatory tweets and statements against him in relation to the cash-for-query row.

# PM Modi symbolises 'asatyamev jayate', is diverting attention from real issues: Congress

NEW DELHI, APR 25: The Congress on Thursday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of spreading "lies" to divert attention from real issues in the Lok Sabha polls and challenged him to point out where in the party's manifesto is "redistribution of wealth" mentioned.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh claimed that PM Modi "symbolises Asatyamev Jayate".

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, Ramesh said the Congress will not play on the pitch prepared by the BJP but "will play on the pitch of issues of unemployment and price rise".

Ramesh claimed that the trends from the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls show that in some states, the BJP has been "wiped out" and in some states, its seats are going down as compared to the 2019 polls.

"He (PM Modi) is trying to take the agenda in another direction. He first tried to give a communal colour to our manifesto and then talked about things

that are not there in the 'Nyay Patra'. It is propaganda based on lies," Ramesh said.

"He is giving publicity to our manifesto, though it is wrong publicity," he said.

The Nyay Patra is based on the feedback from the people during the Bharat Jodo Yatra and the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, he said.

"It is very clear that due to the policies of Prime Minister Modi unemployment has increased, price rise is not being reined in and economic inequalities have gone up," he said.

The Congress will fight the Lok Sabha polls on Nari Nyay, Yuva Nyay, Kisaan Nyay, Shramik Nyay and Hissedari Nyay, he asserted.

"Ours is a positive agenda. We want to fight the polls on people's issues such as unemployment, price rise, attack on Constitution, institutions," he said.

Ramesh claimed that Modi has stopped raising the slogan of '400 paar' and 'Modi Ki Guarantee', and is using a new language of polarisation.

Ramesh said, "Polarisation has always been his weapon but he is using the language of polarisation more brazenly to divert attention.

He is just seeking to defame Congress' Nyay Patra." He asserted that there is no mention of inheritance tax in the Congress manifesto and it is not part of the party's agenda.

"Rajiv Gandhi had abolished it in 1985. However, BJP leaders such as Arun Jaitley and Jayant Sinha advocated in favour of inheritance tax. The one who says we will bring inheritance tax is wrong and in fact, it is the BJP's agenda," Ramesh said.

Noting that Modi has claimed that the Congress will redistribute wealth if it comes to power, Ramesh said, "I challenge him to show us where wealth redistribution is mentioned in the manifesto". Where have we said we will take away mangalsutras, the person who did not respect mangalsutra himself is talking about it," Modi does not say that it is because of his intention and policies that

there are 21 billionaires who have the wealth equivalent to 70 per cent of the population, Ramesh said, adding that the Congress believes in inclusive economic development.

The Congress leader also asked Modi to clear his stand on the caste census issue.

Ramesh's remarks came a day after the prime minister seized on Congress leader Sam Pitroda's remarks on inheritance tax to step up the ruling BJP's attack on the issue of "wealth redistribution".

After Pitroda's remarks on inheritance tax, the Congress distanced itself from the comments of the US-based president of its overseas wing and asserted that it has no plan to introduce such a tax.

Amid the BJP's attack alleging that the Congress would redistribute wealth and introduce an inheritance tax if it comes to power, the Congress has been insisting that its manifesto does not talk about "redistribution" and that it favours a socio-economic caste census.

# Europe could die: French President Emmanuel Macron warns as he calls for stronger defences

PARIS, APR 25: President Emmanuel Macron appealed on Thursday for stronger, more integrated European defences and said the continent must not become a vassal of the United States, as he outlined his vision for a more assertive European Union on the global stage.

With just three years left of his second and final term in office, and having lost his parliamentary majority in 2022, Macron, 46, wants to show his critics that he retains the energy and fresh thinking that helped propel him into the presidency in 2017 and that he has not become a lame duck leader.

"There is a risk our Europe could die. We are not equipped to face the risks," Macron said in his speech at the Sorbonne University in Paris, warning that military, economic, trade and other pressures could weaken and fragment the 27-nation EU.

Macron said Russia must not be allowed to win in Ukraine, and he called for a boost in Europe's cybersecurity capacity, closer defence ties with post-Brexit Britain, and the creation of a European academy to train high-ranking military personnel.

"There is no defence without a defence industry... we've had decades of under-investment," he said, adding that Europeans should give preference to buying European military equipment.

"We must produce more, we must produce faster, and we must produce as Europeans," he said.



Macron said Europe risked falling behind economically in a context where global free-trade rules were being challenged by major competitors, and he called for a reduction in red tape on small and medium-sized businesses.

The French leader hopes his speech will have the same impact as a similar address at the Sorbonne he made seven years ago that prefigured some significant EU policy shifts.

Since then, much has changed, with major geopolitical challenges including the war in Gaza, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and growing China-U.S. tensions.

Thursday's speech was billed by Macron's advisers as France's contribution to the EU's strategic agenda for the next five years. The agenda is due to be decided after the European elections, when EU leaders will haggle over the bloc's top jobs.

# Sunita Kejriwal likely to join AAP's Lok Sabha campaign in Delhi, will hold roadshows this weekend: Sources

NEW DELHI, APR 25: The Aam Aadmi Party's campaigning for Lok Sabha polls will get a boost with Sunita Kejriwal likely to hold roadshows in Delhi beginning this weekend, in the absence of her husband Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, party sources said on Thursday.

Sunita is slowly emerging out of the shadows to assume a bigger role to give a fillip to AAP's campaigning which has been affected by Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case in March. The Delhi chief minister's judicial custody has been extended till May 7.



"The chief minister's wife is scheduled to attend her first roadshow in Kondli reserved assembly constituency represented by Kuldeep Kumar who is AAP's East Delhi Lok Sabha seat candidate in the coming weekend," said a source in the party.

Sunita will also attend roadshows in the other three Lok Sabha seats contested by AAP in Delhi.

AAP, which is contesting the Lok Sabha polls in alliance with Congress in Delhi has fielded its candidates in East Delhi, West Delhi, South Delhi and New Delhi seats. Congress has fielded candidates in North East Delhi, North West Delhi and Chandni Chowk seats.

Sunita will also campaign for AAP candidates in Gujarat and Punjab, sources said. Her name is part of the list of star campaigners of the party for Gujarat.

# United Nations report says 282 million people faced acute hunger in 2023, with the worst famine in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, APR 25: Nearly 282 million people in 59 countries suffered from acute hunger in 2023, with war-torn Gaza as the territory with the largest number of people facing famine, according to the Global Report on Food Crises released on Wednesday.

The UN report said 24 million more people faced an acute lack of food than in 2022, due to the sharp deterioration in food security, especially in the Gaza Strip and Sudan. The number of nations with food crises that are monitored has also been expanded.

Máximo Torero, chief economist for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, said 705,000 people in five countries are at Phase 5, the highest level, on a scale of hunger determined by international experts — the highest number since the global report began in 2016 and quadruple the number that year.

Over 80 per cent of those facing imminent famine — 577,000 people — were in Gaza, he said.

South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Mali each host many thousands also facing catastrophic hunger.

According to the report's future outlook, around 1.1 million people in Gaza, where the Israel-Hamas war is now in its seventh month, and 79,000 in South Sudan are projected to be in Phase 5 and facing famine by July.

It said conflict will also continue to drive food insecurity in Haiti, where gangs control large portions of the capital.

Additionally, while the El Nino phenomenon peaked in early 2024, "its full impact on food security — including flooding and poor rain in parts of east Africa and drought in southern Africa, especially Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe — are like to manifest throughout the year."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the report "a roll call of human failings," and that "in a world of plenty, children are starving to death."

"The conflicts erupting over the past 12 months compound a dire global situation," he wrote in the report's foreword.

Guterres highlighted the conflict in the Gaza Strip, as the enclave holds the highest number of people facing catastrophic hunger. There is also the year-old conflict in Sudan, which has created the world's largest internal displacement crisis "with atrocious impacts on hunger and nutrition," he added.

According to the report, over 36 million people in 39 countries and territories are facing an acute hunger emergency, a step below the famine level in Phase 4, with more than a third in Sudan and Afghanistan. It's an increase of a million people from 2022, the report said.

Arif Husain, the UN World Food Program's chief economist, said every year since 2016 the numbers of people acutely food insecure have gone up, and they are now more than double the numbers before

the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the report looks at 59 countries, he said the target is to get data from 73 countries where there are people who are acutely food insecure.

Secretary-General Guterres called for an urgent response to the report's findings that addresses the underlying causes of acute hunger and malnutrition while transforming the systems that supply food. Funding is also not keeping pace with the needs, he stressed.

"We must have the funding, and we also must have the access," WFP's Husain said, stressing that both "go hand-in-hand" and are essential to tackle acute food insecurity.

The report is the flagship publication of the Food Security Information Network and is based on a collaboration of 16 partners including UN agencies, regional and multinational bodies, the European Union, the US Agency for International Development, technical organisations and others.

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