

# Punjab minister Laljit Bhullar resigns amid row over suicide of Warehousing official

**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab minister Laljit Singh Bhullar tendered his resignation from the state Cabinet on Saturday after Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann asked him to step down amid allegations of abetment of suicide of a state warehousing corporation official.



Gagandeep Singh Randhawa, the district manager of the Punjab State Warehousing Corporation in Amritsar, allegedly took his own life after consuming a poisonous substance on Friday.

A purported video surfaced on social media on Saturday in which Randhawa, who held the additional charge of Patti, was heard saying that he had consumed some poisonous substance and accused the transport minister of harassment.

"Kha layi 'celphos' tuhade yaar ne. Minister Laljit Bhullar de dar ton. Hun nahi main bachda," (Your friend consumed poison because of fear of minister Laljit Bhullar. I will not

survive now)," Randhawa could be heard saying in the video.

However, Bhullar, the MLA from Patti in Tarn Taran, rejected allegations against him as baseless.

CM Mann said he has directed the chief secretary to conduct an impartial probe into the matter and asked the minister to step down for a fair probe.

"What are the reasons behind it? It is a matter of probe. Before conducting the probe, we took resignation from our cabinet

minister so that no one could influence the probe or could put any pressure," Mann said, responding to reporters' query on Bhullar's resignation.

No negligence will be tolerated in the matter, Mann said, adding Bhullar's portfolios of transport and prison will be allocated to some other minister.

As the video surfaced online, the opposition party leaders slammed the AAP government and demanded action against Bhullar. Accusing Bhullar

of pressuring Randhawa to allot a warehouse tender in the name of his father, they alleged that Bhullar made a video of Randhawa and forced him to admit to accepting a Rs 10-lakh bribe from another party.

They further alleged that on March 13, Randhawa was called to Bhullar's place, where he was assaulted and humiliated.

Amritsar's Congress MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla, while speaking to reporters in Amritsar, said Bhullar had applied for a warehouse tender in his father's name. However, when the tender was allotted to some other person, Randhawa was called to Bhullar's residence and was assaulted, Aujla alleged.

In a Facebook post, Bhullar said his party always stands with the truth, so he wanted allegations against him to be investigated properly.

"Until this investigation is completed, I request the party and our chief minister to accept my resignation from the minister's

post," he said.

Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia demanded the arrest of the AAP leader and a CBI probe into the matter.

Addressing the media in Amritsar, Majithia said the government was indulging in "mere drama" in the case and termed Bhullar's resignation as an eyewash.

"If the government is serious about justice, it should register a murder case and take the minister into custody immediately," he said, claiming the minister could be given a clean chit within days.

Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa termed the allegations against Bhullar grave and urged the Punjab and Haryana High Court to take suo motu cognisance and ensure justice.

Punjab BJP working president Ashwani Sharma too demanded the arrest of Bhullar and said Randhawa committed suicide following the alleged harassment by him.

# LDF fields actor Sudheer Karamana and three others as Independent candidates

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** The LDF on Saturday announced actor Sudheer Karamana and three others as its independent candidates for the upcoming Assembly election.

A Left co-traveller, Karamana, will contest as LDF independent and will face Communist Marxist Party (CMP) and UDF leader C P John and BJP candidate Karamana Jayan.

Earlier, LDF allies, including CPI(M), had announced their candidates for the April 9 poll.

However, a decision on the Thiruvananthapuram constituency had remained pending as the seat was allotted to the ally Janadhipathya Kerala Congress (JKC).

JKC leader and sitting MLA Antony Raju was

disqualified after a magistrate's court here convicted and sentenced him in a case related to tampering with evidence.

The JKC failed to field another candidate in the constituency, prompting the LDF to field the actor.

Speaking to reporters, Karamana said he would use the opportunity to work for the people.

He said that as a local person, he knew every nook and corner of Thiruvananthapuram, as well as the sentiments and issues of the people.

He also sought the support of people from all sections for the election.

"About challenges, I am with a strong left front. We will go forward with the slogan of continuity, and it will happen," he said.

Regarding more actors entering the poll fray, he said that the number of people from the film industry in politics is low compared to other states.

"I see cinema and politics differently. I am a teacher and film actor, which I see as part of social work. The end aim is to live and work for society. I see this as an opportunity to enter public life," he said.

Meanwhile, the LDF has also announced Shanavas Padhoor from Kasaragod, C P Musthafa from Vallikkunnu, and Mohammad Sameer from Tanur.

LDF sitting MLA and minister V Abdurahiman has been shifted from Tanur to Tirur, following which Sameer was picked to contest from the constituency.

# Assam polls: BJP declares 2 more nominees, covers 90 of 126 seats



**NEW DELHI/ GUWAHATI:** The BJP on Saturday announced the names of two more candidates for the April 9 Assembly elections in Assam, fielding Krishna Saha from Dalgaoon and Jiban Gogoi from Sissibargaon, party sources said.

The incident took place in Dodawad village of Bailhongal taluk of this district on March 17, police said.

According to police, the murder stemmed from a long-standing feud and a dispute over a pathway in front of their houses. On March 17 evening, following an argument near a chicken shop, the accused allegedly attacked Mahesh with a sharp agricultural weapon, fatally injuring him by striking his neck, before fleeing the spot.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused had frequent altercations with the victim over the pathway issue. On the day of the incident, he reportedly grew enraged after the victim intervened during a quarrel and confronted him, a senior police officer said.

With this, the saffron party has fielded its candidates for 90 seats in the 126-member Assam Assembly.

Speculations were rife that the wife of the BJP's Lakhimpur MP Pradan Baruah might be fielded from Sissibargaon for the Assembly polls. The Sissibargaon seat falls under the Lakhimpur Lok Sabha constituency.

However, Jiban Gogoi, a local leader of the party, made the cut.

The BJP is contesting

the state polls in alliance with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF). AGP got 26 seats while the BPF got 11 in its share as a pre-poll arrangement. The remaining seats are in the BJP's share.

Both the BJP and AGP have named candidates for the Chamaria seat.

The BJP announced its first list of 88 candidates on Thursday, fielding Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Jalukbari, and incumbent MLA Hitenra Nath Goswami against state Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi in Jorhat.

The Cabinet ministers who have been renominated from their seats include Ajanta Neog from Golaghat, Ranoj Pegu from Dhemaji (ST), Rupesh Gowala from Doomdooma,

Bimal Borah from Tingkhong, Pijush Hazarika from Jagiroad (SC), Jayanta Malla Baruah from Nalbari, Ashok Singhal from Dhekiajuli, Krishendu Paul from Patharkandi and Kaushik Rai from Lakhimpur.

Pradyut Bordoloi and Bhupen Borah, who recently joined the BJP from the Congress, will contest from Dispur and Bihpuria, respectively.

Among the other recent entrants to the BJP from the Congress, Sashi Kanta Das has been fielded from the Raha (SC) seat, while Kamalakhya Purkayastha has been named for the Katigora assembly constituency. Both are incumbent MLAs.

Former AGP MLA Bhupen Roy, who recently joined the BJP, will contest from Abhayapuri.

# Odisha govt organises 3-day cultural and tourism event in Ahmedabad

**AHMEDABAD:** A three-day cultural and tourism outreach event organised by the Odisha government began in Ahmedabad in Gujarat on Saturday.

Speaking at the inauguration session of Odisha Parab 2026 at the Gujarat University Convention and Exhibition Centre here, the eastern state's Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida said visitors to the event will experience Odisha's living traditions, artistic expressions and tourism potential by bringing together culture, cuisine, crafts, handlooms, and destination showcases under one roof.

'Odisha Parab', which will be open to the public from 11am to 11pm till March 23, is a flagship ini-

tiative of the Odisha government's department of tourism aimed at presenting aspects of the state's culture and traditions in major cities across India.

"A key highlight of the event will be live craft demonstrations by master artisans from Odisha, offering visitors the opportunity to witness traditional craftsmanship in real time. Dedicated craft and handloom stalls will showcase Odisha's renowned textiles and handicrafts, including handwoven fabrics, traditional motifs, and GI-tagged products," a release said.

Visitors will also have the opportunity to interact with artisans and learn about the heritage and techniques behind each cre-

ation, its added.

"The culinary segment will present an engaging experience through curated food stalls and live cuisine demonstrations, showcasing the rich diversity of Odia cuisine. The event showcases authentic dishes reflecting Odisha's coastal, tribal, and traditional food cultures, along with celebrated Odia desserts such as Chhena Poda," the release noted.

It will also feature a vibrant line-up of classical, folk, and tribal cultural performances, capturing the rhythm, storytelling, and martial traditions of the state, with performances such as Odissi, Gotipua, Sambalpuri dance, Paika Akhada, Ghumura, Dhem-

sa, Chhau, and Ghudukhi giving audiences a dynamic glimpse into the state's rich performing arts heritage.

"When we are in Odisha, we see Gujarat as a second home, and similarly, Gujarat, especially cities like Surat, feels like a 'mini Odisha' because of the large Odia community here," Parida said at the event.

On Sunday, a diaspora meet will be organised with the Odia community for interaction with government and discussions centred on cultural preservation, tourism, and opportunities for collaboration. It will be followed by a tourism roadshow, B2B meetings, and G2B session with potential investors on Monday, the release said.

# Man arrested for killing relative following dispute over pathway

**BELAGAVI:** A 36-year-old man was arrested for allegedly killing his relative over a minor dispute related to access to a pathway, police said on Saturday.

The deceased has been identified as Mahesh Basayya Uppinmath, a resident of Kopp Agasi area in Dodawad, while the accused, Rudrayya Basayya Uppinmath, has been taken into custody, they said.

The incident took place in Dodawad village of Bailhongal taluk of this district on March 17, police said.

According to police, the murder stemmed from a long-standing feud and a dispute over a pathway in front of their houses. On March 17 evening, following an argument near a chicken shop, the accused allegedly attacked Mahesh with a sharp agricultural weapon, fatally injuring him by striking his neck, before fleeing the spot.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused had frequent altercations with the victim over the pathway issue. On the day of the incident, he reportedly grew enraged after the victim intervened during a quarrel and confronted him, a senior police officer said.

# BJP fields Namassivayam from Mannadipet, Selvam in Manavelly

**PUDUCHERRY/NEW DELHI:** The BJP on Saturday released a list of nine candidates for the April 9 Assembly polls in Puducherry, fielding Home Minister A Namassivayam for re-election from Mannadipet constituency.

Speaker of the outgoing Assembly, Embalam R Selvam is seeking re-election from Manavelly and he is among the candidates announced by the party leadership. Both Namassivayam and Selvam filed their nominations on Friday.

While local AINRC functionaries expected their leader, PWD Minister K Lakshminarayanan to fight again from Raj Bhavan segment, the BJP fielded its UT unit president V P Ramalingam from that constituency.

Lakshminarayanan has been fighting polls from the Raj Bhavan constituency for a pretty long time.

Sections of BJP workers said the list "has come as a virtual shock," as Sai J Saravanan Kumar who was elected from Oussudu reserved segment in the 2021 Assembly polls has not been included in the present list.

Instead, the party has named E Theepaindhan for the Oussudu reserved segment. Theepaindhan is among the three nominated legislators in the outgoing Assembly.

Kumar emerged victorious in the last poll from the Oussudu constituency after defeating his immediate Congress rival P Karthikeyan.

Kumar became Civil Supplies and Adi Dravidar Welfare Minister in the wake of his victory in 2021. However he stepped down from office in 2025 and stated that he quit with a view to work for the development of the party.

P R N Tirumurugan (AINRC) from Karaikal was posted as Civil Supplies Minister after Kumar resigned.

Supporters of Kumar turned up at his residence immediately after the announcement of the list of candidates of BJP and opposed non-inclusion of their leader in the list.

According to the BJP list, A Johnkumar who was a minister without portfolio in the outgoing government will fight from Mudaliarpet seat. P M L Kalyanasundaram and G N S Rajasekaran will try their luck from Kalapet and Thirunallar respectively.

# Man dies after motorcycle bursts into flames in Nanded

**MUMBAI:** A 31-year-old man died Saturday after his motorcycle burst into flames in Maharashtra's Nanded city, a police official said.

A forensic team as well as Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) personnel visited the spot as part of the probe because fire-cracker sounds were also heard when the vehicle went up in flames, he said.

The incident took place at 9:30am in Vajegaon Bandhara near Godavar river, some 600 kilometres from here, he added.

"The motorcycle burst into flames, leaving Shyam Babanrao Ghadge, a resident of Parbhani, with severe burns. He died soon after being shifted to a nearby hospital. He was identified from a card recovered from the site along with his mobile phone," the official said.

A team visited his Parbhani residence to inform kin about the incident, the official added.

# BJP leader Namassivayam has Rs 27.78 Crore worth of assets

**PUDUCHERRY:** BJP leader and Puducherry Home Minister A Namassivayam on Saturday declared movable and immovable assets of Rs 27.78 crore in the affidavit filed for the forthcoming Assembly polls.

He had declared assets of Rs 25.77 crore during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The BJP has fielded Namassivayam to contest

from the Mannadipet constituency in Puducherry.

As per the affidavit filed by Namassivayam for the April 9 elections, the value of movable assets stood at Rs 16.50 crore and immovable assets were Rs 11.28 crore. The construction cost that were incurred after the purchase of the immovable properties were Rs 16 lakh, the affidavit said.

# Eid-ul-Fitr celebrated with fervour across UP

**LUCKNOW:** Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated with enthusiasm and religious fervour across Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, with devotees offering prayers at Eidgahs and mosques. Devotees at some places wore black armbands as a mark of protest against the West Asia conflict.

In Lucknow, the main congregation was held at the Aishbagh Eidgah, where a large number of worshippers offered namaz under the leadership of Maulana Khalid Rasheed Farangi Mahli. Special prayers were offered for peace, progress and brotherhood in the country.

In Jhansi, Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated with joy and prayers for peace and communal harmony, though members of the Shia community observed the festival in a subdued manner as a mark of protest over the Iran war.

Following the prayers in Lucknow, special supplications were made for global peace, an end to conflicts and the well-being of people across the world, including those affected in the Middle East.

Maulana Khalid Rasheed called upon the Government of India to play a proactive role in promoting global peace, noting the significant contribution of Indians living abroad.

Leaders from different religious communities, including Christian and Sikh representatives, also attended the gathering. Several political leaders, in-

cluding Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Rajendra Chaudhary, Naseemuddin Siddiqui and Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee president Ajay Rai, attended the gathering and extended greetings. BJP Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Sharma also visited the Eidgah.

Around five lakh people offered prayers at the Eidgah under the leadership of Mahli.

According to local sources, members of the Sunni community offered prayers at Aishbagh Eidgah and the Teele Wali Masjid, while Shia devotees gathered at the Asifi Mosque (Bada Imambara) and Jama Masjid in Thakurganj.

Reports from Sambhal, Kaushambi, Deoria and Amethi indicated that the festival was celebrated peacefully amid tight security.

In Sambhal, prayers were offered at 765 mosques and 117 Eidgahs, Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar Bishnoi said, adding large congregations were seen at the Shahi Jama Masjid and local Eidgahs after the conclusion of the month-long Ramzan fasts.

Some people in Sirsi town offered prayers wearing black armbands to protest against the attack on Iran by the US. Samajwadi Party MP Zia ur Rahman Barq said people have the right to protest.

In Kaushambi, thousands gathered at the Shahi Eidgah in Manjhanpur, with police main-



taining strict vigil to ensure law and order.

In Deoria, District Magistrate Divya Mittal and Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Suman inspected key locations, including the Eidgah on Malviya Road and Jama Masjid, to oversee security arrangements.

In Amethi, the festival was marked by communal harmony, with prayers offered at 117 mosques and 110 Eidgahs under

tight security and drone surveillance, the officials said. District Magistrate Sanjay Chauhan and Superintendent of Police Saravanan T monitored arrangements at the Jais Eidgah and extended greetings to the public.

In Jhansi, thousands gathered at the Eidgah on Datia Road, where Imam Mufti Sabir Kazmi led the traditional prayers. Prominent attendees included former Union minister Pradeep Jain Ad-

ity and other local leaders.

Shia devotees in Jhansi offered prayers at a mosque in Mewatipura, where Maulana Naved Abdi led the namaz. Many in the community wore black armbands and refrained from wearing new clothes as a symbolic protest. The cleric said the observance reflected opposition to actions by the US and Israel and noted that similar sentiments were being expressed by Shia communities globally.