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## Department fails to meet pumpsets repair deadline

Hyderabad: The Mission Bhagiratha Department lagged behind in ensuring that pump sets were repaired by Friday as directed by the government.

About 4,000 pump sets are used under Mission Bhagiratha and of these, officials identified 120 that needed repairs. As on Friday, the deadline set by the government, 85 pump sets have been repaired and the balance are likely to be repaired in a couple of days. Similarly, pipeline leakages and valves have to be fixed within 12 hours from the incident.

## SISA's workshop on knee joint care

Hyderabad: Sai Institute of Sports Injury & Arthroscopy (SISA), celebrating its silver jubilee, is hosting a two-day workshop on Knee Joint Preservation, Live Surgery Conference 2024, here on April 13 and 14.

This is the 14th such conference hosted by SISA, deliberating on advanced techniques in knee realignment surgery and related aspects. Experts, including Dr. K Raghuvver Reddy, the organising secretary, Dr. Adrian Wilson, UK and Dr. Kristian Kley, Germany, and other surgeons shared insights into achieving positive outcomes using these techniques. In knee joint preservation, both non-surgical and surgical treatments are done. Knee joint replacement is the option for patients with advanced arthritis. However, younger patients below 55, who lead active lifestyles, experience high wear and tear on knee prosthesis. To address this, emphasis must be on repairing the knee rather than replacing to prolong natural knee function.

## CM Jagan attacked during Memantha Siddham Yatra in Vijayawada



GNS News Agency, April 14

Vijayawada : Gannavaram Assembly constituency TDP candidate Yarlagadda Venkata Rao said that he was delighted to see many YSRCP leaders joining the TDP and supporting him in the elections. Venkata Rao organised a meeting with the party functionaries at SVR Function hall in Gannavaram of Krishna district on Saturday. The meeting was held when Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was entering Krishna district on Saturday night as part of his Bus Yatra.

Several hundred TDP leaders and functionaries attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Venkata Rao said hundreds of YSRCP leaders and functionaries have joined the TDP in the recent days. He had extended a warm welcome to the YSRCP leaders who joined the TDP on Saturday. He said the YSRCP leaders of Gannavaram were completely ignored by the party high command and as such many activists of the YSRCP were leaving the party.

Venkata Rao exuded confidence that he would win the ensuing election with a good majority as the voters are with him. He recalled that he lost the 2019 elections with a very thin margin. He said that he did not expect a large number of YSRCP cadres to join the TDP and assured the people of the constituency that he would strive to develop the constituency.

He assured that house site pattas will be distributed to 15,000 people in the constituency once the NDA government is formed in the State. Venkata Rao said he had already spoken to TDP chief and former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu on the issue. Venkata Rao has urged the voters to elect him as the MLA and he would develop the constituency. The YSRCP has fielded sitting MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi from Gannacaram and he is also currently involved in vigorous campaigning in the constituency.

## India calls for immediate de-escalation as Israel-Iran tensions grow



GNS News Agency, April 14

New Delhi: India on Sunday expressed serious concern over the escalating tension between Israel and Iran, and called for exercising restraint, stepping back from violence and returning to the path of diplomacy.

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "We are seriously concerned at the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran which threatens the peace and security in the region." Calling for immediate de-escalation, the MEA said, "We call for immediate de-escalation, exercise of restraint, stepping back from violence and return to the path of diplomacy." "We are closely monitoring the evolving situation. Our Embassies in the region are in close touch with Indian community. It is vital that security and stability are maintained in the region," MEA said in an X post of its official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

## Lodge in Gachibowli raided for illegal gambling, four arrested

GNS News Agency, April 14

Rangareddy: The Special Operations Team (SOT) of Cyberabad, along with the Gachibowli Police, raided a room at the Silver Key Oyo Lodge located in the Raja Rajeswara Colony area of Gachibowli. The raid resulted in the apprehension of three individuals engaged in illegal gambling activities.

## BJP unveils manifesto, says no difference between what we say and what we do



GNS News Agency, April 14

New Delhi: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday unveiled its election manifesto, known as 'Sankalp Patra'. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who led the manifesto committee, said, "We have realised all Sankalp. There is no difference between what we say and what we do." He referred to the abrogation of Article 370, and the inauguration of the Ram temple as a few examples of the Sankalp. The manifesto was released in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP chief

J.P. Nadda, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and other leaders. BJP chief Nadda said, "Today is the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar, we pay tribute to him.

We all know that he fought for social justice. Following his path, the BJP always fought for social justice." For making this manifesto, the BJP had amassed over 1.5 million recommendations, with 4,00,000 originating from the NaMo app and 1.1 million submitted via videos.

## Ayodhya gears up to welcome 25L devotees on Ram Navami

GNS News Agency, April 14

Ayodhya: With just two days left for Ram Navami, Ayodhya is gearing up for massive crowd control — bigger than the one seen in the holy city during the pran pratishtha ceremony in January. Police officials deployed at Ayodhya for the Ram Navami celebrations, which will begin from midnight on April 16, have been asked to do 24-hour long shifts. Chief Secretary D.S. Mishra said that the government is anticipating the arrival of around 25 lakh devotees in the temple town.

He said that the Health Department had been directed to station ambulances at all main areas while all hospitals have been directed to remain in alert mode. Temporary health centres have been set up at 12 spots and they will be equipped with all necessary medicines and facilities, he said. "For crowd control and the convenience of devotees, large LED screens are being set up in the Ayodhya and in holding and parking areas where live streaming from the sanctum sanctorum of the temple will be done. Security personnel will be stationed in the temple premises and the Mela area on 24x7 duty. CCTV



coverage of the entire area will be done around the clock. These should be used to monitor the movement of devotees, for traffic control and crowd assessment," the chief secretary said. He further said that 24 automatic number-plate recognition cameras had been installed across Ayodhya and cameras installed at the borders of Ambedkar Nagar, Sultanpur and Barabanki districts would be monitored to get an assessment of visitors entering the city.

## 'EC in charge of voters' list, not me,' says Asaduddin Owaisi

GNS News Agency, April 14

Hyderabad: Rejecting BJP Hyderabad Lok Sabha candidate K Madhavi Latha's allegation of about six lakh bogus votes in the constituency, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday said the Election Commission takes care of the issue of voters' lists. Owaisi, who is seeking reelection from Hyderabad constituency, wondered what his role was in the matter. The AIMIM leader said the process of addition of names and publication of final voters' list is carried out every year by the Election Commission which he does not head. He was responding to a query from scribes about Madhavi Latha's charge that Owaisi wins with the help of the six lakh bogus votes. The allegation amounts to "abusing" the Election Commission, he added. "By speaking like this, you are insulting Hyderabad electorate, which includes brothers from backward class and Dalits, minority Muslims, Christians who are going out to vote.

Because of their votes, every party is getting votes and AIMIM is successful," he told reporters. Asked about the reported comments of a Congress leader in Hyderabad that he has to be friends with the AIMIM, Owaisi said his party does not have any alliance with any party in Telangana for the Lok Sabha elections. His party has formed PDM in Uttar Pradesh and his colleague MP in Maharashtra Intiaz Jaleel is holding talks on the issue in the western State.

To a query on the Centre's advisory to Indians not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice, Owaisi pointed out that the union government had signed an agreement with Israel as per which 6,000 Indian workers had gone to that country. "After sending 6,000 Indian citizens into the jaws of death, you issue an advisory. What type of humanity is this by the Narendra Modi government?" he asked. He



To a query on the Centre's advisory to Indians not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice, Owaisi pointed out that the union government had signed an agreement with Israel as per which 6,000 Indian workers had gone to that country

demanding that the government immediately call back those 6,000 Indian citizens. Lashing out at the Israeli government, Owaisi said it was committing a "genocide" against Palestinians. Asked about the BJP candidate's alleged comments about his attire, he claimed that there is hate against his food, beard, 'hijab' and existence. "But, the people of Hyderabad would not make hate successful. (They will) make love successful.

## Congress taking people for granted, cautions KCR



GNS News Agency, April 14

Hyderabad: Calling for the unity of the backward classes in fighting the Congress, Leader of Opposition and BRS president K Chandrashekhar Rao on Saturday sounded a caution to the people that they would be taken for granted and would have to continue to take things lying low if they preferred to vote for the Congress Party once again despite its dismal performance in the State for the past four months. Addressing a public meeting at Chevella, Chandrashekhar Rao said if the situation prevailing in the State was any indication, it was time to give a big mandate to the BRS, which should emerge victorious in all the seats it was contesting. A strong opposition was the need of the hour. Questioning the Congress for failing to fulfil the promises made at least to the farmers, he said no bonus was given so far for paddy even though the arrivals for the Yasangi season had started all over the State.

The farmers were extended no incentive. They should fight against the government at the paddy purchase centres while casting their votes against the Congress in the polling booths, he said, pointing out that all the schemes implemented for reaching out to the farmers by the previous government including Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bima, free power and purchase of their produce offering MSP, had lost their importance after the Congress came to power. Land prices had come down drastically. Lavish promises were made to the people by the Congress party and once the party was voted to power, it started backing out from each of its commitments.

The party had promised to offer one tola of gold as part of the Kalyana Lakshmi programme, but it proved to be a false promise. The government had failed to continue the uninterrupted power supply to the farm sector along with other facilities. Coming down heavily on the Congress candidate in Chevella G Ranjith Reddy, who switched his loyalties from the BRS, Chandrashekhar Rao likened his behaviour to that of a sunflower, slanting towards power like the flower did towards sunlight. The Congress party had promised Scooty two-wheelers for the girl students, but had failed to fulfil that as well. He also attacked the BJP for meeting out a raw deal to Telangana in the sanction of medical colleges, Navodaya schools and extending benefits due to the State under Centrally sponsored programmes.

## Five youths arrested for forced conversion and gang-rape of minor in UP

GNS News Agency, April 14

Bahraich: Five youths have been arrested for the forcible conversion and gang-rape of a minor girl in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich. The incident was reported from the Hardi area of the district where a Dalit minor girl, staying in her grandmother's house, was kidnapped, converted, and gang-raped by the accused. The mother told police that her minor daughter, who was at her grandmother's residence near Raji Chauraha, was kidnapped on February 2 by five youths from the neighbourhood, who converted her to their religion and gang-raped her.

A case was registered and Superintendent of Police (SP) Vrinda Shukla along with other officers visited the site and gave directions for evidence collection and stringent action against the accused. The girl said that the youths had threatened to kill her if she spoke up. The accused — Anees, Saddam, Mohiuddeen, Aleem and Baura — were taken into custody and legal proceedings have been initiated against them under sections 363, 342, 376-D, 506, of IPC, the SP said on Sunday.

## BJP sharpens attack on Cong, BRS, likens polls to IPL match

GNS News Agency, April 14

Hyderabad: The Telangana BJP is sharpening its arsenal against the ruling Congress and BRS ahead of the nominations to the ensuing parliament elections. Speaking at the Karimnagar parliament booth committee's Vijaya Sankalp Abhiyan', attended by BJP national organisational joint general secretary Shiva Prakash on Saturday, BJP candidate and national general secretary Bandi Sanjay Kumar mounted a no-holds-barred attack on the Congress and BRS.

Terming the ensuing Indian Political League (IPL) is being played by the INDIA's alliance team and Narendra Modi's team that is all set to win the cup with 400 points, he said. Similarly, the Telangana Political League



# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### Ukraine peace talks

SWITZERLAND has announced that it will host an international conference in June to provide a platform for a high-level dialogue on ways to reach a 'comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine, based on international law and the UN Charter'. Leaders of major Global South countries, including India, and Western nations have been invited. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will attend the summit, even as his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin has spoken disdainfully of the scheduled round of peace talks. He has warned that Moscow will not accept any enforced plans that ignore its interests. Claiming that Russia has not even been invited, Putin has retorted: 'They think there is nothing for us to do there, but at the same time they say it's impossible to decide anything without us.' In the same vein, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has dismissed the meet as a Western ruse to rally broader international support for Kyiv. It is obvious that no viable peace plan can take shape without Russia's participation and consent. Putin has already dismissed Zelenskyy's formula requiring Moscow to pull back its troops, pay compensation to Ukraine and accept an international tribunal for its alleged crimes. The US-led West's ploy to seize the initiative through the Swiss talks can prove counterproductive and further prolong the war, which is in its third year and has caused global upheaval in terms of supply chain disruptions. The onus is on the host country, which has affirmed that 'peace is at the heart of the Swiss spirit', to go all out to bring Russia to the negotiating table. It's also imperative to have an influential player like China on board. India, which is seen as a potential mediator because of its good ties with both warring nations, needs to play a proactive role to prevent the June summit from coming a cropper and being reduced to a Western show of strength.

### It's Tewari vs Tandon in Chandigarh, Congress decides

GNS News Agency, April 14

Ending speculation over the candidature from the lone Chandigarh parliamentary seat, the Congress leadership on Saturday decided to pit Anandpur Sahib sitting MP and lawyer Manish Tewari against BJP's Sanjay Tandon. Tewari, former Chandigarh MP Pawan Kumar Bansal and Chandigarh Congress president Harmohinder Singh Lucky have been vying for the party ticket from Chandigarh.

Sources said the demand for a "new face" from within the local unit for Chandigarh made the party leadership decide in favour of Tewari over Bansal against arch-rival BJP, which too preferred first-timer Tandon over its sitting MP Kirron Kher. According to the INDIA bloc seat deal, the Aam Aadmi Party fielded its candidate in the Chandigarh mayoral elections, leaving the Chandigarh Lok Sabha seat for the Congress. Thus, Tewari will be the joint candidate for the Congress and the AAP.

He finally got the party ticket from Chandigarh which he had been trying since 2009. Tewari told The Sunday Express, "I would, of course, like to thank Pawan Bansal ji, our former minister and former MP for long decades from Chandigarh. I will personally go and seek his guidance, support and blessings, and try to take forward the good work he has done for the City Beautiful." "I would also like to thank Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and...colleagues in Punjab who I have had the honour of working with over the past 43 years of my political career," Tewari said. "And this is an opportunity given to me to serve my birthplace. I will make it worthwhile," he said.

Born and brought up in Chandigarh, Tewari, 58, did his schooling at St. John's High School in Sector 26, BA (Economics) from DAV College (Panjab University), Chandigarh, and a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from the University of Delhi. Tewari is a distinguished senior fellow of the Atlantic Council, one of the most prestigious global think-tanks based in Washington DC. His mother Late Amrit Tewari was a former Dean of the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research (PGIMER) and a nominated councillor of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation. His father VN Tewari was a professor at Panjab University.

Even in the 2009 parliamentary elections, Tewari expressed his willingness to contest from Chandigarh but the party fielded him from Ludhiana. And, he won the seat, defeating Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) candidate Gurcharan Singh Galib. Then again in 2019, he expressed his intent to fight from Chandigarh, but he was fielded from Anandpur Sahib and he defeated SAD's Prem Singh Chandumajra. Tewari's supporters and the local Congress chief have been pressing the party for "a new face from Chandigarh as Bansal lost twice in the last two Lok Sabha elections". Tewari's supporters even said Bansal had contested eight Lok Sabha elections from Chandigarh and people now want a change. BJP's Kirron Kher defeated Bansal twice in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

During a meeting with the party's central leadership on March 19, Lucky had sought a "fresh candidate" from Chandigarh. Chander Mukhi Sharma, AAP leader and a childhood friend of Tewari, said "The connection Tewari has with Chandigarh residents is something that no other leader can have as his family was among the original settlers of the city." "We had worked together for NSUI in the 1980s. We were joint secretaries. He was the elected president of DAV College Students' Union and connected with the youth so well," Sharma said. In 1998, Tewari became the president of the Indian Youth Congress. A national-level swimmer, Tewari's friends said, he (Tewari) led the Panjab University team in swimming and water polo. Besides, he would win declamation contests because he was a good orator. "He knows every corner of the city. He loved cycling in Chandigarh and would speak making the city beautiful. His father was a professor at Panjab University and his mother was a PGI professor. So, he has seen the city growing. We can say his family was among the original settlers in the city and had seen Chandigarh growing," Sharma said. "We would love hanging around the Students' Centre of the university and Mehfil in Sector 17 (owned by Harmohan Dhawan)," he recalled when asked about their favourite places in the city. VN Tewari, who was nominated as a member of the Rajya Sabha in 1982, was shot dead by militants in 1984 during a morning walk in Sector 24 here. Manish was 19 then.

## Temperature in Kolkata expected to rise by 3-5 degrees Celsius from tomorrow



GNS News Agency, April 14

A rise in temperature of up to 3-5 degrees Celsius has been projected in southern Bengal, including Kolkata, over the next five days starting Monday, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). On Saturday, Kolkata reported a maximum temperature of 37 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 27 degrees. Humidity levels soared to 85 per cent as the sky remained partly cloudy. The Met department has advised residents to take precautionary measures while stepping outside between 11 am and 4 pm. Kolkata is expected to remain dry till next Friday with little to no chance of rainfall.

Meanwhile, the maximum temperature is gradually

rising in the entire southern region. On Saturday, the maximum temperature in localities like Panagarh, Bankura, Bishnupur, Purulia, and Bolpur was hovering around 35-36 degrees Celsius. Last week, these places saw the mercury remain below 35 degrees Celsius due to rainfall. Till Tuesday, light rain with thunder has been forecast in areas including North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, East Midnapore, Birbhum, Murshidabad, and Nadia. Conversely, areas such as Howrah, Hooghly, Kolkata, Purulia, Jhargram, West Midnapore, Bankura, West Burdwan, and East Burdwan are expected to remain dry during this period. In the northern part, thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds ranging from 30-40 kmph persisted in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Kalimpong, Alipurduar, and Cooch Behar. Meanwhile, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, and Malda experienced dry weather conditions. On Tuesday evening, these places are expected to have light to moderate rain with thunder. On Saturday, Darjeeling recorded a maximum of 19 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 12 degrees, Kalimpong saw a maximum of 23 degrees Celsius, Cooch Behar 33 degrees, Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar 34 degrees, and Malda reported 35 degrees. The Met department has announced that there will be a gradual rise in day temperature by two to three degrees Celsius during the next four days in districts in sub-Himalayan West Bengal.

## From playing dafli to administering pledge, poll officials walk extra mile to motivate voters to exercise franchise

GNS News Agency, April 14

From organising cultural events to playing tambourines at railway stations to organising interactive sessions at colleges and schools to grassroots campaigns, officials are making an all-out effort to maximise voting percentage through various innovative programmes under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative as the campaign for the parliamentary elections in Punjab has gained momentum with political parties strategising various means to lure electorates to garner maximum votes. At 65.94 per cent in the 2019 parliamentary elections, Punjab was among 11 states and Union Territories (UTs) where the turnout were lower than the national average of 67.40 per cent. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar had stressed that the 'one size fits all' approach will not work and different strategies have to be worked out for different areas and segments to encourage more people to come out and vote.

In districts like Hoshiarpur, officers resorted to creative tactics such as playing tambourines at railway stations and conducting grassroots campaigns to reach out to the people with their message. In Nawanshahr, efforts are directed towards educating young voters. In Jalandhar, polling stations with low voting percentages are targeted, with students even making 'rangolis' to educate voters. The dedication of officials and volunteers under initiatives like the 'Ghar Ghar Dastak' (knocking on every door) underscores the commitment to ensure every citizen understands the importance of voting and actively participates in the democratic process, official sources said.

Hoshiarpur district SVEEP nodal officer Preet Kohli even played 'dafali' (tambourine) at the railway station and interacted with people, asking them to vote on June 1. Other officials were seen carrying posters, pamphlets and placards in their hands. "Through these initiatives, we aim not just to meet but exceed the Election Commission (EC)'s target and ensure every voice is heard and every vote counts," Kohli said. From 'Jago' (Awakening — a rural tradition in Punjab) to Gidda (a folk dance) programmes and grassroots campaigns are being organised in several parts of Hoshiarpur district in the Doaba region. The Doaba region of Punjab has four districts with two Lok Sabha constituencies — Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur.

## In Jalandhar, BSP again banks on Balwinder, had finished 3rd in 2019

GNS News Agency, April 14

The Bahujan Samaj Party Saturday announced its candidates for two Lok Sabha seats in Punjab, fielding Jagjit Chharbarh from Patiala and Advocate Balwinder Kumar from Jalandhar, both party general secretaries. With this, the BSP has named candidates for five seats. Announcing the candidates Saturday, party in-charge for Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh, Randhir Singh Beniwal said the final decision was made by BSP supremo Mayawati.

BSP state unit chief Jasvir Singh Garhi said Balwinder Kumar aims to "expose the counterfeit Dalit" candidates being fielded by various political parties. He also accused the Congress of "consistently deceiving the Dalit community", a trend, which he said, BSP "is combating nationwide". Balwinder Kumar had contested the Vidhan Sabha elections from Kartarpur in 2017 and 2022, and Lok Sabha election from Jalandhar in 2019. He had garnered more than two lakh votes or 20 per cent of total votes polled and finished third. The election was won by Congress' Chaudhary Santokh Singh.

In the bypoll to the same seat in 2023, necessitated by the death of Santokh Singh, the SAD-BSP alliance had again secured the third position with 1.58 lakh votes (or 17.85 per cent of the total polled). According to data from the Punjab Election Office, BSP, in Jalandhar, had garnered 15% vote share in the 1992 Lok Sabha election. The figure dipped to 0.9% in 1998 and 9.14% in 2004. In 2009, the vote share was 10.40%, reaching a low of 4.5% in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, before bouncing back to 20% in 2019. Chharbarh had contested Punjab Assembly elections in 2012 and 2017 from Rajpura and Ghanaur segments respectively. The BSP, which has announced to go solo in the parliamentary polls, had earlier declared candidates for Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur and Sangrur Lok Sabha seats. It has fielded party general secretary Makhn Singh from Sangrur. Makhn Singh had retired as the deputy director of the state health department.

The party has named Surinder Kamboj for Ferozepur,



Hoshiarpur Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer Komal Mittal said, "We are educating voters to use their voting rights to achieve the target set by the EC." The EC has set the target of achieving 100 per cent voting, but most districts in Punjab have a fixed voting target of 70-75 per cent. In Kapurthala district, officers ventured into schools and colleges armed with presentations. They held interactive sessions to sensitise the youth. "Through engaging discussions and thought-provoking activities, we instilled among students the significance of each vote cast, shaping future generations into informed and conscientious citizens," said Kapurthala SVEEP Nodal officer Paramjit Singh, adding that many other programmes are in the pipeline in the coming days.

Also, some officers were stationed at public squares, community centres and villages and made citizens take pledges to exercise their voting rights. In Nawanshahr district, too, schools and colleges are being covered to make young voters, including first-time voters aware of casting their votes. They are also motivated to sensitise their families to cast votes. Nawanshahr DC Navjot Pal Singh Randhawa said under the 'Ghar Ghar Dastak' (knocking on every house) programme, officials are approaching every household and motivating them to visit polling booths on June 1. In Jalandhar, polling stations with lesser voting percentages are being targeted under the SVEEP programme. Also, students are making 'rangolis' to educate people on the importance of casting their votes. Meanwhile, volunteers are organising outreach programmes and mobilising communities, aiming not just to meet but exceed the quota, and to ensure every voice is heard and every vote counts.



and Rakesh Kumar Summan from Hoshiarpur, and said that remaining candidates would be announced soon. In 2014, the BSP had contested all 13 seats in Punjab and could secure only 2.63 lakh votes. The party was on fourth spot on seven seats, sixth on two seats and fifth on two seats. It later entered into an alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal and as part of the seat-sharing pact, had fielded candidates from Anandpur Sahib, Hoshiarpur (reserve) and Jalandhar (reserve) seats in 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

The party had sprung a surprise by finishing third on all three seats, doing better than the Aam Aadmi Party, which at that time was the principal opposition party in Punjab. The AAP had finished fourth on these three seats. In Hoshiarpur, party candidate Khushi Ram had secured over 1.28 lakh votes. At that time, Capt Amarinder Singh, who was the chief minister, had blamed the defeat of the Congress candidate on "shifting of votes to the BSP". Though Congress romped home to impressive victory by winning eight out of 13 Lok Sabha seats, Amarinder had said shifting of Dalit votes to the BSP had affected the winning margins of some party candidates. From the Anandpur Sahib, BSP's Vikram Singh Sodhi had secured 1.46 lakh votes, finishing third. BSP traditionally had had a strong presence in the Doaba region's Lok Sabha constituencies, including Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur, but its support base has fragmented over time.

## Threat letter, email, and firing outside house: Why has Salman Khan been on radar of gangsters?



GNS News Agency, April 14

Two bike-borne assailants fired rounds outside the Bandra residence of actor Salman Khan in the early hours of Sunday. While the actor is safe, this is the latest in a series of threats the actor has received in the past few years. Two unidentified bike-borne individuals wearing helmets fired five rounds outside Salman Khan's residence around 5 am on Sunday. The Mumbai police registered an FIR in the matter and have begun a probe.

What were the other threats received by the actor in the last few years?

In March 2023, the actor's manager received a threat mail, following which an FIR was registered against jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, Goldy Brar — a Canada-based gangster and close associate of Bishnoi — and one Mohit Garg. It referred to an interview given by Bishnoi from Tihar jail where he had threatened the actor. The email from Mohit Garg's ID said Brar wanted to talk to the actor. It referred to the interview given by Bishnoi in which the jailed gangster issued the death threat. The email said if the actor wanted to close the matter, he should talk to Brar "face to face." The mail further threatened that while information was passed on this time around, the next time, there would be consequences.

Before that, in June 2022, a threat letter was kept at a spot on Bandra Bandstand where the actor's father, Salim Khan, would walk. The threat letter claimed that the actor would meet the fate of singer Sidhu Moosewala, who was killed in May 2022, allegedly by the Bishnoi gang. An FIR was registered regarding that threat letter as well. Further, during interrogation with the Punjab Police, a Bishnoi gang member said two men had conducted a reconnaissance along Salman Khan's route to his Panvel farmhouse from Mumbai. He said the two men had taken a room on rent for a month for this purpose. The Mumbai police, however, could not corroborate this.

Why has the actor been on the radar of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang?

Bishnoi has in the past threatened and allegedly tried to attack Salman Khan due to his alleged involvement in the blackbuck killing case of 1998 while shooting the movie Hum Saath-Saath Hain in Rajasthan. Blackbucks are considered holy by the Bishnoi community; hence, Lawrence Bishnoi claimed he had been upset with the actor ever since. Law enforcement agencies, however, said that like any gang, Bishnoi also targets high-profile people to stay in the news and ensure this scares victims to pay protection money.

Who is Lawrence Bishnoi?

Bishnoi, 31, is a Punjab-based gangster with several cases of murder and extortion against him. He became a more prominent name after the murder of Moosewala. Brar claimed responsibility for the murder and said he had planned the attack with Bishnoi, who was then in Tihar jail.

What security measures have been taken by the police?

Following the threats to Salman Khan, the Mumbai Police, in August 2022, issued the actor a firearm licence for self-protection. In November 2022, the Maharashtra government upgraded his security level to the Y plus category from the X category. While X category security usually entails one gunman, Y has one gunman for mobile security and one (plus four on rotation) for static security. Y+ has two policemen (plus four on rotation) for mobile security and one (plus four on rotation) for residence security.

## Salman Khan again targeted; crime branch probes firing at actor's Mumbai home

GNS News Agency, April 14

Mumbai: With Bollywood megastar Salman Khan again targeted, the Mumbai Police Crime Branch entered the scene to probe at least three-four bullets fired at the actor's Bandra West home early this morning, officials said on Sunday. The chilling act was committed by at least two unidentified persons sporting helmets who came speeding on a motorcycle and fired at least four shots in the direction of Galaxy Apartment, before zooming off on the dark and deserted road.

For the past several years, Salman Khan and his family have been facing death threats from certain Punjab-based mafia groups like the Bishnoi gang. In the past couple of years, he and his father Salim Khan have been issued death threats in different ways, including dropping a letter to the family. It was not immediately known if Salman Khan was at home or not on a weekend holiday just after the Ramzan Eid celebrations. On learning of the incident, a Bandra Police team rushed to the Khan household and launched preliminary investigations, and also tightened security in the vicinity.

The police are scanning the CCTV footage in the area to trace out the shooters and check their motives and targets, and more details are awaited. Hours later, a Crime Branch and Forensic Team with ballistics experts also arrived on the scene and found at least one bullet mark on the gate of the building entrance. Salman Khan, 58, lives with almost his entire joint family comprising parents, brothers and their kin at the landmark Galaxy Apartments on the picturesque Bandra sea-face area of suburban north-west Mumbai. For several years, Salim Khan and Salman Khan have been getting death threats from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang after the 1998 blackbuck poaching incident in Rajasthan. In 2022, while on a morning stroll near his home, Salim Khan found a note saying "Salim Khan...Salman Khan... bahut jald aapka Moose Wala hoga" — a reference to Sidhu Moose Wala, a Punjabi rapper, who was brutally shot dead near his home on May 29, 2022, shaking the entertainment industry.



## 15th Bengaluru International Film Festival to begin on Thursday, focus on Kannada industry this year



GNS News Agency, April 14

The 15th edition of the Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFes) is all set to commence on Thursday. With 180 films across various categories, the festival will continue until March 7 with screenings at PVR Orion in Rajajinagar, Suchitra Academy, and Dr Rajkumar Bhavana. The eight-day film festival will begin with an opening screening of the Swiss comedy 'Bonjour Switzerland' directed by Peter Luisi besides a cultural programme by Grammy winner Ricky Kej. According to

the state Department of Information and Public Relations, Kannada films will be in focus this year, marking 90 years of the industry and 50 years of the state of Karnataka, while the Country Focus will be on German films. Lesser-known languages will also be featured at the festival, like Tulu and Kodava.

Thirty Kannada films have been curated to mark the occasion, while 11 have been selected under the Popular Entertainment category. Centenary tribute screenings have also been scheduled to be held in honour of director Vijayabhaskar and cinematographer N G Rao, while other screenings will be held in honour of film personalities Leelavathi, Vani Jayaram, Bhagwan and C V Shivashankar. The five sets of juries include international figures from Russia, Spain, Bangladesh, the UK, Slovakia, Taiwan, Australia and Bulgaria. According to N Vidyashankar, artistic director of BIFFes, "Thirty Indian films will premiere at the festival. This is very good because the Indian film calendar usually starts around October." The inaugural and closing ceremonies of BIFFes will be held at the Vidhana Soudha. Registration for delegates is open till 5 pm on February 28 at biffes.org.

## IPS officer seeks court order to prevent defamatory media reports during SIT probe

GNS News Agency, April 14

A senior IPS officer in Karnataka, who appeared before a Special Investigation Team last week in connection with a probe into a Bitcoin scam, has moved a court for an ex parte interim order to prohibit defamatory reporting by the media on his role in the case. Sandeep Patil, Inspector General of Police, who headed the Bengaluru police Central Crime Branch between 2020 and 2021, has sought an ex parte injunction against defamatory reporting by media outlets in a CCB case that is being probed again by the SIT.

Patil had appeared before the Karnataka Criminal Investigation Department SIT last week to provide clarifications on a probe against hacker Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki, who was arrested by the Crime Branch under his watch in 2020-21 in connection with multiple hacking crimes. The SIT spoke to the IPS officer after it named four former CCB officers in an FIR filed on January 24, 2024, for alleged illegal confinement, breach of trust by a public servant, and destruction of evidence in connection with the crime branch's handling of cases after Sriki's arrest in November 2020.

In its FIR, the SIT has named K Sridhar Poojar (now a deputy superintendent of police), inspectors Prashanth Babu, Chandradhar S R and Lakshmi Kanthiah along with a private cyber expert K S Santhosh Kumar who assisted in the probe of the hacker's case in 2020. The SIT has arrested Prashanth Babu and Santhosh Kumar. The two were granted bail on February 23 after they cooperated with the probe. The SIT is seeking the custodial



interrogation of Poojar whose anticipatory bail was denied by a special court on February 23. Poojar was the original investigating officer when Sriki was arrested by the Crime Branch in a case of buying drugs on the darknet. On February 23, a special court indicated while rejecting Poojar's anticipatory bail that the SIT had unearthed prima facie evidence to suggest wrongdoing by the Crime Branch officers following the arrest of the hacker. The SIT has accused the Crime Branch officers of holding the hacker and his associate in illegal custody before showing their official arrests in November 2020. Sriki's arrest led to the cracking of several cyber crimes in Karnataka, including a Rs 11.5 crore heist from the Karnataka e-governance cell in July-August 2019. After it came to power, the Congress government constituted the CID SIT on June 30, 2023, to probe the Bitcoin scam.

## Hanuma Vihari resignation: TDP says YSRCP pressured him to resign after spat with player whose father is party corporator

GNS News Agency, April 14

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh has accused a Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) corporator of forcing cricketer Hanuma Vihari to resign as captain of the Andhra Pradesh Ranji team. The corporator's son has denied the allegation.

Vihari, who has played 16 Tests for India, had posted a statement on his Instagram account on Monday saying that he would never play for Andhra Pradesh again. Vihari said that in a game against West Bengal, he had shouted at a player who complained to his father, who then allegedly asked the Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) to take action against Vihari. He also said that he was asked to resign from captaincy for no fault of his. The TDP, in a statement on Tuesday, said that Vihari was pressured to resign after an altercation with his teammate Kuntrapakam Prudhviraj. "Prudhviraj complained to his father Kuntrapakam Narasimha, the YSRCP municipal corporator of the 25th ward from Tirupati who forced the cricketer to resign and leave playing cricket for the team altogether," said senior TDP leader and national spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhi Ram. "The issue between the two players took a twist when Vihari was pressured by Prudhviraj's father. Vihari was subjected to relentless verbal abuse and humiliation, finally resulting in his decision not to play for Andhra ever again," Pattabhi Ram said.

Vihari has been hounded out by the YSRCP, Pattabhi



Ram alleged. "Even in the Andhra Cricket Association, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Reddy has put his henchmen. The president of the cricket association is P Sharat Chandra Reddy who is also accused in the Delhi liquor scam. So criminals who are close to Jagan Reddy are running the cricket association," he claimed. Earlier, Vihari said in his post, "I felt embarrassed but the only reason I continued playing this season is because I respect the game and my team. Sad part is the association thinks that players have to listen to whatever they say and players are there because of them. I felt humiliated and embarrassed but I have not expressed it out until today. I have decided that I'll never play for Andhra Pradesh where I lost my self respect," he stated.

## Chandigarh fruit vendor sparks CBI probe, leading to termination of two employees

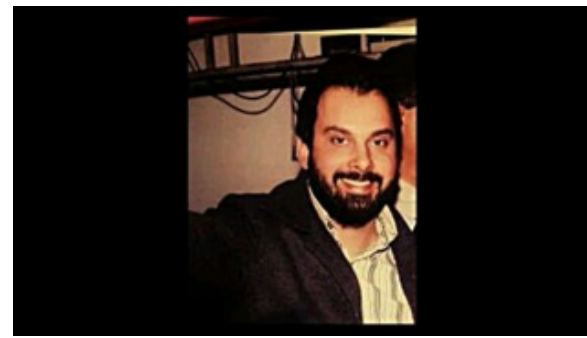


GNS News Agency, April 14

The services of two contractual employees, including driver Sabar Ali of Market Committee secretary Manoj Sharma, were terminated after their arrest for accepting a bribe of Rs 12,000. Sharma's role is under the CBI scanner. A team of CBI, headed by Inspector A K Meena, had arrested the two — driver Sabar Ali and another employee Rahul Yadav — on February 22. They were alleg-

edly demanding the bribe on behalf of secretary Manoj Sharma whose role will be looked into during the investigation. A senior officer of State Agriculture Marketing Board said, "Indeed, services of two arrested contractual employees were terminated. We are yet to receive an official communication from CBI in this connection. Once the communication is received, the role of secretary Manoj Sharma will be examined at the departmental level. We cannot say whether Manoj Sharma will join the CBI probe or not." In his complaint to CBI, fruit vendor Ravi Shankar of Baltana had alleged that secretary Manoj Sharma through his men had confiscated his fruits at Grain Market, Sector 26, and demanded Rs 12,000 bribe to release the confiscated material. He alleged in his complaint that Manoj had directed him to meet his driver Sabar Ali. Sources said the CBI registered a regular case against driver Sabar Ali and arrested him along with another contractual employee, Rahul Yadav, red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs 12,000 from Ravi Shankar on February 22. A source said, "

## Sippy Sidhu murder case: CBI court sets aside order that junked probe plea against cops



GNS News Agency, April 14

A special CBI court has set aside the order of special judicial magistrate which had dismissed the protest petition filed by Sippy Sidhu's mother and brother, seeking action against Chandigarh Police's inspector Poonam Dilawari and former assistant superintendent of police (ASP) Gurqbal Singh Sidhu for allegedly destroying evidence. The Special CBI Court of Additional District and Sessions Judge, Jagjit Singh, remanded back the case for appreciating afresh the allegations as levelled in the protest petition against Gurqbal and Dilawari, and to pass afresh order therein, and then commit the case. The court further directed the two police officials to appear before the Court of Special Judicial Magistrate CBI, Chandigarh along with their counsels on March 1.

Sukhmanpreet Singh, alias Sippy Sidhu, a national-level shooter and corporate lawyer, 35, was shot dead on September 20, 2015. Initially, the Chandigarh police investigated the case, but it was handed over to the CBI in 2016. After six years, the CBI filed an untrace report in December 2020. The complainants filed a protest petition against it. Later when the CBI filed a chargesheet against accused Kalyani Singh, the complainants told the court that they would like to pursue the protest petition qua the role of Sidhu and Dilawari, as well. The petition was however dismissed against the duo by the Judicial Magistrate Court of CBI on February 4, 2023 on grounds that it was "not maintainable", and "infructuous".

The applicants, Deepender Kaur and Jasmanpreet Singh Sidhu — mother and brother of Sippy — challenged the judicial magistrate order before the appellate CBI Court of Additional District and Sessions Judge, Jagjit

Singh, by filing a revision application. Sourabh Bedi, counsel for revisionist, argued that the order of Special Judicial Magistrate Court of CBI, is liable to be set aside and special judicial magistrate was required to pass a specific order deciding the protest petition of the complainant on merits against two other accused namely Dilawari and Gurqbal. The revisionist counsel told the court about the untrace report submitted by the CBI, wherein, it was mentioned about Dilawari having reached the spot and inspected the scene of crime with the other police officials, including ACP Gurqbal, and it is further mentioned about the documents found from the deceased, including his ID proof, and it was argued that the identity of the deceased had become clear, but the matter was delayed and the FIR was registered about death of an unknown person. Further, the accused failed to collect the CCTV footage from the spot, as it would have helped in tracing the accused earlier. Also it was argued that CBI had even asked the department (Chandigarh Police) to take disciplinary action against them. The revisionist counsel further argued that the accused having committed offence punishable under Section 167/204/217/218/34 of Indian Penal Code read with 120-B of IPC, but there is no whisper by the learned Special Magistrate about all this evidence, and it was simply held that the protest petition was not maintainable or had become infructuous. The counsel for Sidhu and Dilawari meanwhile argued that they are not at fault and had there been any case made out against them, the CBI could have filed the charge sheet even against them, but which was not done. The Court of Special CBI Judge, Jagjit Singh, on hearing the contentions held that a perusal of the protest petition, as filed by the present revisionist goes to show that it had been filed when an untrace report had been filed by the CBI against all the accused persons, and in the said protest petition, the complainant has discussed a lot of evidence, which had even come in the original untrace report filed by the CBI, which was also discussed during the above arguments of the revisionist counsel. Thus setting aside the order of the special judicial magistrate, the court said that the learned magistrate "could not have simply overlooked all the said evidence, and in one line could not have come to the conclusion that the protest petition was not maintainable or was infructuous and by doing so he has fallen in error".

## 98% of work done, Shahpurkandi Dam's real benefit is irrigation, and not preventing Ravi's water from flowing down to Pakistan

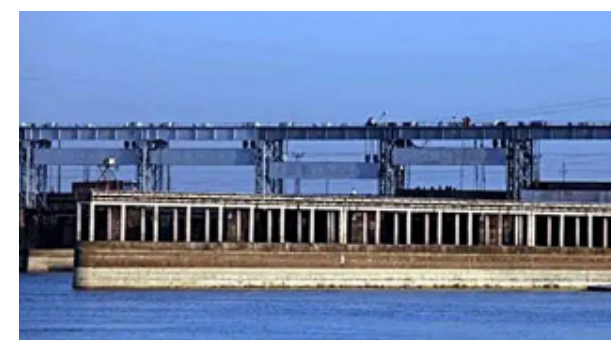
GNS News Agency, April 14

The Indus Waters Treaty signed between India and Pakistan in 1960 for the sharing of the river waters gives India the right to utilise the waters of three eastern rivers the Ravi, Beas and Satluj. Some of the Ravi waters are currently wasted through the Madhopur headworks downstream to Pakistan. The waste can be minimised when the Shahpurkandi Dam project on the river becomes operational — the dam is almost ready, but yet not completed. Often viewed as a measure to prevent the Ravi waters from going to Pakistan, the purpose of the Shahpurkandi Dam project is other than the perceived notion. A bilateral agreement was signed between Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir in January 1979 for the construction of the Shahpurkandi Dam, but the proposed project couldn't see the light of day. In 2001, during the tenure of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the project was included under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Scheme (AIBP) but stalled again.

In 2009, the revised cost of the Shahpurkandi Dam National project was pegged at Rs 2,285.81 crore, but the construction work could not progress due to paucity of funds from time to time under different governments. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government made a fresh effort and an agreement was reached between Punjab and J&K in New Delhi on September 8, 2018. The notion of stopping waters to Pakistan is understood to have given a fillip to the BJP politics in the Hindi belt.

Chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Union Cabinet had in 2018 approved a central assistance of Rs 485.38 crore (for the irrigation component) for the project. The Bhartiya Janta Party has been accusing successive governments at the Centre and J&K of "deliberately stalling" the Shahpurkandi Dam National project for over 45 years. Speaking after laying the foundation stone of the Shahpurkandi Ravi Canal at the riverside in 2021, Union Minister of State Dr Jitendra Singh had said, "History will seek answers as to what were political compulsions behind this delay." According to the Punjab government website, the 55.5m high dam with two powerhouses having a total installed capacity of 206 MW, is being constructed across the Ravi, 11 km downstream of the Ranjit Sagar Dam project and 8 km upstream of the Madhopur headworks. The project will have an irrigation potential of 37,173 hectares (5,000 in Punjab and 32,173 in J&K), intensive irrigation in the UBDC system and a regulated supply to Rajasthan.

It shall also act as a balancing reservoir qua the Ranjit Sagar Dam project since, its releases, guided more by the power-generation considerations, are playing havoc with the Upper Bari Doab Canal System. The Shahpurkandi Dam project was declared a 'National Project' by the Union Ministry of Water Resources in February 2008. As per the guidelines of the National Project, the central government shall provide 90% of the cost of the irrigation component as the central assistance and 10% shall be provided by the Punjab government. The Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd shall provide funds for the power component. The quantity of Ravi water flowing down to Pakistan in the absence of the Shahpurkandi dam is not much. It's only during the rainy season that the excess water goes to Pakistan. Talking to The Indian Express, Sher Singh, chief engineer, dams, Punjab Irrigation Department, said, "Almost 98% of work has been done, but the Shahpurkandi Dam project has not been completed yet. It will take two more months." On the Ravi water going to Pakistan, he said, "Ravi water is not going to Pakistan. It's only during the rainy season, the extra water flows down to Pakistan. But now we will be able to store that extra water in the dam." The Ranjit Sagar dam on the Ravi controls the flow of water as per our requirements. But there are some catchment areas downstream the Ranjit Sagar dam and water from these areas will go



to the Ravi base, which we can store now," he said. "We can't give an exact figure about how much water will be stored as it depends on the rainy season every year. But that quantity of water going to Pakistan is not much," Singh added. The Ravi water is being used for irrigation in Jammu and Punjab by the lift technique. "Earlier, the lift technique was being used for irrigation. Now much simpler 'gravity' will be used for the same purpose. It will be a simple process," Singh said. He said, "The biggest benefit of the Shahpurkandi Dam is now more than 32,000 hectares in J&K will come under irrigation and around 5,000 in Punjab." "The second biggest benefit is power generation. We will have 206 MW hydro powerhouse ready by the next year and we will have this additional energy available from the dam," he said.

## Teacher Eligibility Test to be conducted twice a year starting this year

GNS News Agency, April 14

Hyderabad: The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) will be conducted twice a year starting this year, once in June and December. The TET will be conducted irrespective of the issuance of the District Selection Committee (DSC) notification for recruitment of teachers in government and local body schools in the State. The National Council for Teacher Education has already directed States to hold TET twice a year besides extending the validity of the scores secured in the test from seven years to lifetime. Currently, the TET comprising of two papers is being held once in a year with the last such test being held in September 2023.

The paper-I is for candidates who intend to be a teacher for Classes I to V, whereas paper-II is for a persons who want to work as a teacher for Classes VI to VIII. Candidates intending to be a teacher either for Classes I to V or Classes VI to VIII have to appear for both paper-I and II. So far, candidates who completed two year BED or DEd courses or to enhance their score appeared for the TET. Henceforth, in service teachers seeking promotion as the school assistant in government and local body schools are also required to take the TET. The decision of the government to hold TET twice a year will aid teachers seeking promotions. Meanwhile, the Education department is drawing up plans to issue a DSC notification for filling over 11, 000 teacher posts in two to three days. The recruitment examination is expected to be conducted after Parliament elections in the month of May. However, this time, the DSC notification is being planned before the conduct of the TET as the test was conducted in September 2023. As per latest decision, teacher aspirants can appear for the TET in June and upload the score for DSC recruitment after announcement of the result, officials said.



## Mayor's swearing in put off at last minute, senior deputy mayor, deputy mayor polls uncertain



GNS News Agency, April 14

With newly appointed Chandigarh mayor Kuldeep Kumar Dhalor failing to turn up for his oath-taking ceremony on Monday, the fate of the re-election for the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor, scheduled for Tuesday, also hangs in the balance. Hours before Dhalor was to take oath as the Chandigarh mayor, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) announced that the event had been postponed indefinitely due to some "personal reasons".

Later in the evening, Dhalor told HT that his sister was unwell, so he had to rush to Ludhiana. "As my sister is unwell, I could not assume charge today. I will not be able to come to the MC House on Tuesday either," he said. As per the MC Act, the mayor acts as presiding authority and presides over the meeting for the election of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor. Hence, if Dhalor does not turn up at the time of the polls, which are scheduled at 10 am, the MC secretary will have to issue a notification on postponement of the polls. "So far, Dhalor has not submitted any verbal or written communication on requesting to postpone the polls. No official notification on postponement has been released," said MC secretary Shambhu Rathee. Having clinched victory in the Chandigarh mayoral elections after a hard-fought legal battle that went up to the Supreme Court, AAP had planned to make the mayor's swearing-in ceremony a grand event by inviting Delhi chief minister and party chief Arvind Kejriwal, his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann and senior party leader Raghav Chadha on the occasion. Sources, however, said the three leaders had no plans to attend the event.

Meanwhile, two councillors of the Congress moved the Punjab and Haryana high court (HC) demanding that the deputy commissioner's notification on the election for senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor on February 27, be quashed. In the petition, Gurpreet Singh Gabi and Nirmala Devi, who were Congress candidates for the posts of senior deputy and deputy mayor respectively, chal-

lenged the notification stating that the deputy commissioner did not have the power to convene the meeting for this election and it was only the mayor, who could have summoned the meeting and conducted the elections. Even if, he had to do it, he should have consulted the mayor, the plea stated, adding that the election is to be held as directed by Supreme Court, which, as per the plea, means, a fresh notification be issued, nominations be invited again and thereafter a date be fixed. The lawyers, led by Rajiv Sharma, had made a request for urgent hearing on Monday afternoon, which was allowed by the high court bench of justice Sureshwar Thakur, and ordered listing of the case for Tuesday. Meanwhile, the duo withdrew the petition in which they had challenged the election of BJP's Kuljeet Sandhu and Rajinder Sharma as deputy mayor and senior deputy mayor respectively, conducted on January 30 in which AAP and Congress party councilors did not participate.

After three AAP councillors defected to the BJP two days before the Supreme Court verdict on February 20, the saffron party secured an edge in the numbers' game in the 35-member MC House. A party needs 19 votes to win the election, which the BJP has in its kitty with 17 councillors, an ex-officio vote of BJP MP Kirron Kher and the support of the lone Shiromani Akali Dal councillor. The AAP, on the other hand, is down to 10 councillors, and even the pre-poll alliance with the Congress, which has seven votes, will not help the INDIA bloc reach the magic number of 19. At least two of the three turncoat councillors returning to the AAP is the combine's only hope for winning the senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor's posts. To prevent this, until Saturday, the 17 BJP councillors remained at the PWD Guest House in Panchkula's Sector 1. To further ensure that they remain unreachable before the fresh elections, senior party leaders directed them to move to a resort in Morni Hills on Sunday. The councillors continue to be restoring at Morni till the filing of the report. As per BJP sources, the three councillors Neha Musawat, Poonam and Gurcharanjit Singh (Kala), who joined the BJP on February 18 in Delhi, are in Gurugram and are not with their BJP councillors at Morni. "We are trying to talk to the three councillors. We want them to do 'ghar-vapsi' and we will welcome them in the party fold again", said the AAP leader. The mayoral elections have been mired in controversy since the word go, with the elections, originally scheduled for January 18, being cancelled at the eleventh hour after the presiding officer Anil Masih called in sick. When the polls finally took place on January 30, it came under the cloud of vote-tampering. Later on February 20, the Supreme Court declared Dhalor the winner of the mayor's seat after noting that Masih defacing the eight ballot papers to tilt the scales in BJP's favour was "obvious". Also, the apex court directed fresh elections for the two posts. Chandigarh deputy commissioner (DC) had then notified the election date for senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor for February 27.

## Prosecution opposes bail plea, says drug officer may influence witnesses in Graft case



GNS News Agency, April 14

In September 2023, the drug control officer Sunil Chaudhary and the middleman Ashok Narula, a resident of Sector 63 were booked by the police under Sections 7, 8 and 12 of the Prevention of Corruption Act. Submitting that there is sufficient evidence against drug control officer Sunil Chaudhary, arrested in a ₹25,00,000 graft case, the prosecution opposed his bail plea. The case is now listed for an order for Tuesday.

In September 2023, the drug control officer Sunil Chaudhary and the middleman Ashok Narula, a resident of Sector 63 were booked by the police under Sections 7, 8 and 12 of the Prevention of Corruption Act. Chaudhary had filed a regular bail plea and the case was listed for Monday before the court of additional sessions judge.

On Monday, the prosecution opposed it stating that there is sufficient evidence against Chaudhary that he has demanded illegal gratification from the complainant, who specifically mentioned his name and on the basis of

which an FIR was registered against Narula and Chaudhary. "Chaudhary is the main accused as he, himself, raised a demand of ₹1 Lakh as illegal gratification and later settled for ₹80,000 and part payment of this amount ₹25,000 was accepted by Narula. Before the magistrate, Narula has admitted that he accepted a bribe on behalf of Chaudhary," the prosecution argued. Adding that there are a sufficient number of calls between Narula and Chaudhary, which proves their association. It was argued that the accused is an influential person and there is every possibility that he will threaten the witnesses and tampered the case record. Seeking dismissal of bail plea, the prosecution argued: "There is every apprehension that if released on bail, he will abscond. The investigation is still pending and vigilance is going to verify the facts with regard to previous complaints/ cases against the accused."

The duo was booked on the complaint of chemist Dev Sharan Saha, who complained that Chaudhary and Narula visited his shop for inspection before processing his drugs licence file. Chaudhary claimed that there were many shortcomings in his shop and that it would be sealed, after which the former took Saha's signature on paper.

Narula then offered to get his file approved in exchange for ₹1 lakh and assured that his shop would not be sealed, the complaint mentions. At last, the amount was settled at ₹80,000. The chemist approached the Vigilance department. They laid a trap and caught Narula red-handed while accepting ₹25,000 bribe as the first instalment on September 27, 2023. However, Chaudhary managed to escape. He surrendered before the court of the additional chief judicial magistrate on February 1 following the Supreme Court's direction and has been in custody since then.

## Delhi BJP to not field 7 sitting MPs in LS poll; search for candidates deepens

GNS News Agency, April 14

The BJP has intensified the Lok Sabha candidate selection process, with party's Delhi unit observers on Monday gathering the names of ticket probables on seven parliamentary seats of the city, at the district level. In the wake of the AAP and Congress alliance in Delhi, buzz is growing stronger that the BJP may not field all its sitting MPs in the Lok Sabha polls to be held in April-May. Further, in the run-up to the selection of candidates, the BJP has been conducting three surveys and doing a performance analysis of its 7 MPs in Delhi, said a top functionary of Delhi BJP. "There are talks of at least half of the present MPs losing ticket this time. Buzz is also strong that all will be replaced, but it's too early to say anything because these matters are decided by the national leadership," he said.

In 2019, the BJP repeated its sitting MPs on five of the seven seats. Gautam Gambhir and Hans Raj Hans were fresh candidates in East Delhi and North West Delhi constituencies. All the BJP candidates won with huge margins in 2019 and polled more votes than that obtained by the candidates of the Congress and the AAP that fought the elections independently.

"We never take any election lightly. But we are not bothered by the alliance between the AAP and the Congress in Delhi and making our preparations with full dedication to win all the 7 seats third time in a row," said another senior Delhi BJP leader. The district level leaders, including president, general secretary, sitting councilors, candidates of previous Assembly polls, state functionaries, district in-charges and co-in-charges took part in



the feedback gathering exercise conducted by teams of two senior leaders sent from the state unit.

Read Here | Lok Sabha elections: AAP-Congress alliance vs BJP in Delhi, Haryana, Gujarat, Goa; seats sharing details revealed | Each local leader provided three names of probables. Roughly, five to seven names of probable candidates for the seven Lok Sabha seats. The observers have submitted their reports to Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva," said party leaders. The feedback exercise revealed that there was a lot of enthusiasm among the party leaders to contest the Lok Sabha polls, they said. "Apart from sitting MPs, the names of many state office bearers were suggested by the leaders at the district level," they said. The process for selection of candidates from Delhi may be wrapped up in the next four to six weeks and the tickets could be declared around mid April, they added.

## HC orders CAG audit of private-aided colleges

GNS News Agency, April 14

The bench of justice Sureshwar Singh Thakur and justice Sudeepti Sharma passed the order while dealing with the plea on enhancement of the retirement age of faculty of these colleges. The Punjab and Haryana high court (HC) has ordered a CAG audit of the seven private-aided colleges in Chandigarh to check for any financial anomalies. The bench of justice Sureshwar Singh Thakur and justice Sudeepti Sharma passed the order while dealing with the plea on enhancement of the retirement age of faculty of these colleges.

"(These) colleges are not shown, by any tangible evidence placed on record, to be wholly non-profitable organisations nor is there any tangible evidence adduced on record, thus suggestive that a holistic philanthropic purpose, is the bedrock of the opening and running of these colleges. Therefore, but only for want of the above evidence, thus leads this court to form a conclusion that such colleges rather became established and are also being managed by the managements concerned, hence for a profiteering purpose," the court said asking the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India to appoint an auditor, adding that the exercise would help in detecting any purported faults, if any, in earlier audits for which responsibility can be fixed.

It noted the audit of such colleges may be done by the auditors as being appointed till now. However, it is neither apprised to this court by the counsel for the petitioner nor by the counsel for the opposite party, that the



makings of audits for the relevant purpose, thus were completely by a "non-partisan agency". The CAG audit would ensure the correctness or otherwise of the previously made audits, and further help in finding out whether these colleges made correct financial projections while seeking grant-in-aid from the Centre. No perpetual embezzlement is cast upon the Government of India to release grants-in-aid to such colleges, it added. The court has now ordered that CAG appoint a qualified auditor to make an incisive audits of all the independent financial resources of these colleges and a report has been sought by April 30.

## CCPCR inspects playway schools in Chandigarh, found discrepancies



GNS News Agency, April 14

They have made a list of discrepancies and sent them to the schools for their response; the team checked the whole premises including corridors, washrooms, play areas, classrooms, CCTV cameras and school buses. The Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CCPCR) headed by chairperson Shipra Bansal made a surprise inspection visit to three playway schools of the city. They have made a list of discrepancies and sent them to the schools for their response. The team checked the whole premises including corridors, washrooms, play areas, classrooms, CCTV cameras and school buses.

According to information shared by CCPCR, they found discrepancies at Eurokids Preschool in Sector 37 such as improper record of the staff and no police verification of the teaching and non-teaching staff. There are two school buses run by a private contractor. On checking, the team found that pollution and insurance certificates have expired of buses and also no police verification of the drivers and attendants had been done. Further, the team found that a staff member was looking after a specially-abled child without any proper qualification, school was missing out on a counsellor. There were no display boards mentioning the child help line number and other child protection agencies. CCPCR added, at St Stephen's Preparatory School in Sector 46, there were also no display boards mentioning the number of relevant child protection agencies. Also the first-aid box was not well maintained. The concerned school had only one special educator and no school counsellor. The school had three buses owned by a private contractor out of which the pollution certificate of one bus had expired. The team found that Stepping Stones Play School in Sector 38 had no major discrepancies. Bansal strictly instructed the schools to take immediate steps to check out all the loopholes. She said, "Time has been given to the schools to address any shortcomings. We have visited other schools as well in the past and the purpose is not to penalise the schools but for constructive criticism and to ensure that rules and regulations are followed," she added.

## TN politician, film producer kingpin of drug racket: Investigators

GNS News Agency, April 14

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Saturday last said that the cartel was busted on February 15 after a four-month-long joint probe with the Delhi Police. The alleged kingpin of the ₹2000 crore drug trafficking racket busted this month is a Tamil Nadu politician, who is also a prominent film producer, officials aware of the matter said. Three members of the cartel have been arrested even as the kingpin remains on the run. Investigators suspect the kingpin, who has produced four movies, may have laundered drug money to finance them. "A fifth film that the man produced will be released next month. It looks like he was using drug money, and the movie business was a front to launder money. It will be clear once he is arrested," an officer aware of the matter said.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Saturday last said that the cartel was busted on February 15 after a four-month-long joint probe with the Delhi Police. The agency said it acted on a tip-off from New Zealand and Australia about pseudoephedrine being sent to these countries from India under the guise of food products. Three men from Tamil Nadu were subsequently caught from a warehouse in West Delhi's



NCB deputy director general Gyaneshwar Singh on Saturday said New Zealand customs and Australian police informed them that pseudoephedrine concealed in desiccated coconut powder was being sent to these countries.

Basai Darapur. The cartel allegedly used air and ship cargo for smuggling.

NCB deputy director general Gyaneshwar Singh on Saturday said New Zealand customs and Australian police informed them that pseudoephedrine concealed in desiccated coconut powder was being sent to these countries. "Further inputs from the US DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] indicated that the source of the consignments was Delhi." The three men were caught while packing around 50kg of pseudoephedrine in a health supplement packet. Investigators cited the probe so far and said the cartel sent 45 consignments contain-

ing approximately 3500kg of pseudoephedrine worth over ₹2000 crore in the international market over the last three years. A second officer, who asked not to be named, said the producer-politician was in touch with a cartel in Australia and New Zealand, who gave orders for pseudoephedrine. "We are probing if he has more warehouses such as the one in West Delhi. He also roped in people from Tamil Nadu to work for the cartel. We have information that he has been active in this drug trade for the last few years and has successfully smuggled the drug through different routes."

The officer said the

cartel took advantage of the high demand for methamphetamine, especially in Australia. This month, the NCB busted a laboratory in Ludhiana, where three Mexican nationals were hired to prepare methamphetamine. The three were flown to India in November 2023 for their expertise in making methamphetamine with almost 90% purity. Pseudoephedrine is a precursor chemical used in the manufacture of methamphetamine, a dangerous and highly addictive synthetic drug. It is classified as a controlled substance in India, which means there is strict regulation on its production, possession, trade, export, and use.



## White House says 'people should be held accountable'



GNS News Agency, April 14

The White House shared a statement on the murder of Laken Riley on Monday, January 26. Riley, a nursing student at Augusta University, was found dead near a lake on the University of Georgia's campus in Athens. She died from "blunt force trauma," according to official police reports. "We would like to extend our deepest condolences to the family and loved ones of Laken Hope Riley," a White House spokesperson told Fox News Digital. "People should be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law if they are found to be guilty. Given this is an active case, we would have to refer you to state law enforcement and ICE."

Riley was found to have "visible injuries," according

to UGA Police Chief Jeff Clark. Her body was found after a friend reported that she did not return after going for a run.

Police later arrested 26-year-old Jose Antonio Ibarra, an illegal immigrant. Ibarra was taken into custody on Friday, February 23, and charged with malice and felony murder, aggravated battery, kidnapping, concealing the death of another and other charges. Police said the incident was a "crime of opportunity." According to Clark, Ibarra does not have an "extensive" criminal history. The loop Riley went to run is easily accessible from behind Ibarra's apartment complex. The scene where Riley was found dead is about a five-minute walk from Ibarra's door. UGA said in a news release "there is no higher priority for [the] campus than the safety and security of all who live and work here." "We have put in place comprehensive measures to protect our students, faculty, staff, and guests — including \$16 million invested over the last eight years to hire more police officers, install more security cameras, enhance lighting, establish a nightly rideshare program, and create a UGASafe app," the school said according to Fox News.

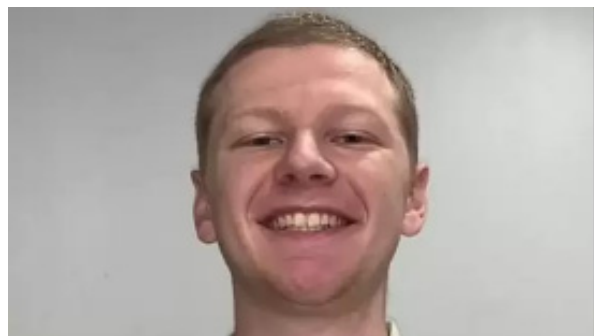
"But we are committed to doing even more. Earlier this week, we approved an additional phase of lighting improvements and security camera installations, and we will continue to evaluate our safety programs for further enhancements. This is an ongoing and exhaustive effort," it added.

## US airman Aaron Bushnell's last Facebook post before death revealed

GNS News Agency, April 14

The last post Aaron Bushnell, the US Air Force member who set himself on fire outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC, shared on Facebook has been revealed. The incident took place on Sunday, February 25, following which he was reportedly in critical condition. He later succumbed to his injuries. In various posts and a video, Bushnell expressed US support for Israel after the October 7 Hamas attack. This led to a brutal war in Gaza, where thousands of civilians were killed. He cited this as the reason he died by suicide. Bushnell took to Facebook earlier in the day, writing, "Many of us like to ask ourselves, 'What would I do if I was alive during slavery?' Or the Jim Crow South? Or apartheid? What would I do if my country was committing genocide? The answer is, you're doing it. Right now." The post has since been deleted.

Bushnell also posted a video where he explained why he had planned to do what he did. "My name is Aaron Bushnell, I am an active-duty member of the United States Air Force and I will no longer be complicit in genocide," he said. "I am about to engage in an extreme act of protest but compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonisers, it's not extreme at all. This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal."



He live streamed the video of the tragic incident on Twitch, but it was later taken down. The footage reportedly showed him walking up to the Israeli embassy and pouring a liquid on himself. He then set himself on fire, shouting "Free Palestine" repeatedly. The 25-year-old was from San Antonio, Texas. He died on Sunday, February 25, the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington confirmed. Discussing suicides can be triggering for some. However, suicides are preventable. If you or someone you know is considering suicide, please contact the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

## Who are Ralph Hendry and Kathy Brandel, US couple likely killed in Grenada?



GNS News Agency, April 14

Three escaped prisoners have been accused of hijacking an American couple's yacht in Grenada. It is now believed that the couple is dead and that they were tossed overboard in the Caribbean. Ralph Hendry, 66, and his wife Kathy Brandel, 71, were both from Virginia. They were last seen on February 18 and are now presumed dead. Their boat was later found anchored and deserted.

Royal St. Vincent and Grenadines Police Force official Junior Simmons said during a press conference that officers responded to the boat and came across a scene that was "consistent with signs of violence." "Several items were strewn on the deck and in the cabin and a red substance that resembled blood was seen on board," Simmons said. "There was no discovery of bodies on board the yacht." A longtime friend and colleague of Nick Buro, Brandel's son, has set up a GoFundMe for the couple. "Kathy and Ralph were seasoned sailors who lived on their beloved catamaran, Simplicity. Their lives

ended in unimaginable tragedy on Sunday, February 19th, off the shores of Grand Anse Beach, Grenada," the GoFundMe reads. "Kathy and Ralph, experienced adventurers, spent their retirement sailing aboard Simplicity, spending summers in New England and embracing the warmth of Caribbean winters. Their final voyage with the Salty Dawg Sailing Association crew took an unthinkable turn as Simplicity was found abandoned in St. Vincent, bearing chilling evidence of a violent struggle."

"This heartbreaking tragedy has left not only the sailing community, but also their families, shattered. Kathy, who had recently become a first-time grandmother, found immense joy in the presence of her grandson—joy that has now been abruptly taken away. As their families navigate the overwhelming grief and attempt to make sense of this unthinkable loss, we extend our collective support and sympathy," she says, adding that the funds raised will "go towards recovering the vessel and belongings, covering funeral costs, and providing support to the grieving families as they try to comprehend the depth of this tragedy." The couple's sons called their parents' disappearance "the rarest of the rare occurrences," according to NBC News. They are clinging on to the hope that their parents are still alive.

Who are the suspects?

Three men have been arrested in connection with the crime — Ron Mitchell, 30, Trevon Robertson, 19, and Abita Stanislaus, 25. They were nabbed in St. Vincent after the boat was searched. All of them had escaped from police custody on February 18. On Sunday, February 25, the trio appeared in court on four counts each of immigration-related charges. Officials said they pleaded guilty. Before their escape, they were all facing robbery charges, and Mitchell was also facing rape and attempted rape charges. The trio have been accused of getting on the boat, named Simplicity, while it was docked in the St. George part of Grenada. They have not been charged in the disappearance of Brandel and Hendry yet.

## Biden hosts high-stakes White House talks on Ukraine, shutdown

GNS News Agency, April 14

The high-stakes showdown comes after President Volodymyr Zelensky warned that his country desperately needs continued support from the West to defeat Russia and voiced hope the United States would approve the \$60 billion package. As the war enters its third year, Moscow has mounted heavy attacks on Ukrainian troops struggling with an ammunition shortage caused by political wrangling over aid in the US House of Representatives. The White House said Biden will meet Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson and his Democratic counterpart Hakeem Jeffries, as well as the Senate's Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and oppo-

sition chief Mitch McConnell. "There is a strong bipartisan majority in the House standing ready to pass this bill if it comes to the floor," National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told CNN. "And that decision rests on the shoulders of one person — and history is watching whether Speaker Johnson will put that bill on the floor." When Russia attacked Ukraine in February 2022, US lawmakers were overwhelmingly in favor of arming the pro-Western former Soviet republic, which denuclearized in the 1990s after gaining assurances from the West over its security. The Senate has remained largely supportive and recently passed a \$95 billion package pairing the Ukraine funding with help for Israel's military and for democratic Taiwan.

## Tesla Power India Launches ReStore— India's First Refurbished Battery Brand



GNS News Agency, April 14

The initiative is led by Tesla Power India Private Limited, which is headquartered in Gurgaon and has global headquarters in Delaware, USA. Tesla Power India is thrilled to introduce ReStore, India's first and foremost refurbished battery brand supporting self-reliance, skill development, and green technology. The initiative is led by Tesla Power India Private Limited, which is headquartered in Gurgaon and has global headquarters in Delaware, USA. Its cutting-edge Electro-Chemical Battery Enhancement Process (EBEP) is poised to transform the battery industry landscape. In a groundbreaking move, Tesla announces plans to launch 5000 "ReStore Battery Refurbishing Centers" in India by 2025, with 500+ already operational, spread across the country. This strategic move exemplifies Tesla Power India's dedication to "Circular Economy" and "Sustainable Environment.". The proprietary EBEP technology significantly extends the lifespan of all types of Lead acid batteries, including tall tubular inverter batteries and UPS VRLA batteries, offering a cost-effective solution that can extend the battery's life by 1 to 2 years by refurbishing them. The refurbished batteries under the brand name of "ReStore" will be sold to the customer at almost half of the cost of a new inverter battery along with warranty.

The launch of this brand "ReStore" is in compliance with the "Battery Waste Management Rules 2022" wherein the CPCB has recognized Battery Refurbishing as an approved business activity. This change in the policy and rules will open up a new service industry and approximately 30,000 battery refurbishment centers are expected to open up in India giving employment opportunities to more than 1 Lac people. Approximately 10 crore lead acid batteries are scrapped and replaced every year in India, costing Rs.40,000 crore to the Indian economy. This strategic move addresses both economic strain from battery replacements and environmental hazards linked to improper disposal, and complying to the Indian government's commitment to promote circular economy and sustainability through innovative battery waste management policy.

Mr. Kavinder Khurana, Managing Director of Tesla Power India, expressed his enthusiasm, saying, "ReStore is not just a refurbished battery brand; it's also a solution for employment generation in a new battery service industry, which will contribute to a sustainable environment. By offering affordable refurbished batteries with performance warranty, we aim to not only redefine the market but also to train the micro and small entrepreneurs on our Electro-chemical battery enhancement process (EBEP technology) which has been proven as a game-changer, as we have already refurbished more than 3 Lac batteries using our proprietary technology", said Mr. Khurana. ReStore is the first Refurbished battery brand in India, powered by Tesla Power India. This reaffirms the brand's commitment to delivering quality, reliability, and cutting-edge technology to the Indian market. This strategic move underscores Tesla Power India's dedication to creating a positive impact on the environment, the economy, and society as a whole. By offering affordable and sustainable battery solutions, ReStore is poised to drive significant change in the energy storage sector and beyond.

## Federal judge reverses himself, rules that California's ban on billy clubs is unconstitutional

GNS News Agency, April 14

U.S. District Judge Roger Benitez ruled last week that the prohibition "unconstitutionally infringes the Second Amendment rights of American citizens" and enjoined the state from enforcing the law, the Los Angeles Times reported Monday. Weapons such as billy clubs have been outlawed in some form or other in California since at least 1917, with exceptions for law enforcement officers and some state-licensed security guards, the Times said.

Benitez declared in Sept. 2021 that California's ban on such weapons qualified as "longstanding" and therefore did not violate the Second Amendment. But while that ruling was under appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* that altered the legal analysis for Second Amendment regulations. The billy club case was sent back to Benitez to review under the new Bruen analysis. He decided that Attorney General Rob Bonta's office, which

is defending the case, failed to provide evidence of any historically similar prohibitions. Bonta said the judge's decision "defies logic" and the state has filed an appeal. "The Supreme Court was clear that Bruen did not create a regulatory straitjacket for states — and we believe that the district court got this wrong. We will not stop in our efforts to protect the safety of communities," Bonta said in a statement Monday.

Alan Beck, an attorney for two military veterans who challenged the billy club ban, welcomed Benitez's ruling. "I thought it was a straightforward application of Supreme Court precedent," Beck told the Times on Monday. The challenged California law bans the possession, manufacture, importation or sale of "any leaded cane, or any instrument or weapon of the kind commonly known as a billy, blackjack, sandbag, sandclub, sap, or slungshot." Courts have defined a billy as any kind of stick, bat or baton that is intended to be used as a weapon — even common items like a baseball bat or table leg could qualify if it is meant to cause harm.

## Yellen Credits Bidenomics-Fueled US for Brighter Global Outlook

GNS News Agency, April 14

"Over the past year, global growth has been resilient and stronger than predicted," Yellen said, according to excerpts of remarks prepared for delivery Tuesday in Sao Paulo, Brazil. "America's path to a soft landing has underpinned global growth." Yellen touted Biden administration policies that she argues have helped drive a surprisingly resilient US economy, which has featured historically low unemployment. By contrast, the euro zone has seen stagnant growth, Japan has contracted and China has had to roll out support measures to counter weak domestic demand.

Finance ministers and central bankers from the Group of 20 emerging and developed nations are gathering this week in Brazil's business capital to assess the state of the global economy. The US Treasury chief noted that expectations of a broad-based slowdown in the world economy for 2023 — put out by the International Monetary Fund and other forecasters — ended up not materializing. The IMF raised its forecast for global growth this year on better-than-expected expansion in the US, along with fiscal stimulus in China, even as it warned of

risks from wars and inflation. World GDP will rise 3.1% this year, up from the 2.9% seen in October, the fund said last month.

At home, Yellen and Joe Biden have sought to showcase strong economic numbers as the president faces a tough re-election campaign, with surveys suggesting continuing public dissatisfaction after a surge in the cost of living. Yellen acknowledged there are risks facing the global outlook, and said she continues to carefully monitor the economic challenges in certain countries. Chief among them are the effects of prolonged conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East that led to spikes in commodity prices and global supply chain disruptions. Debt troubles plaguing many low-income nations are another source of global vulnerability, as is stubborn inflation that might force central banks to keep interest rates higher for longer. "Had a US recession come in 2023, like many predicted, global growth would have been thrown off track," Yellen said. She cited policies championed by the administration including increased infrastructure spending, measures to boost manufacturing jobs and investments in clean energy as helping underpin US resilience.

## Joe Biden 'hopes' for ceasefire in Israel-Hamas conflict by 'next Monday'

GNS News Agency, April 14

"Well I hope by the beginning of the weekend, I mean, the end of the weekend," Joe Biden said, on being asked when a ceasefire may be expected. President Joe Biden has said that he hopes there will be a ceasefire by "next Monday" in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. On being asked when a ceasefire may begin, Biden said during an appearance at an ice cream shop in New York city on Monday, February 26, with comedian Seth Meyers, "Well I hope by the beginning of the weekend, I mean, the end of the weekend."

"My national security adviser tells me that we're close. We're close, it's not done yet. And my hope is that by next Monday we'll have a ceasefire," Biden added.

Hamas previously backed off some important demands in hostage negotiations and pause in fighting in Gaza after Israel accused its position of being "delusional," CNN reported. "The major obstacles have been resolved in terms of Hamas insisting on a full withdrawal of Israeli forces and end to the war," a senior Biden administration official said. "Hamas' requirements for the numbers of Palestinians [prisoners that] would have to be freed has declined." Biden recently also took to X to

say that the majority of "overwhelming" Palestinians are not Hamas, and said they too are suffering as a result of Hamas' terrorism. He reiterated a bit of what he said in his initial statement on the conflict after the October 7 attack. "I won't mince words," he wrote. "The overwhelming majority of Palestinians are not Hamas. And Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people. In fact, they're also suffering as a result of Hamas' terrorism. We need to be clear-eyed about that reality." Biden had issued a statement following the first Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, saying in part, "This attack has brought to the surface painful memories and the scars left by millennia of antisemitism and genocide of the Jewish people. So, in this moment, we must be crystal clear: We stand with Israel. We stand with Israel. And we will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens, defend itself, and respond to this attack. There is no justification for terrorism. There is no excuse." "Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination. Its stated purpose is the annihilation of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people," he added. "They use Palestinian civilians as human shields. Hamas offers nothing but terror and bloodshed with no regard to who pays the price."



# RBI fines SBI, Canara Bank for breach of rules



Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced on Monday that it has imposed penalties on the State Bank of India (SBI) and Canara Bank for non-compliance with banking regulations and RBI directions. The RBI in an order dated February 26 slapped a penalty of Rs 2 crore on State Bank of India for contravention of provisions of the Banking Regulation Act and not complying with the Depositor Education Awareness Fund Scheme.

assessment Report/Inspection Report revealed, inter alia, that SBI held shares as pledge of an amount exceeding 30 per cent of paid-up share capital of certain companies and also failed to credit eligible amount to the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund within the period prescribed in the BR Act. Similarly, the RBI has imposed a penalty of Rs 32.30 lakh on Canara Bank for non-compliance with certain directions issued by the central bank on 'Data Format for Furnishing of Credit Information to Credit Information Companies and other Regulatory Measures'.

The RBI said that an examination of the Risk Assessment Report/Inspection Report and all related correspondences in the case of Canara Bank revealed, inter alia, non-compliance with the aforesaid directions by the bank, to the extent it (i) failed to rectify the rejected data and upload the same with the Credit Information Companies (CICs) within seven days of receipt of such rejection report from the CICs, and (ii) restructured certain accounts which were not standard assets as on March 31, 2021 under the extant directions. However, RBI also said this action is based on the deficiencies in regulatory compliance of the two banks and is not intended to pro-

# Oil regulator for opening ATF pipelines at airports

EMS News Agency, July 1

Currently, ATF is transported by road and rail network and only a limited number of airports are linked with pipelines. Even where pipelines are there, they are not on an open access basis which means only the company that has laid it can supply jet fuel to airlines. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has invited comments from the public and various stakeholders including oil marketing companies (OMCs), airport operators, and airlines operators for development of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) pipelines connecting various greenfield and brownfield existing and upcoming airports in India. "Pipelines are the cheapest mode of transport of liquid fuels with road transport being quite costly. And looking at the high share of ATF price in airline costs, provision of the pipeline could bring down the cost of air travel," the regulator said in a notice inviting comments.

While the fuel market is open in the airport premises, in the absence of a common carrier pipeline the objective of this open market cannot be achieved. "There are a few other ATF pipelines which are being operated by the OMCs, which also need to be declared as common/contract carriers," the regulator said. "This move will enable other OMCs to utilize these pipelines for transporting their products, fostering competitiveness within the industry".

Further, to ensure security of supply there may be desirability of more than one pipeline supply to major airports. Additionally, existing pipelines need to be declared as common carriers especially due to historical domination of government owned ATF marketing companies so as to allow private marketers get access, it said. This will cater to rising fuel demand of the aviation sector.

Domestic air passenger traffic rose by compounded

annual growth rate of 8.9 per cent between 2012-13 and 2022-23. International passenger traffic grew by a slower 3.1 per cent over the same period. During fiscal year 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023), India saw a 47.1 per cent surge in ATF consumption, correlating with heightened air traffic. The previous year was marred by the pandemic that shut businesses. Transporting ATF by any other means than pipeline, results in logistical inefficiencies, increased expenses, and disruptions in the supply chain, PNGRB said. "The absence of an ATF pipeline exacerbates these issues, hindering the sector's competitiveness and sustainability." PNGRB said it is seeking comments from stakeholders to gather insights for effective development of ATF pipelines across the aviation infrastructure in the country. It asked stakeholders to identify key airports requiring ATF pipeline connectivity, assess potential demand over the next 30 years, identify ATF supply source, evaluate potential routes for pipeline construction and assess the need for single or multiple common/contract carrier ATF pipelines to ensure redundancy and operational reliability. "The views and suggestions received will help PNGRB in initiating suo moto bidding processes or assisting entities in identifying potential projects," the notice said. In recent times, PNGRB has authorized two new ATF pipelines for connecting upcoming greenfield international airports -- one from IndianOil's JNPT terminal to Navi Mumbai international airport and the second from Bharat Petroleum's Piyala terminal to Noida International Airport, Jewar as common/contract carrier pipeline through bidding process. In the past, PNGRB has also declared IndianOil's existing Devangonhi to Devanahalli ATF pipeline for connecting Bangalore airport as a common/contract carrier. Another ATF pipeline from Malkapur to Hyderabad Airport is under bidding process.

# Economy another victim of war in impoverished Sudan

Before the Sudanese army and paramilitary fighters turned their guns on each other last year, Ahmed used to sell one of Sudan's main exports: gum arabic, a vital ingredient for global industry. Now he's out of business, and his story encapsulates the broader economic collapse of Sudan during 10 months of war. Since combat between two rival generals began on April 15, Ahmed has been at the fighters' mercy.

"When the war began, I had a stock of gum arabic in a warehouse south of Khartoum that was intended for export," Ahmed told AFP, asking to use only his first name for fear of retaliation. "To get it out I had to pay huge sums to the Rapid Support Forces," the paramilitaries commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo who are at war with the Sudanese Armed Forces led by Abdel Fattah el-Burhan.

"I had to pay multiple times in areas under their control, before my cargo got to areas controlled by the government," Ahmed said. But the government — loyal to the army — "then demanded I pay taxes" on the product, an emulsifying agent used in everything from soft drinks to chewing gum. When the trucks finally made it to Port Sudan for export on the Red Sea, "authorities again asked for new taxes, and I had to pay storage fees six times more than before the war", Ahmed said. His gum arabic — like many other Sudanese products — never made it onto a ship. According to Sudan's port authorities, international trade fell 23% last year. The finance ministry, which didn't set a national budget for 2023 or 2024 and

has foregone quarterly reports, recently raised the exchange rate for imports and exports from 650 Sudanese pounds to 950. But that is still far below the currency's real value. With most banks out of service, the only exchange rate that matters to ordinary Sudanese is on the black market, where the dollar currently goes for around 1,200 Sudanese pounds. "It's a sign of the destruction of the Sudanese economy," former Sudanese Chamber of Commerce head al-Sadiq Jalal told AFP. To make matters worse, a communications blackout since early February has hampered online transactions — which Sudanese relied on to survive. The war has led industries to cease production. Others were destroyed. Businesses and food stocks have been looted.

The World Bank in September said "widespread destruction of Sudan's economic foundations has set the country's development back by several decades".

The International Monetary Fund has predicted that even after the fighting ends, "years of reconstruction" await the northeast African country. Sudan suffered under a crippled economy for decades and was already one of the world's poorest countries before the war. Under the Islamist-backed regime of strongman Omar al-Bashir, international sanctions throttled development, corruption was rampant, and South Sudan split in 2011 with most of the country's oil production. Bashir's ouster by the military in 2019 following mass protests led to a fragile transition to civilian rule accompanied by signs of economic renewal and international acceptance.

# Govt mulls allowing excess stock of B-heavy molasses for ethanol making

The government is considering allowing sugar mills to manufacture ethanol using their excess B-heavy molasses as feedstock, amid comfortable sugar supply and stable prices in the market, according to sources.

Currently, sugar mills are holding an excess stock of more than 8 lakh tonnes of B-heavy molasses — a byproduct of the sweetener — produced before the ban on its use on December 7, last year. A week later, the government reversed the ban and allowed the use of both cane juice and B-heavy molasses but it permitted within the overall cap of a sugar diversion of 17 lakh tonnes for ethanol production for the 2023-24 supply year (November-October).

"The industry has stored B-heavy molasses for making ethanol after the crushing gets over. But the govern-

ment banned it suddenly and imposed a cap. Mills now have excess stock of B-heavy molasses," the sources told PTI. Now that the crushing is coming to an end, the sugar industry has been demanding the government to permit the use of available excess stock of B-heavy molasses for ethanol production, the sources said. "The proposal is under consideration. Discussions are going on," the sources said. Sources said the proposal may be approved considering domestic sugar output which has reached more than 300 lakh tonnes so far in the 2023-24 season (October-September), which is sufficient to meet the demand and even retail prices are ruling stable.

Sugar production is estimated to be between 315-320 lakh tonnes in the ongoing 2023-24 season excluding diversion of 17 lakh tonnes.

# Obsessing over the weighing scale? 5 things you should worry less about on your weight loss journey



Embarking on a weight loss journey can often feel like navigating a maze of conflicting advice, societal pressures, and personal expectations. Amidst this complexity, there are certain aspects that warrant less worry and more focus on sustainable, holistic approaches to fitness. Here are 5 things you should worry less about on your weight loss journey, according to Simran Khosla, a nutritionist and fitness coach.

## 1. Your scale weight

While the scale can provide a quantifiable measure of progress, it doesn't reflect overall health or body composition. Fluctuations in weight are natural and can be influenced by various factors such as water retention, muscle gain, and hormonal changes. Khosla emphasised that scale weight is just a number, and not your worth. "Focus more on your energy level, strength, muscle mass, nutritional quality, sleep quality and performance," she recommended.

## 2. Complex nutrition advice

Rather than worrying about the complex and extreme nutrition messaging on social media, Khosla advised to keep it simple and listen to your body. "The basics — boring information is most useful," she highlighted.

## 3. Daily weight fluctuations

The day-to-day weight fluctuations, as per Khosla, are normal and don't define your progress. It's more important to focus on the average weight change per week, she said.

## 4. Slip-ups

Khosla said that 'failing the plan' or 'slipping up' is part of the process. "Learn and move forward," she noted, adding that paying attention to what you do majority of the time is essential.

## 5. Comparisons

Comparing your progress to that of others can be demotivating and counterproductive. Each individual's journey is distinct, influenced by factors such as genetics, metabolism, and lifestyle. "Someone else's journey," said Khosla, is not to be worried about. "Your journey is unique, so focus on your own path," she added. By worrying less about arbitrary numbers, extreme measures, and comparison to others, and instead prioritising balanced nutrition, enjoyable exercise, and self-compassion, you can cultivate a sustainable and fulfilling journey towards a healthier lifestyle. "Stay positive and trust the process," the nutritionist concluded.

# Fuel your Fitness: Almonds aid in post-exercise recovery and boost performance



New Delhi: A new study found that eating almond reduces feeling of muscle soreness during exercise recovery which translates to improved muscle performance during a vertical jump challenge. These results expand on prior research which looked at how almonds affect muscle recovery after exercise.

In the new research study, published in *Frontiers in Nutrition* and funded by the Almond Board of California, 25 mildly overweight middle-aged men and women performed a 30-minute downhill treadmill run test after eight weeks of consuming 57g (two ounces) of whole raw almonds daily. The control group ate a calorie-matched (86 g/three ounces) snack of unsalted pretzels. The treadmill test was designed to cause muscle damage to see how almonds affected muscle recovery.

Researchers measured participants' muscle function; blood markers of muscle damage and inflammation;

and perceived muscle soreness using a visual scale, before, during, and at three time points after the treadmill test. They also measured markers of cardiometabolic health, body composition, and psycho-social assessments of mood, appetite, and well-being at baseline and after eight weeks of almond snacking.

Participants who ate almonds experienced an almost 25 percent reduction in muscle soreness when performing an explosive power exercise (a vertical jump challenge) over the cumulative 72-hour exercise recovery period. The perceived reduction in soreness translated to better muscle performance during the vertical jump challenge in the almond group versus the control. No significant differences were observed in measures of cardiometabolic health, muscle damage/inflammation, mood state, or appetite for the almond group or the control group.

The study included non-smoking participants who were mildly overweight and occasionally physically active but were not trained athletes. A limitation of this study is that the results are not generalizable to populations with other demographic and health characteristics. "Our study suggests that snacking on almonds can be recommended to occasional exercisers as a go-to food to help fitness recovery after strenuous exercise," said Dr. Oliver C. Witard, Senior Lecturer in Exercise Metabolism and Nutrition at Kings College London. "Almonds are naturally nutritious with protein, good fats and the antioxidant vitamin E. They can be considered an ideal food for fitness." One serving of almonds (28 g) has 4 g of plant protein, 13 g of good unsaturated fat and only 1 g of saturated fat.

# What's flexitarian diet and how does it affect heart?

New Delhi: A flexitarian diet, also known as a semi-vegetarian diet, emphasises plant foods with limited or occasional meat consumption. As per a new study, a flexitarian diet was linked with lower cardiovascular risk than an omnivorous diet.

The study, published in the journal *BMC Nutrition*, underlined the benefits of eating more plant-based foods instead of meat for better cardiovascular health. The study aimed to investigate the effects of a flexitarian diet on heart health. It involved 94 participants between the ages of 25 and 45 who had been following a vegan, omnivorous, or flexitarian diet for at least a year prior to the study. To assess the participants' dietary habits and lifestyle factors, questionnaires were used.

Individuals who consumed less than 50 grams of meat per day were classified as flexitarians, while those who consumed 170 grams or more of meat were categorised as omnivores. Vegans, who completely avoided animal products, constituted the third group. On the day of the study, blood samples were collected from the participants to evaluate cardiovascular disease biomarkers. Additionally, the researchers measured the participants' blood pressure, body mass index, and arterial stiffness during the visit. The blood biomarker analysis re-



# The study, published in the journal BMC Nutrition, underlined the benefits of eating more plant-based foods instead of meat for better cardiovascular health.

vealed that both flexitarians and vegans had better cardiovascular health than omnivores. Specifically, they exhibited lower levels of total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol than omnivores.

Furthermore, com-

pared to omnivores and flexitarians, vegans showed lower fasting insulin levels, although the difference lost significance when the researchers adjusted for cofounders. Last ly,

flexitarians and vegans had lower metabolic syndrome severity scores, which is a composite measure of various cardiovascular risk factors, including blood glucose levels, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and weight.



## Hardik Pandya back from injury with IPL and T20 World Cup inching closer, Ishan Kishan to follow suit



GNS News Agency, April 14

For the first time since his last appearance at the 2023 ODI World Cup, Hardik Pandya marked his return back to professional cricket as he took the field for Reliance 1 in the 18th edition of D Y Patil T20 Cup 2024 at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai. It was a triumphant return for the all-rounder, who snapped a couple of wickets – conceding 22 runs – to help his side restrict BPCL to 126 in 18.3 overs after opting to field. With the bat then, Pandya held himself lower down the order and came in to bat after Reliance 1 had slipped to 113/8 and partnered up with Piyush Chawla to see through a two-wicket win.

Also slated to mark his return back to professional cricket in the ongoing tournament is Ishan Kishan, who will take the field for the Reserve Bank of India against Route Mobile on Tuesday. Pandya has been out of action

since he sustained an ankle injury while bowling during India's World Cup league stage game against Bangladesh last October. Since then, the all-rounder has also made headlines for his return to his former franchise Mumbai Indians from Gujarat Titans – the team he led to an IPL title in their first season back in 2022. MI have also announced that come IPL 2024, Pandya will take over the captaincy from their long time skipper Rohit Sharma, who led the franchise to all five of their league titles. Coincidentally, Pandya's first start as Mumbai Indians' captain is likely to be against Gujarat at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad – as the two teams face each other in their first game in the upcoming season. Since 2022, Pandya's captaincy credentials have also extended to the international arena. After India's humbling by England in the T20 World Cup semifinal in Australia, in the absence of all-format captain Rohit Sharma, it was the all-rounder who took over the reigns in the shortest format for India. Leading many to speculate if he was also going to lead India in the World Cup in June. Those speculations were quashed by the BCCI Secretary Jay Shah earlier this month, who during a BCCI event in Rajkot said, "We may have lost the final of the 2023 ODI World Cup. But we won hearts there by winning 10 matches in a row. I would like to say that I am confident that India will lift the 2024 T20 World Cup under Rohit Sharma's captaincy at Barbados." Rohit had resumed the command in T20Is in January for the three-match series against Afghanistan, leading the side to a clean sweep in what was their last bilateral series ahead of the world tournament this summer.

## Paulo Dybala scores first hat trick for Roma in win over Torino

GNS News Agency, April 14

Paulo Dybala scored his first hat trick for Roma as the home side beat Torino 3-2 in Serie A on Monday. On a day that Chris Smalling started for Roma for the first time since September, Dybala took all the plaudits. It was Dybala's first club hat trick since October 2018, when he was with Juventus. Roma stayed sixth, while Fiorentina rose to seventh after beating Lazio 2-1. Lazio dropped to eighth, and Torino remained 10th.

Dybala got the opener from the penalty spot three minutes before halftime and Duvan Zapata equalized for the visitors two minutes later when he headed home a corner kick from the left. Dybala score a splendid second goal after 58 minutes, swerving a 30-yard shot low past goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic. The Argentine striker capped a fine performance when he worked a neat one-two with substitute Romelo Lukaku and slotted home from a tight angle. Smalling's substitute, Dean Huijsen, conceded an own goal at the end. Later, Fiorentina hit the woodwork four times and missed a penalty but still managed to win from a goal down against Lazio in Florence. Lazio took the lead seconds before halftime when



Luis Alberto took Matteo Guendouz's pass and shot low into the net to end a flowing move. The 19-year-old Michael Kayode equalized for Fiorentina 16 minutes into the second half with his first goal of the season. Nicolas Gonzalez saw his penalty come back off the post midway through the second half but one minute later the home side went ahead. Lazio keeper Ivan Provedel could only parry a shot from Andrea Belotti and Giacomo Bonaventura followed up to give Fiorentina the lead.

## 'Still love the game but...': Murray drops bombshell hint after landmark win



GNS News Agency, April 14

Andy Murray may have given a hint about ending his prolific professional career after recorded his 500th career hard court win on Monday. Murray beat Canadian Dennis Shapovalov 4-6 7-6 (7-5) 6-3 in Dubai in what was just his second victory in 2024. The 36-year-old Murray said after the victory that he will do his best in "these last few months." "I probably don't have too long left but I'll do as best as I can these last few months. still love competing and still love the game but it gets harder and harder to compete the older you get, to keep your body fit and fresh," he said.

The three-time Grand Slam champion's retirement

has been hovering in the news since he underwent hip-replacement surgery in 2019. In January 2019, an emotional Murray even said that he might retire after the Australian Open that year as he had been suffering with hip pain on a daily basis and it had been difficult for him to perform basic tasks like tying his own shoe laces. Murray lost the opening match of that tournament to Roberto Bautista Agut in a five-set epic after which a video montage was played featuring top players paying tribute to him. However, Murray indicated in the post-match interview that he is considering a second hip surgery and could continue playing. By the end of the month, Murray announced that he had undergone a hip resurfacing surgery in London.

Murray eventually returned to court, won another title and reached three finals. He has however gotten off to a forgettable start in 2024, losing his first four matches. Murray, however, railed against outside suggestions to retire, angrily responding to a British reporter on X by saying: "Tarnishing my legacy? Do me a favour. I'm in a terrible moment right now, I'll give you that. Most people would quit and give up in my situation right now. But I'm not most people and my mind works differently. I won't quit. I will keep fighting and working to produce the performances I know I'm capable of."

## Jared Bowen nets hat-trick as West Ham end poor run with 4-2 win over Brentford

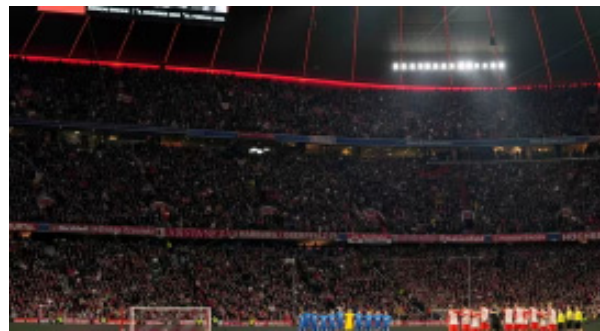
A hat-trick from Jarrod Bowen helped West Ham United to snap a six-match winless run in the Premier League as they secured their first victory of 2024 with a thrilling 4-2 home win over Brentford

GNS News Agency, April 14

A hat-trick from Jarrod Bowen helped West Ham United to snap a six-match winless run in the Premier League as they secured their first victory of 2024 with a thrilling 4-2 home win over Brentford on Monday. The hosts grabbed the lead five minutes into the game as Bowen collected Emerson's pass from the left to slam home a fierce low shot before doubling the lead with a half-volley from close range two minutes later. David Moyes' side moved up to eighth with 39 points, level with seventh-placed Brighton and five adrift of sixth-placed Manchester United. Brentford remain 16th with 25 points, five clear of the relegation zone. "I'd hoped it was coming. It was needed. Our form in six weeks has been poor. It's good to score four goals and get a win at home," Moyes told the BBC. "Eighth place) is not bad at this time of the season. We're always getting a level of criticism but we're up there challenging. There's a lot of teams with a lot of money and experience. It was only three years ago we were battling to avoid relegation most seasons." The hosts grabbed the lead five minutes into the game as Bowen

collected Emerson's pass from the left to slam home a fierce low shot before doubling the lead with a half-volley from close range two minutes later. Neal Maupay pulled one back for the visitors in the 13th minute following a pass from Keane Lewis-Potter, sliding through the centre of the box to lob the ball over French compatriot keeper Alphonse Areola. Bowen capitalised on Brentford's sloppy defending to complete his first ever senior hat-trick with a header on the edge of the six-yard box in the 63rd minute, and Emerson made it 4-1 with a superb long-range shot into the top right corner in the 69th minute. Yoane Wissa scored eight minutes from time for Brentford, who came close to a stoppage time goal but fell short as they suffered their fifth defeat in their last six games. "There's been a lot of games, at Hull City too, where I scored two but couldn't get the third one," Bowen said. "Inside I was really happy for myself to get that first hat-trick I've been waiting for many years. We knew tonight we could create a home atmosphere with the fans and if we started well they'd respond to it." West Ham next play at Everton on Saturday, while Brentford host Chelsea.

## Wounded Bayern Munich appoint new sports director to oversee shakeup



GNS News Agency, April 14

Stung by the prospect of a first season without a major trophy for 12 years, Bayern Munich appointed Max Eberl as its new sporting director to oversee a major shakeup. The Bavarian powerhouse said on Monday the 50-year-old Eberl signed a contract through June 2027 and will begin on Friday. He was to appear at a press conference with club president Herbert Hainer and chief executive Jan-Christian Dreessen on Tuesday. Eberl will be charged with rejuvenating a team that has lost its aura of dominance and no longer demonstrates the assured belief it used to as the best in Germany. "Not only does he have decades of experience in football management, but he also started playing football at FC Bayern and became a professional here," Hainer said. "We are convinced that he will successfully form and shape the future of this club." Eberl, a former right back, made only one Bundesliga appearance for Bayern in October 1991, when he was substituted off at halftime in a 3-2 loss at Stuttgart. He went to Bochum in January 1994, played for Greuther Fürth for 3½ seasons, then joined Borussia Mönchengladbach to start a 23-year association with the club.

After finishing his playing career, Eberl enjoyed success as the sporting director at Gladbach from 2008 until he quit abruptly in January 2022, citing burnout. He started at Leipzig in the same role eight months later but was fired last September for "his failure to commit to the club." At Leipzig, Eberl led a rebuild that saw established players like Joško Gvardiol and Dominik Szoboszlai depart for big sums, while young talents like Loïs Openda and Paris Saint-Germain loanee Xavi Simons arrived to star this season. Eberl's alleged lack of commitment to Leipzig likely had to do with the speculation linking him

with Bayern, where his work in a managerial capacity at Gladbach had long been admired. Eberl was already a target for Bayern before it appointed Hasan Salihamidzic as sporting director in 2017.

Salihamidzic was fired hours after Bayern clinched the league title last season, along with chief executive Oliver Kahn. Both men paid the price for the problems that Eberl will be expected to address. Bayern won the Bundesliga last season only because Borussia Dortmund squandered its chance on the final day. The decision to axe Kahn and Salihamidzic was taken earlier, after a season in which the team's decline had been plain to see. Former chief financial officer Jan-Christian Dreessen took over as CEO and Bayern hired former Salzburg sporting director Christoph Freund to take over from Salihamidzic, though he didn't start officially until Sept. 1, and wasn't involved in the summer transfer business. Eberl and Freund will be expected to work together, with a priority being the hiring of a new coach following Bayern's decision not to continue with Thomas Tuchel next season after the team lost three games in a row. Tuchel said on Friday he wasn't the "only problem" at Bayern and his employers were unable to contradict him over the weekend. "If FC Bayern loses three times in a row, then we all have to question ourselves; the team, the coach, we in management, we do it as well, it's not in question at all," Hainer said Saturday. "But you will see, we will draw the right analysis and conclusions and do the right thing." Asked why Bayern had worked its way through three highly regarded German coaches in Tuchel, Julian Nagelsmann and Hansi Flick since 2021, Hainer replied that the demands at Bayern were very high and there was constant pressure to do well. "But I believe that at the end of the day, the formula for success at FC Bayern is that we are never satisfied with where we are, and then we continue to move forward," Hainer said. Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso – a former Bayern player – is the favorite as Tuchel's replacement, though former Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane and Stuttgart's Sebastian Hoeneß have also been linked. The latter is the nephew of Bayern honorary president Uli Hoeneß and has led Stuttgart to third place in the Bundesliga after saving it from relegation last season. Hainer placed the onus on the new coach for success by saying the Bayern squad is "not un-coachable." Eberl will be under pressure from the start.

## Andhra Cricket responds to Hanuma Vihari's accusations, fresh allegations thrown

GNS News Agency, April 14

Andhra Pradesh crashed to a narrow four-run defeat against Madhya Pradesh in their Ranji Trophy quarter-final fixture on Monday. It was a close encounter but Madhya Pradesh came out on top in a nail-biting thriller.

The heartbreak for Andhra Pradesh didn't just end there. After the match, star batter and former captain Hanuma Vihari came up with sensational accusations towards the Andhra Cricket Association and also towards a teammate. In a controversial statement posted on Instagram, Vihari disclosed the circumstances leading up to his departure from captaincy. He revealed that he was asked to resign from captaincy after an altercation with a player, who happened to be the son of a "prominent politician". Soon, Andhra cricketer Prudhvi Raj KN took to Instagram and revealed that he was the cricketer Vihari spoke about, but Prudhvi had a different take on the situation and accused Vihari of abusing him. In an attempt to put an end to the social media war, Andhra Cricket Association came forward with an official statement, where they also threw accusations towards the India cricketer. In their statement, Andhra Cricket Association said, "Addressing the reported issue, it has come to our attention that Mr. Vihari personally verbally abused a specific player during the Bengal Ranji game in front of everyone. The affected player filed an official complaint with ACA."

The association also explained the captaincy change



in the statement. The statement revealed, "In January 2024, following the first Ranji Trophy game, an email from the Chairman of the Senior Selection Committee proposed a new captain due to Vihari's status as an Indian prospect affecting his season-long availability. Vihari, in response, expressed appreciation for the decision, leading to Ricky Bhui being announced as the new captain by the senior selection committee.

The association also went on to allege that they received complaints from Vihari's teammates, support staff and ACA administrators about the batter's use of foul language and abusive behaviour. ACA also accused Vihari of frequently seeking a No Objection Certificate to move to other state teams, but swiftly reversing the decision. The board went on to further state that they would conduct an inquiry into all the complaints.

## Dravid's motivational punch as Gill roars back from the verge of getting dropped

GNS News Agency, April 14

Shubman Gill and Dhruv Jurel had to play out of their skins on Day 4 of the fourth Test between India and England to lead the hosts to a five-wicket victory in Ranchi. India had a target of 192 to chase and openers Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal had knocked off 84 runs out of that in the first 18 overs itself. However, a sudden flurry of wickets meant that England had their tails up when Gill was joined by Jurel in the middle. The pair, however, kept their calm and grinded their way to the target. Gill, who is known to be a prolific ODI and T20I player, pocketed the big shots and almost reached his half-century without hitting a single boundary. In fact, the Indians went over 30 overs without hitting a four or a six. The partnership between Gill and Jurel finished unbeaten on 72 off 136 balls as the two players saw India through to the finish line. Gill's innings sparked comparisons to



Cheteshwar Pujara and India's head coach Rahul Dravid, both of whom famously made the No.3 spot their own. The 24 year old in his post on Instagram after the match shared a motivational quote and attributed it to Dravid. "If not you, then who? If not now, then when?" the quote reads.

Monday's hard-fought victory gave India a record-extending 17th successive home series win. It came against a spirited England who gave them an al-

mighty scare by winning the first Test and matched India toe-to-toe for much of the rest of the series thus far. England were, in fact, well ahead in the first two days of the fourth Test but Jurel's first innings knock of 90 off 149 balls, coupled with a sensational bowling performance from India led by Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav, helped the hosts wrestle back control. On Day 4, England captain Ben Stokes stuck with his aggressive field positions by placing

the fielders all around the circle, and it worked well for his team. India lost wickets in quick successions; from 84/0, they were half down for 120. The aggressive field did help England make a comeback, but it didn't last long, as Gill and Jurel blunted the threat. They initially struggled to rotate strike but eventually started finding gaps more often. Gill scored 39 runs in 119 balls before suddenly unleashing two sixes in three balls to get to a half-century in 123 deliveries.



## Kangana Ranaut says her 'nationalist' image has taken over her 'glorious acting career', teases political plunge: 'Right time to get into it'



then added, "It has never kept me away from being a really aware person. I have done more than anyone could from this so-called seat for the country. I have literally fought from film sets with political parties. That doesn't keep me away, it doesn't take me a seat to do what I want to do for my country. But, if I want to get into politics, I probably think this is the right time." At the summit, the actor spoke about she is a proud nationalist— an image that is widely known more than even her two-decade-long acting career. When asked how she is doing South films today, the actor said she feels grateful that she is loved everywhere.

"This country and its people have given me wings, love from all corners. I come from up North, I have worked in South, I have done roles about Delhi girls, Haryana girls, I have also done Jhansi ki Rani from central India. This country has given me so much, I feel deeply responsible to give back. I have always been more of a nationalist and that image has taken over even my very glorious acting career. I do have the awareness that I am deeply loved and appreciated," she added. On the work front, Kangana Ranaut will be next seen in Emergency, which she has directed and also produced. Featuring her in the role of India's former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the film is gearing up for a global release on June 14.

Is Kangana Ranaut actively considering joining politics? The actor says not being a politician has never come in the way for her to work for the country, but if she were to take the plunge into the world of politics, this just may be the "right time."

During an event of TV9 Bharatvarsh, Kangana was asked if she would contesting the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The actor has been vocal about her political stand, with constant speculations that she would join the BJP. "It is not my place to announce whether I should be contesting or not," Kangana said and laughed. The actor

## Tigmanshu Dhulia criticises 'bekaar' Hindi film heroes, says gatekeepers of Bollywood saw real India only on 'papa ki shooting'

Filmmaker Tigmanshu Dhulia rued the state of the Hindi film industry, and identified the problem areas. In a new interview, he said that the gatekeepers of Hindi cinema are stuck in a rut because they haven't seen the real India. Similarly, he said, mainstream actors lack the requisite language skills to improvise, which is why they're all 'terrible'.

Tigmanshu appeared for an interview on the Red Mike YouTube channel, where he spoke about his career and the film industry. Asked about Hindi cinema and its stars, he expressed his dismay with the state of affairs, but said that he has been able to extract performances out of 'patthars (rocks)' as well. He said in Hindi, "Our mainstream actors are incapable of improvising. They speak English all day at home, they get scripts in Roman, they can't improvise, and that's why they're all terrible."

He then spoke about the 'big tragedy of Indian cinema', and offered his theory about why it's on the decline. "After the Partition, people from all over came to Mumbai. Lahore had a film industry, Bengal still has a film industry. In Maharashtra alone, there were studios in Kolhapur and Pune. Bimal Roy came to Mumbai, Hrishikesh Mukherjee came to Mumbai, the Anand brothers and Prithviraj Kapoor came from Punjab... They brought their stories and culture with them. Then, they had children, and their children got married and settled down in Mumbai." He continued, "These people were from Mumbai. They never saw the rest of India. They only time they'd go to Kashmir was probably to watch papa's shoot-



ing. They travelled to London and New York. These children made films from their understanding of films; there should be a hero, songs, etc. The lack of evolution that we speak of, the emergence of formula films, stems from this." Tigmanshu said that things changed in the early 2000s, when a new batch of filmmakers, including himself, came to Mumbai from small cities. But he held his own tribe responsible as well for having succumbed to 'greed' over the years.

Tigmanshu didn't spare audiences either, and said that compared to two decades ago, the consumers have become more 'bewakoof'. Tigmanshu Dhulia broke out with the film Haasil, and has since directed movies such as Paan Singh Tomar and Saheb, Biwi, Aur Gangster. More recently, he branched out into the streaming space, but said in this interview that even that industry is struggling now, after the boom that it witnessed during the pandemic.

## Not Taylor Swift, her former rival was once Travis Kelce's choice when asked whom he'd marry.



taylor swift, taylor swift and travis kelce, taylor swift eras tour, taylor swift travis, taylor swift travis kelce news, taylor swift travis kelce timeline, taylor swift travis kelce relationship, katy perry taylor swift, katy perry taylor swift friends, taylor swift katy perry Though the two singers are friends now, Katy Perry and Taylor Swift were not on good terms when Travis Kelce made these comments. Pop sensation Taylor Swift and American football player Travis Kelce have been the talk of the town ever since rumours started flying around that they were dating. Once the two made their relationship public by showing up for each other at special moments, such as concerts and football games, it seems fans can't get enough of the "Swelce"

But did you know that Kelce once chose Swift's former rival Katy Perry over her as his choice for a potential partner? Yep, he actually did. In a resurfaced 2016 interview clip from Afterbuzz TV, Kelce can be seen playing the risky game of 'Kill, Marry, Kiss'. When the interviewer asked Kelce to choose between Swift, Perry and Ariana Grande, the footballer was instantaneously flabbergasted. "Damn, that's messed up. I don't want to kill any of them," he said awkwardly.

Nevertheless, Kelce chose to play the game and started off by saying he would "kill" Grande. "Ariana is the kill, unfortunately. Love you, but you're gone," he said with folded hands. What left fans shocked was his subsequent answers as he said, "Taylor Swift would be the kiss and then Katy Perry would be the marry." Though Swift and Perry were embroiled in a public feud that lasted years in the 2010s, the two American singers reconciled towards the end of the last decade and have been great friends since then. Perry attended Swift's The Eras Tour concert in Sydney recently and even shared a photo with the "Midnights" creator on her Instagram. However, it should be mentioned that at the time Kelce's interview was recorded, the two singers were not on good terms.

Nevertheless, once Swift and Kelce began dating last year, both of them have consistently supported each other during significant moments. Another video has also gone viral showing the Kansas City Chiefs tight end grooving to his girlfriend's hit track "Love Story" as it began playing at a nightclub where he and his team members were partying last Saturday night, celebrating their Super Bowl win.

## When Madhoo Shah turned down Abbas-Mustan's Baazigar: 'I was offered Shilpa Shetty's role; didn't want to play second fiddle'



Shilpa Shetty made her screen debut with Baazigar and bagged nomination for the Filmfare Award for Best Supporting Actress. It launched her acting career opening new avenues for her. But did you know that her role — Seema Chopra — in the Abbas-Mustan directorial was initially offered to Madhoo Shah? For the 1993 superhit thriller — starring Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol leading roles — Venus Movies had first reached out to Madhoo, who refused the offer. In a new interview with Siddharth Kannan, Madhoo revealed, "I was offered Shilpa Shetty's character in Baazigar and I turned it down because I didn't want to play second fiddle. I did want to see myself on screen, but I refused the part because it wasn't the lead role."

Madhoo's acting career began in 1991 with the Tamil film Azhagan, followed by her Hindi debut opposite Ajay Devgn in Phool Aur Kaante. She played Roja in Mani Ratnam's 1992 directorial — Roja which both critically-acclaimed and 54-year-old actress is still remembered for her part.

When asked if she ever rejected the decision because Baazigar went on to become a massive success, she answered that there is no hint of regret. "I don't regret the decision but I will always remember this moment in my life. Interestingly, a lot of my female friends from the industry tell me that they had auditioned for Roja. They worked hard, prepared for the part and gave auditions but eventually I got the film, similarly, jo role jisse milna hota hai woh uske paas hi jata hai (whoever is meant for that role, it will go to them)," she shared. In an interview with The Times of India, Madhoo had spoken about her being "SRK's biggest fan." The actor is among her first crushes. "When one talks about a crush, the first name that comes to my mind is Shah Rukh Khan. His charisma and the way he does things on screen, what he represents, appeals to me. I am his biggest fan," said Madhoo, adding, "Even when his films flop, he doesn't do well at the box office or he does horrible work, he is just like a God."

## Salman Khan's advice for Ankita Lokhande to make her marriage with Vicky Jain 'stronger': 'Ek hi baat bol raha hun'

Actor Ankita Lokhande and her husband Vicky Jain created a stir in the Bigg Boss 17 house. With their regular fights, the two kept the viewers entertained. The couple emerged as one of the strongest contenders for the trophy, but couldn't win. However, they won the hearts of not just the audience but also of the show's host, Salman Khan. After the show concluded with Munawar Faruqi's win, Ankita met Salman, who had advice for the young star.

During her latest appearance on Bharti Singh and Haarsh Limbachiya's vlog with Vicky, Ankita revealed that she met Salman after Bigg Boss 15 was over. Upon meeting her, the Dabangg star only had one advice for her: to have kids. "Salman sir ne merko advice di thi jab main unse milne gayi thi, season khatam hone ke baad. He said, 'Ek hi baat bol raha hun, bachcha kar lo.' I was like, 'Sir, kya bol rahe ho?' (Salman sir gave me just one piece of advice when I went to see him after Bigg Boss 17 ended. He said, 'I am telling you only one thing, have a baby.' I was like, 'Sir, what are you saying?'" shared Ankita.

As Ankita got awkward with what Salman told her, he insisted, "No, I am telling you. Just have a baby." Ankit



shared that the Bollywood star meant good for her as she said, "He meant that after a child, a couple grows stronger together." Ankita's husband agreed to the thought and added, "The marriages that stay intact for a long time are because of kids. Vicky Jain, Ankita Lokhande Vicky Jain and Ankita Lokhande at Bigg Boss 17 finale. (Photo: Ankita/Instagram) Vicky and Ankita have been married for over two years now. Though their fights got so severe on Bigg Boss 15 that Ankita mentioned divorce a couple of times, the couple has not talked things out.

## Rashmika Mandanna comments on fan post that her husband should be like 'VD': 'Very true'



Rashmika Mandanna, Vijay Deverakonda Actor Rashmika Mandanna left an interesting comment on a fan's post. Actor Rashmika Mandanna often comments on her fans' social media posts, keeping them engaged. Her recent comment, however, caught everyone's attention where she commented on a fan club's post discussing the qualities in her future husband. What was interesting about the post was that it

said her husband should be like "VD". The actor commented "That's very true," leaving her fans excited.

For the unversed, VD is also the nickname given to actor Vijay Deverakonda by his fans. Vijay and Rashmika's relationship rumours started after they worked together in 2018 film Geetha Govindam. However, both of them have always maintained that they are great friends and a strong support sys-

tem to each other. Rashmika's fan club played with words in the post, as they wrote, "What qualities should one have to become Rashmika Mandanna's husband? She is National Crush of India Her husband must be special. Her husband should be like VD. I mean Very Daring. Who can protect her. We call her a queen. then her husband should also be like a king."

Rashmika's comment

brought a lot of attention where several fans shared their excitement with comments and gifs. A fan commented, "I think rash will marry VD in future (winking emoticon)." Another fan wrote, "VD I mean Vijay Deverakonda". A fan wrote, "So rashmikamandanna mam you indirectly confirm something" Rashmika Mandanna, Vijay Deverakonda Rashmika Mandanna's comment on a recent post got fans excited. (Photo: X/Rashmikamandanna) Rashmika and Vijay have worked together in Telugu films Geetha Govindam and Dear Comrade. The duo have always professed respect towards each other and also cheer for one another when an important project is announced. In an earlier interview with We Are Yuva, Rashmika spoke about Vijay and said, "Viju and I, we sort of grew up together. So anything I do in my life right now, he has a contribution in it. I take his advice in anything that I do.