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## IIIT-H, Coursera launch eMSIT

Hyderabad: The International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Hyderabad has launched an online Master of Science in Information Technology (eMSIT) on Coursera, an online learning platform.

The eMSIT is the first master's degree programme from an Indian university offered on Coursera. It integrates and recognises industry microcredentials, creating pathways for students to advance their learning journey.

"We are honoured to partner with IIIT Hyderabad to bring the benefits of the high-quality, affordable education the university is known for to learners across India and beyond," said Raghav Gupta, MD, (India and Asia Pacific), Coursera. To learn more and apply: <https://www.coursera.org/degrees/master-of-science-information-technology-iiithyderabad/academics>.

## 'Inclusive Art Exhibition' at State Gallery of Art in Hyderabad from April 20-23

Hyderabad: Maqam Foundation is set to host an enriching art exhibition in Hyderabad, from April 20 to 23 at Start Art Gallery from 10 am to 6 pm. The exhibition spotlights the talents of both emerging and established artists, from around the world. In collaboration with Beyond Hyderabad, Parvaaz, and Nayi Disha, the event seeks to raise awareness about the transformative power of art in society. Serendipity India's Managing Director and Founder, Rumana Sinha Sehgal, will grace the occasion, alongside esteemed personalities including renowned artist Sachin Jaltare, K Muralidhar, Dr. Nabat Lakhani, Sridevi Prasad, Dr. Sana Smriti, and Prachi Dec.

## Ayodhya's first Ram Navami post Pran Pratishtha is generational milestone: PM



GNS News Agency, April 17

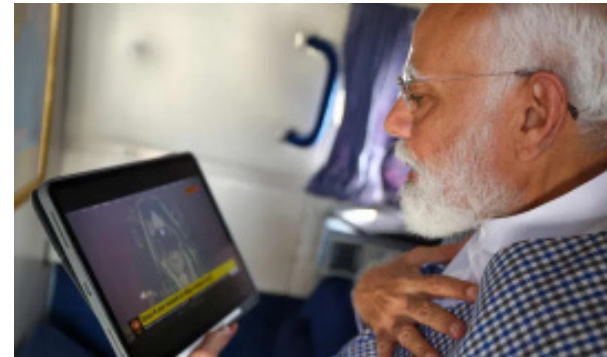
New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted people on the occasion of Ram Navami on Wednesday and said "Ayodhya is in immense joy" and celebrating the birth anniversary of Lord Ram after the Pran Pratishtha ceremony. Ayodhya is observing its first Ram Navami af-

ter the Pran Pratishtha ceremony at Ram Temple on January 22. In a post on X, PM Modi said, "The first Ram Navami after the Pran Pratishtha in Ayodhya is a generational milestone, weaving together centuries of devotion with a new era of hope and progress. This is a day crores of Indians waited for. Innumerable people devoted their lives to this sacred cause."

"May the blessings of Prabhu Shri Ram always remain upon us and guide our paths towards righteousness and peace, illuminating our lives with wisdom and courage," he said. The PM also said, "I have full faith that the life of Maryada Purushottam Lord Shri Ram and his ideals will become a strong basis for building a developed India. His blessings will provide new energy to the resolve of Aatmanirbhar Bharat."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also extended greetings to people. He said on X, "Jai Shri Ram! Best wishes to everyone on the holy festival of Ram Navami," the senior BJP leader wrote on X. "The life of Maryada Purushottam Lord Ram is a symbol of the struggle for justice, social welfare and self-respect. The Lord established the highest ideal of sacrifice for truth and religion through his life and guided the entire world for ages. This year, celebrating the birth anniversary of the Lord in the temple of his birthplace after 500 years is a matter of pride for all Ram devotees. I pray to God for everyone's welfare," Amit Shah said.

## PM Modi witnesses Surya Tilak ceremony on Ram Lalla in Ayodhya



GNS News Agency, April 17

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday watched the Surya Tilak event of Ram Lalla LIVE, despite his busy schedule and election engagements. PM Modi also shared his pictures of watching the LIVE streaming of the mesmerising event, while onboard, returning from a public rally in Assam's Nalbari.

Sharing the pictures on his social media handle, PM Modi described the experience as 'blissful and highly

satisfying' and said, "Surya Tilak and the spiritual energy emanating from it, will embolden the pledge for Viskit Bharat mission." PM Modi, on a campaign trail to Assam and Tripura on Wednesday, addressed a public rally in Nalbari and then watched the Surya Tilak on a flight, while on a way to Agartala.

The Surya Tilak or Surya Abhishek, a three-minute phenomenon, during which Sun rays were made to fall on the deity's forehead, took social media by storm as lakhs of 'Ram Bhakts' joined the LIVE streaming of the event. The Surya Abhishek of Ram Lalla was performed this afternoon, using a technology invented by the researchers of the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee.

Earlier, PM Modi also shared the LIVE Streaming link of the event, posted d by Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra and urged the Ram Bhakts across the globe to become part of this mesmerising event and watch the stunning 'Surya Abhishek' of Ram Lalla. "This is the first Ram Navami after the pran pratishtha ceremony of Ram Lalla. Also, this is the first Surya Tilak of Lord Ram. So, I urge all the ram bhakts to become witness to the rare spectacle inside the grand Ram Temple," PM Modi tweeted.

## Religious fervour marks celestial wedding at Telangana's Bhadrachalam temple

GNS News Agency, April 17

Hyderabad: Grandeur and religious fervour marked the celestial wedding of Lord Rama with his consort Sita at Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple in Bhadrachalam town of Telangana on the occasion of Rama Navami on Wednesday. Thousands of devotees participated in the annual mega-religious event. Devotees from both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh took part in the celestial wedding (Sitarama Kalyanam). The celebrations were held in a grand way in the traditional manner with the famous temple being decked up for the special occasion. A group of priests performed elaborate rituals to mark the celestial celebrations. Priests performed rituals associated with Sitarama Kalyanam. Thousands of devotees watched the annual event at Mithila Stadium. Telangana Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari offered pattu vastralu (silk clothes) and mutyala talambralu (pearl necklaces) to the deities on behalf of the state government. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, ministers P. Srinivas Reddy, Konda Surekha, public representatives and district collectors of Khammam and Bhadrachalam districts participated in the annual event.

Earlier, some rituals were performed in the main temple and later the deities were brought to the temple in a procession. The endowments department put up tents for devotees to protect them from the scorching sun. The area around the stadium was divided into 24 sectors with barricading for the devotees to watch the celestial wedding. The endowments department had set up counters to provide Muthyala talambralu and laddus to devotees.



The temple authorities prepared two lakh packets of prasadam for distribution among devotees. More than 2,000 policemen were deployed as part of the security arrangements at the temple. Police were guiding devotees with QR code to avoid traffic problems. The event was telecast live after the Election Commission of India (ECI) gave the permission. It had laid down the conditions that all the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) are followed and no political mileage is derived from the live telecast. Endowments minister Konda Surekha had requested the ECI to accord permission for the live telecast of the celestial wedding, which has been going on uninterruptedly for the last 40 years. The minister had urged the ECI to consider the request stating that devotees in foreign countries also follow live-telecast with great fervour. -

## PM Modi is champion of corruption: Rahul Gandhi



Ghaziabad, GNS News Agency, April 17

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged the electoral bonds scheme was the biggest "extortion scheme" in the world and that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the "champion of corruption". Addressing a joint press conference with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav here, Gandhi said there is a strong undercurrent in favour of the opposition INDIA bloc in the Lok Sabha elections and the BJP will be limited to 150 seats. Yadav said the winds of change will start blowing from Ghaziabad in western Uttar Pradesh to Ghazipur and the BJP will be given a grand farewell in the Lok Sabha elections. "We have to ensure that not a single vote is divided in the Lok Sabha polls," Yadav said.

Criticising the now-scrapped electoral bonds, Gandhi said the prime minister claims that the scheme was started to bring transparency in poll funding but then why was it struck down by the Supreme Court. "The electoral bonds scheme is the biggest extortion scheme in the world. India's businessmen know it very well. No

matter how much the prime minister clarifies, it will have no impact because the entire nation knows that the prime minister is the champion of corruption," Gandhi said. On Modi's criticism of his remarks that the Congress will end poverty in no time, Gandhi said no one said that poverty will end in one go but we can make strong efforts for it.

## Arvind Kejriwal Asserts "I Am Not a Terrorist" From Jail: AAP Leader

GNS News Agency, April 17

Kejriwal's declaration echoes a famous line from the 2010 Shah Rukh Khan-starrer 'My Name is Khan,' in which the actor famously declares, "My Name is Khan and I am not a terrorist." Arrested on March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the money laundering case related to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy, Kejriwal is presently incarcerated in Tihar Jail. A Delhi court has extended his judicial custody until April 23. Posting a video on X (formerly Twitter), Singh criticized the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and stated, "The BJP and the Prime Minister are treating Kejriwal like a terrorist. Are you not ashamed? You have... so much malice and hatred that you make him (Kejriwal) speak to his family, his wife through a glass wall... The Punjab CM who has Z+ category security was made to meet the three-time elected CM through a smudged glass wall..."

## KCR's meeting in Andole boosts morale of BRS candidates, cadre

GNS News Agency, April 17

Sangareddy: The success of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) public meeting at Sultanpur in Andole on Tuesday has boosted the morale of the BRS cadre, both the Medak and Zaheerabad candidates of the party and BRS leaders. The public meeting drew a huge number of people from Andole, Narsapur, Narayankhed, Sangareddy, Zaheerabad and other constituencies. Since the meeting was organised close to the NH-161, the busy highway was enveloped in pink as people from either side of the highway made a beeline to the venue holding party flags. BRS leaders said the meeting got nearly one lakh people from both the Lok Sabha constituencies.

Medak Lok Sabha candidate P Venkatrami Reddy said the meeting reflected what was in the people's minds. The response to Leader of Opposition and BRS president K Chandrashekhar Rao's speech enhanced confidence levels of the party cadre too, he said, adding that they would put more efforts in the coming days to win the elections. Zaheerabad Lok Sabha candidate Gali Anil Kumar said they would intensify the campaign across the



constituency. Chandrashekhar Rao and former Minister T Harish Rao would design a plan of action to lead an effective campaign. After Chandrashekhar Rao's scheduled meeting with candidates, MLAs, and other key leaders in Hyderabad on Thursday, Harish Rao is expected to hold a meeting with erstwhile Medak district leaders to discuss the campaign strategies, he added.

## 71 killed, 67 injured in rain-related accidents in Pakistan

GNS News Agency, April 17

Islamabad: Heavy rains and lightning caused havoc in different areas of Pakistan causing 71 deaths and injuries to 67 others since four days, an official told the media on Wednesday. An official from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said that the northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was the worst-hit region where 32 people lost their lives in different incidents, including roof collapse and lightning incidents. According to the official, 15 children and five women were among the deceased in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 41 others were also injured and 1,370 houses were damaged, Xinhua news agency reported.

The official added that 23 people lost their lives and seven were wounded in eastern Punjab province, eight were killed and eight others injured in southwest Balochistan province. At least eight people were killed and 11 others injured and 47 houses were destroyed in heavy rains in the Pakistan-controlled Kashmir during the period, the official said. The NDMA issued an advisory on Wednesday, saying that intense rainfall and thunderstorms are likely to hit the country from April 17 to April



29. "Pakistan may expect a series of moderate to intense weather systems.

Weather patterns are anticipated to bring heavy rain, thunderstorms, and hailstorms, posing significant risks to various parts across the country," said the NDMA. The NDMA feared that the expected rainfall may trigger flash floods in vulnerable areas, including low-lying areas.

## Rahul Gandhi is not scared of anything, he is a born fighter: Karnataka Dy CM Shivakumar

GNS News Agency, April 17

Bengaluru: MP Rahul Gandhi is not scared of anything and he is a born fighter, stated Karnataka Congress President and Deputy Chief Minister, DK Shivakumar on Wednesday in Bengaluru. Speaking to reporters, Dy CM Shivakumar stated, "Rahul Gandhi is campaigning all over the country. I am also reaching Wayanad tomorrow and taking up campaigning. I have confidence that the hard work of Rahul Gandhi will pay off."

When asked about the senior Congress leader's allegations that the "BJP won't cross the 180-seat mark without fixing EVMs", he stated that Rahul Gandhi had more information in this regard and based on that he had made the statement. "I have also maintained that the NDA won't form the government and the INDIA bloc will form the government at the Centre," he added.

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, **D. JANARDAN S/O BAPUR RAO (Old name)** born on 11-06-1982 at Jainath hereby changing my name and henceforth in future I would be known as **DESHETTI JANARDHAN S/O BAPUR RAO (New Name)** R/o HNo. 8-58/6 Jainad, Adilabad-504309, Telangana.

**DECLARANT.**  
**DESHETTI JANARDHAN**  
**S/O BAPUR RAO**

**Place: Jainad**  
**Date : 18-04-2024**



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Ailing healthcare

THE appalling case at Ludhiana Civil Hospital, where a patient was forced to share a bed with a corpse for over half an hour due to administrative negligence, sheds light on the dire state of healthcare in Punjab. The incident underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms and increased investment in the health sector. The patient who died had been left unattended for days with a broken thigh bone. Such cases not only compromise patient safety and dignity but also erode public trust in the healthcare system. It is imperative that those responsible for the lapses are held accountable to prevent a repeat of such incidents. While the Punjab Government has announced a hike in the healthcare budget and proposed initiatives like the establishment of new medical colleges and mohalla clinics, concerns remain about the adequacy of these measures to address the systemic challenges facing the sector. Experts have been rightly pointing out that the budgetary allocations may not be sufficient to scale up infrastructure, reduce the out-of-pocket expenditure of patients and improve health indicators in the state. Vacant medical posts compound the problem. A multi-pronged approach is needed to address the healthcare crisis. Increased funding for infrastructure, recruitment of doctors and paramedical staff, implementation of stringent protocols to ensure patient safety and measures to bring down citizens' medical expenses can help heal the ailing system. Improved governance and oversight to hold the authorities accountable for their actions are also needed. A transparent reporting mechanism and regular audits should be the norm to monitor the performance of institutions and prevent lapses in patient care. Punjab must invest in healthcare and ensure that every citizen has access to equitable and quality healthcare services.

## Travel details are personal info and can't be divulged to third party under RTI Act: Delhi High Court



GNS News Agency, April 17

The Delhi High Court has recently observed that travel information of any person is personal information and it cannot be divulged to a third party under Right to Information Act unless disclosure is justified under larger public interest. The court made the observation while dismissing a plea by Ehtesham Qutubuddin Siddiqui – a death row convict in the 2006 Mumbai 7/11 bomb blast case.

He had challenged before the HC an order passed by Central Information Commission (CIC) in January 2022 denying him information regarding the entries of travel (departure or arrival) of a witness in the bomb blast case from Mumbai International Airport to Hong Kong between January 1, 2006, and June 30, 2006. A single judge

bench of Justice Subramonium Prasad in its April 8 order said, "Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act provides that information which relates to personal information, disclosure of which has no relation with any public interest or which would cause unwarranted invasion of privacy of an individual is exempted".

It observed that the CIC had rejected the petitioner's case on the ground that the information that was sought is the personal information of the witness which is exempted under Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act.

The HC thereafter said, "Travel information of any person is personal information and such details cannot be divulged to a third party unless the same is in larger public interest which justifies the disclosure of the said information. This court is of the opinion that the view taken by the CIC is not so perverse which warrants interference under Article 227 of the Constitution of India". The High Court, however, said that it is always open for Siddiqui to approach the court concerned under provisions of the CrPC seeking this information "if it does not form part of the record of the criminal court even though it is not a part of the chargesheet". Siddiqui, was sentenced to death by a special court under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crimes Act (MCOCA) in October 2015 for his involvement in the 7/11 Mumbai train blasts. His appeal against the 2015 order is pending before the Bombay High Court.

## 'I am like Munna Bhai MBBS': Ahmednagar's MVA candidate Lanke takes a dig at BJP's sitting MP, a doctor



GNS News Agency, April 17

Ahead of even filing nominations for the Lok Sabha elections, both sitting MP Sujay Vikhe-Patil of the BJP and Nishesh Lanke (who quit as Parner MLA and left the NCP-Ajit Pawar group to join the NCP-Sharad Pawar one) have embarked on a vigorous campaign in Ahmednagar (Ahilyanagar). Be it actively participating in religious events, celebrating party workers' birthday celebrations to even engaging in verbal sparring matches, both Vikhe-Patil and Lanke are not leaving any stone unturned to clinch success at the elections.

On Vikhe-Patil's recent remark challenging Lanke, who is the MVA candidate, to list any of his achievements in the constituency in English or Hindi, Lanke pointed out that one need not be fluent in the language to be able to accomplish major tasks. In an indirect reference to Sujay Vikhe-Patil being a doctor (neurosurgeon), Lanke told The Indian Express, "I am like Munna Bhai MBBS (the protagonist in the Hindi film by the same name) who could win people's hearts," and added how he helped more

than 33,000 people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It is all about meeting the people and addressing their concerns. We are often told by our supporters that a particular village could fetch more than 70 per cent of votes and another will get 80 per cent votes. But I want to personally visit each village and meet the people and take their blessings," Lanke said. As part of his Swabhiman Jan Samvad Yatra, Lanke said he would visit close to 300 villages by the end of his tour by April 19 and is expected to file his nomination for the Lok Sabha elections by April 23. If Lanke's team has been capturing their candidate's visits to villages and religious fairs and posting them on social media platforms, Vikhe-Patil's team has been actively engaged in rolling out the sitting MP's achievements during his five-year tenure. "Sujay Vikhe-Patil starts his day at 6 am and would be busy attending people's events at booths and across public meetings. He has urged people to judge him by the work that he has done in Ahmednagar," Vikhe-Patil's supporters told

Vikhe-Patil ensures that he closely interacts with booth workers and guides them on how best the works done in Ahmednagar should reach the people. At a large motorcycle rally and gathering at Shrigonda, Ahmednagar, Vikhe-Patil told workers to ignore the Opposition claims and refrain from commenting on them. "As guided by PM Narendra Modi, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, the focus should be on the works done for the people in the constituency and the welfare schemes that have been implemented for people," Vikhe-Patil said. At various meetings, supporters have also captured videos and images of people wanting a 'selfie' with Vikhe-Patil to upload on their channel.

## Domestic Violence Act applicable to all women irrespective of religion, social background: Delhi High Court

GNS News Agency, April 17

delhi high court domestic violenceA single judge bench of Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta in its April 5 order further said, "The same was enacted to safeguard the rights of the victims of 'domestic violence' in domestic relationship." The Delhi High Court has recently observed that the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act is a "measure of social justice applicable to each woman irrespective of religious affiliation or social background". A single judge bench of Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta in its April 5 order further said, "The same was enacted to safeguard the rights of the victims of 'domestic violence' in domestic relationship."

The High Court made the observations while dismissing a plea moved by a husband and his relatives challenging an appellate court order restoring the domestic violence complaint of the wife. The petitioners had claimed that the non-appearance of the wife before the trial court was "intentional in order to harass the petitioners". It was also submitted that the respondent wife was contesting other litigations between the same parties and sufficient grounds have not been shown before the appellate court (Additional Sessions Judge) for restoration of the proceedings. Initially, the trial court had dismissed the wife's restoration application. She had then approached the appellate court (ASJ) which had restored the same on March 5. Against this, the husband and relatives moved the High Court.

Justice Mendiratta, however, observed that there was "no blemish in the order passed by the learned Appellate Court and for the cogent reasons, learned ASJ was duly satisfied with the explanation extended for non-appearance of respondent/counsel". The High Court said that the procedure is the "handmaid of justice and is to come to the aid of justice rather than defeating it". "Considering the facts and circumstances of the case, no grounds for interference in the impugned order are made out, since sufficient grounds have been shown by the respondent for restoration of proceedings," the High Court said while dismissing the husband's plea.

## Filing of nominations for Baramati, Sangli, and other western Maharashtra seats begins



The most keenly watched contest is going to be between sitting MP Supriya Sule, daughter of veteran leader Sharad Pawar, and Mahayuti candidate Sunetra Pawar, wife of Ajit Pawar, in the Pawar family bastion of Baramati.

GNS News Agency, April 17

The filing of nominations for constituencies in western Maharashtra started on Friday. This region includes the Baramati seat which is witnessing a contest between two members of the Pawar family. The electoral outcome in Baramati is expected to have political ramifications throughout the state.

The other western Maharashtra constituencies for which the election process has started are Solapur, Madha, Sangli, Satara, Kolhapur, and Hatkanangle. The nominations can be filed till April 19, while the scrutiny will be carried out on April 20. The final date for withdrawal of nomination is April 22. The polling will take place on May 7, while the counting of votes will be done simultaneously across the country on June 4.

The most keenly watched contest is going to be between sitting MP Supriya Sule, daughter of veteran leader Sharad Pawar, and Mahayuti candidate Sunetra Pawar, wife of Ajit Pawar, in the Pawar family bastion of Baramati. Another interesting tussle is in Madha, where sitting MP Ranjeetsinh Naik-Nimbalkar of the BJP is all set to face tough competition from former BJP leader Dhariyashel Mohite-Patil, who is contesting as an NCP (Sharad Pawar) candidate.

In adjoining Solapur, the contest is between Praniti Shinde, daughter of senior Congress leader Sushilkumar Shinde, and Ram Satpute of the BJP who was roped in from the neighbouring Madha constituency to retain the seat won by the saffron party in 2019. The Kolhapur seat will see a straight fight between Congress candidate Shahu Maharaj, a descendant of Maratha king Shivaji, and sitting Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Mandlik.

Another royal family member, Udayanraje Bhosale, is likely to contest the Lok Sabha election as a BJP nominee. He is preparing to contest from the Satara seat, which he had lost in the previous election to Shriwas Patil of the NCP. However, Bhosale had won the same seat twice in the past as an NCP candidate.

In Sangli, Sanjaykaka Patil of the BJP will try his luck for the third time and is facing a challenge from wrestler-turned-politician Chandrarah Patil of the Shiv Sena (UBT). The seat will witness a triangular fight if Vishal Patil, grandson of former chief minister Vasantdada Patil, of the Congress decides to file his nomination. The Hatkanangle seat is witnessing a triangular fight among sitting Shiv Sena MP Dhariyashel Mane, Raju Shetti of the Swabhimani Paksh, and Satyaji Patil Shirudkar of the Shiv Sena (UBT). The filing of nominations for other western Maharashtra seats – Pune, Shirur, and Maval – would begin next week as their voting day is May 13.

## Undercurrent in INDIA bloc's favour, BJP copying Congress guarantees: Mallikarjun Kharge

GNS News Agency, April 17

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge Friday claimed there is no 'Modi ki guarantee' and the BJP is "copying" the Congress guarantees implemented in Karnataka, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh, while he pointed out there is an invisible undercurrent in favour of INDIA bloc across the country. Kharge was addressing a rally in Kalaburagi after the party's candidate for Kalaburagi and Kharge's son-in-law Radhakrishna Doddamani filed his nomination papers.

Alleging that the central government has failed to make any contribution to Karnataka, he said, "What is your (BJP's) guarantee? Now, he (Modi) is going around saying 'Modi ki guarantee'. He is copying us." He pointed out the guarantee schemes implemented by the Congress governments in Karnataka, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh and said, "Where is your (BJP's) guarantee? Tell us."

He demanded that Modi swear in the name of the Ram Lalla idol at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya and tell people whether his party has fulfilled its manifesto promises of providing two crore jobs annually, doubling farmers income, depositing Rs 15 lakh in the bank account of every citizen, and ensuring MSP for farmers. "What did you do then? On one hand he is invoking the name of God and on the other he is oppressing the poor," he alleged and said people are struggling due to high inflation in the country. "If poor people are surviving, it's because of MGNREGS and the five guarantees of the Congress government in Karnataka," he said.

"There is an undercurrent. It's not visible. Why is Modi touring so extensively these days? Because there is an undercurrent in favour of the INDIA bloc. That's the reason he is going to narrow lanes and holding road shows," Kharge said. Central investigating agencies such as the ED and the Income Tax Department are being "misused to force the corrupt to join the BJP," he alleged. "When these leaders were in our party, they were corrupt. Did they get cleaned as soon as they joined your party (BJP)?" Kharge said, adding though Modi had said he would not spare the corrupt, now the corrupt leaders were sitting next to him. "That's why I often say Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have a massive washing machine in which not only clothes are put but also human beings. Once you put them there, they come out clean," Kharge said. Kharge, the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, has decided not to contest polls from Kalaburagi Lok Sabha segment. Having won Assembly elections nine times in a row since 1972 and Lok Sabha



polls twice from Kalaburagi in 2009 and 2014, he tasted his first defeat in 2019 Lok Sabha elections against BJP's Umesh Jadhav.

## Samajhdar Begum to clear poll-related queries in Punjab's Malerkotla

GNS News Agency, April 17

Punjab Malerkotla voter awareness campaign Deputy Commissioner Dr Palavi (6th from left) holding a poster of the Samajhdar Begum mascot along with other officers. The Malerkotla district administration in Punjab unveiled a voter awareness mascot called 'Samajhdar Begum' on Friday.

At the event, Malerkotla Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer Dr Palavi said, "This mascot will educate the voters, especially women and youngsters, about their right to vote... Samajhdar Begum is our SVEEP mascot, representing the harmonious, vibrant culture of our district. Begum has arrived in our district on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr to assist all our voters during this election season. She will help clear all election-related queries of our voters..." The deputy commissioner said Model Polling Stations, Pink Polling Stations, PWD Polling Stations, and Youth Managed Polling Stations would be set up in the area to encourage voters. Malerkotla is a minority-dominated area. In 2019, the district witnessed 70.54% polling, and the administration has set a goal to take it beyond 80% this time.

## No bar on use of any language along with Marathi on signboards for municipal councils: Bombay HC

GNS News Agency, April 17

Marathi language sign boards Bagde cited that any language other than Marathi on the signboards of civic authorities was prohibited under the Maharashtra Local Authorities (Official Languages) Act, 2022. The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court has said there was no restriction on putting up signboards for municipal councils in any language along with the state's official language Marathi. A division bench of Justices Avinash Gharote and M S Jawalkar on April 10 dismissed a petition seeking the removal of a signboard of the Patur Municipal Council displaying the civic body's name in Urdu along with Marathi.

"There is no prohibition on the use of any language, in addition to the official language," the court held. The petition filed by one Varsha Bagde sought the court's direction to the chairman of the Akola District Marathi Language Committee to take immediate action against the use of Urdu on the signboard of the Patur Municipal Council. Bagde cited that any language other than Marathi on the signboards of civic authorities was prohibited under the Maharashtra Local Authorities (Official Languages) Act, 2022. The provisions of the Act would mean that only Marathi would be the official language and no other language is permitted, she said.

The court in its order said the provisions of the Act only ensure that the business and affairs of the council are conducted in Marathi, including the script. "Insofar as the erection of signboard and display of the name of the municipal council is concerned, it does not prohibit the use of an additional language, to display the name, in addition to the name being displayed in Marathi," the high court said. The use of additional language to display the name of the municipal council on its building would not indicate any violation of the Act, it held.

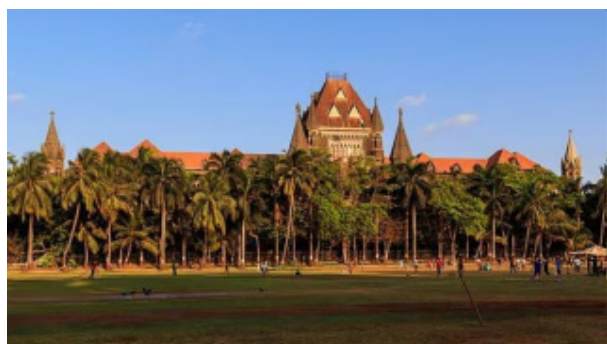
## Resolution introduced in US Congress condemning attacks on Hindu places of worship and Hinduphobia

GNS News Agency, April 17

Washington: Celebrating the contributions of Hindus and Hinduism to the US, a prominent Indian-American Congressman has introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives condemning Hinduphobia, anti-Hindu bigotry, hate and intolerance. The resolution that was introduced by Congressman Shri Thanedar on Wednesday has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability. The resolution reads that despite their positive contributions to the United States, Hindu Americans face stereotypes and disinformation about their heritage and symbols, and have been the targets of bullying in schools and on college campuses, as well as discrimination, hate speech, and bias-motivated crimes. According to the FBI's Hate Crimes Statistics Report, anti-Hindu hate crimes targeting mandirs and persons are annually on the rise while in parallel Hinduphobia in American society is unfortunately rising, the resolution said. Noting that the United States has welcomed more than four million Hindus from all corners of the world since the 1900s, representing diverse racial, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds, the resolution asserts that the country has greatly benefited from contributions by Hindu Americans in every aspect of the nation's economy and every industry. About a fortnight ago, Indian-American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, Ro Khanna, Thanedar, Ami Bera and Pramila Jayapal had written to the Department of Justice to request a briefing from them on the status of investigations concerning an alarming increase in incidents of vandalism at houses of worship across the country including at Hindu temples to better understand existing law enforcement coordination between local agencies, the FBI, and the Civil Rights Division. "Attacks at mandirs from New York to California have contributed to increased collective anxiety among Hindu Americans. Leaders from these impacted communities have expressed their are unfortunately 'no leads'



## Explore land availability at Goregaon instead of Bandra for new Bombay HC complex: CJ Upadhyaya to Maharashtra



GNS News Agency, April 17

The Bombay High Court on Friday asked the Public Works Department (PWD) of the Maharashtra government to explore the availability of land in suburban Goregaon for the new HC complex and provide a rough sketch of its accessibility from the proposed coastal road. The court said it would not stop the government from declaring the presently allotted land at Bandra (East) as a special area for a "public project of vital importance".

It expressed displeasure over the delay in handing over vacant possession of 30.13-acre land situated in Bandra (E). It added that while the Goregaon (West) land was not accepted earlier due to accessibility issues, it could be a better idea to explore the same due to the proposed coastal road. A division bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Arif S Doctor was hearing a contempt petition by lawyer Ahmed Abdi that claimed the government's non-compliance in a 2018 high court order on land allotment. On March 28, the HC had said the administration had to face constraints due to lack of space at the present heritage building of the principal seat of HC in the Fort area in South Mumbai. On Friday, Advocate General Birendra Saraf representing the state government submitted an affidavit giving an estimated timeline for handing over portions of 30-acre

Bandra land and added that 13.73 acre of land can be handed over by May next year. After CJ Upadhyaya remarked that the Chhattisgarh HC was getting nearly 100 acre of land for its complex, AG Saraf submitted that another larger land parcel at Goregaon was offered by the government, which was not accepted by the HC due to accessibility issues earlier. A part of that land was later allotted for the construction of the Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU), he added.

However, we cannot go back in time and can proceed further based on our current position, AG Saraf said. He added that as soon as the Code of Conduct for general elections is over, the government will declare the Bandra land as an area of a public project of vital importance to streamline the construction. The state said it took a policy decision "to revamp and redevelop" the entire larger plot of 89.75 acre at Bandra under 'Special Project' status with the help of the Economic Development Co-operation Fund (EDCH), South Korea, of which nearly 30-acre land is allotted for HC complex. "What is the position of land at Goregaon? Whether it is accessible through the coastal road?" the CJ remarked, to which Saraf said that it would amount to going back to 'square one'. Saraf also suggested that the same can be discussed in the administrative meeting of the HC. The government has also come a long way by identifying Bandra land for HC, he added. However, CJ Upadhyaya, expressing concerns over delay related to Bandra land, said it could be a better idea to at least explore the possibility of utilising the Goregaon land if it can be accessed through proposed coastal road. "Can you give us details of the total available land at Goregaon? Not even a single displacement has taken place (at Bandra) and not even a single building... removed. By this, we will have a new HC building in 2030 (Bandra)... In the past Goregaon land was not accepted on the accessibility issue. It can be a better idea. It is just a loud thinking on my part," CJ Upadhyaya remarked. The HC will hear the matter next in June.

## Kolhapur royal family 'ignores' Mandlik remarks, MVA presses for apology

GNS News Agency, April 17

A day after sitting MP and Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) candidate in Kolhapur Sanjay Mandlik's kicked up a controversy over his remarks questioning the royal lineage of rival candidate Shahu Maharaj Chhatrapati, the Kolhapur royal family called it a baseless remark and refused to comment on an "irrelevant topic". The royal family, which also shares good equation with BJP, was miffed at the saffron party's stoic silence over Mandlik's comments that Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj was not the real heir of Rajarshri Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj as he was adopted by the royals. "The remarks are baseless... We don't want to get into any unnecessary arguments. Everyone knows the truth," said a member of Kolhapur royal family member. When contacted, another royal family member refused to comment on an "irrelevant" subject. A close associate of the royal family said, "The BJP and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' silence has hurt the family. It was BJP who had nominated to Sambhaji Raje Chhatrapati to Rajya Sabha and yet the BJP and Fadnavis have refused to openly condemn Mandlik's statement."

On Thursday, Mandlik, during a rally in Kolhapur, asked if the current head of the royal family (Shahu Maharaj) belongs to Kolhapur. "He is not the real heir of Rajarshri Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj (social reformer)," he said, drawing sharp reaction from leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi who have asked Mandlik to apologise.

NCP faction led by veteran leader Sharad Pawar said Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur is drawing inspiration from Rajarshri Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj's social work and is serving the people. "Those who criticise him are only exposing their mindset. It also reflects the low level to which the rival candidate has stooped," Pawar hit back. Pawar added that Shahu Maharaj has a lot of respect from the people. "In royal families, adoptions are common. When a child is adopted he or she becomes a



member of the family," he said. Former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan has condemned the "insulting remarks" against the Kolhapur royal family. "Does Mandlik's remarks form part of BJP's grand strategy?" Chavan asked. Former minister Satej Patil, who hails from Kolhapur, reminded Mandlik's comments that he would not make personal attacks on Shahu Maharaj and sought a public apology. "Mandlik is resorting to such low-level tactics since he is sensing defeat... We are confident that the people of Kolhapur will give a befitting reply to Mandlik," Patil remarked.

Shiv Sena (UBT) spokesperson Sanjay Raut said that Maharashtra will never forgive those who insult Chhatrapati's seat of power. "Rajarshri Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj was a great social reformer. He was much ahead of his time... The current Shahu Maharaj is the legal heir of the Rajarshri Shahu Maharaj. If people are not expected to respect the seat of Shahu Maharaj, then who should they respect? Prime Minister Modi's seat?" Shiv Sena spokesperson Sanjay Shiras said, "Mandlik should not have commented about the Kolhapur royal seat. We should all respect the descendants of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. In politics, we should avoid such controversy. Whatever he said was wrong."

## Bombay HC 'surprised' over Maharashtra stand that it's 'not possible to grant benefits' to slain soldier's widow

GNS News Agency, April 17

Expressing "surprise" over the Maharashtra government's stand that it was not possible to grant monetary benefits to the family of late Major Anuj Sood, the Bombay High Court has sought its affidavit in response by next week. Major Sood laid down his life on May 2, 2020 while rescuing civilian hostages from terrorist hide-outs. He was posthumously awarded the Shaurya Chakra. The division bench of Justices Girish S Kulkarni and Firdosh P Pooniwalla was hearing a plea by Aakriti Sood, widow of the slain soldier, which stated that Sood was entitled to the benefits under the state government's policy as per two Government Resolutions of 2019 and 2020. The matter was argued through senior advocate Ashutosh Kumbhakoni and advocate Sneha Bhange.

The state government's counsel submitted that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde could not take a decision in the matter as a "special case" as directed by the court earlier, since it would require a policy decision and has to be considered by the Cabinet, which is not currently available. Earlier on March 28, after the government lawyer submitted that the decision could not be taken due to the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the bench expressed disagreement and said the model code of conduct should not come in the way of the said decision. On April 4, the high court had asked the chief minister to consider extending benefits to the family of Major Sood within a week as a "special case". On Friday, Government Pleader P P Kakade submitted that he was in talks with higher officers and a policy decision was required to be taken by the state Cabinet. He added that Sood was not domiciled in Maharashtra. "We are considering the case, but have to make conscious policy decisions. In prevailing situations, the Cabinet is not sitting," he added.

"Under prevailing policy, it is not possible for the



state government to grant benefits to the widow of Major Sood, who has sacrificed [his] life for the country," the state submitted.

"We are quite surprised by the stand of the GP. Be that as it may, our orders are very clear. We had called upon the highest functionary (CM) to consider it as a special case. If the CM is not in a position to take a decision, it is appropriate that the state government put its stand through an affidavit, instead of an oral statement," the bench noted in its order. Justice Kulkarni orally remarked, "We have been repeatedly passing orders. There is no question of talking (with the highest officers). If you cannot comply with our directions, please tell us on affidavit, we will look into it. You cannot do this (grant benefits) when somebody has sacrificed his life? We had requested the CM to take a decision. You reject it if you are not convinced. Please say it in the affidavit. They (petitioner) will have to challenge the decision in that case. This is not the way you shirk responsibility as someone in the government does not want to take a decision and shift it to Cabinet. We expected much better."

## 'Bengal a safe haven for terrorists': BJP attacks Mamata after NIA arrests in Rameshwaram Cafe blast case



GNS News Agency, April 17

A political war of words erupted in West Bengal on Friday after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) announced that it had arrested two prime suspects in the Bengaluru Rameshwaram Cafe blast case from the state. While the BJP attacked the Trinamool Congress (TMC) government, saying the state had become a "safe haven for terrorists", Mamata Banerjee hit back, praising the "prompt response" by the state police. "NIA detains two chief suspects in the Rameshwaram Cafe blast, Mussavir Hussain Shazib and accomplice Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa, from Kolkata. Both likely belong to ISIS cell in Shivamogga, Karnataka. West Bengal, unfortunately, under Mamata Banerjee, has become a safe haven for terrorists," BJP leader Amit Malviya said in a post on X.

Mussavir Hussain Shazib and Abdul Matheen Taha were arrested from Purba Medinipur district on Friday for their alleged involvement in the blast at the Bengaluru cafe on March 13 that left nine people injured. NIA detains two chief suspects in the Rameshwaram Cafe blast, bomber Mussavir Hussain Shazib and accomplice Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa, from Kolkata. Both likely belong to ISIS cell in Shivamogga, Karnataka.

Responding to Malviya's post, the West Bengal Police put out a message on their official X handle, highlighting that it was a joint operation. "Falsehood at its worst! Contrary to the claims made by @amitmalviya, the

fact is that, two suspects in the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case have been arrested from Purba Medinipur in a JOINT operation by the West Bengal Police and the Central Intelligence Agencies," it said. "West Bengal has NEVER been a safe haven for terrorists and the state police will continue to remain ever-vigilant in keeping its people safe from nefarious activities. The proactive role of WBP in the matter has been officially acknowledged by the Central Agencies," the post added. Contrary to the claims made by @amitmalviya, the fact is that, two suspects in the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case have been arrested from Purba Medinipur in a JOINT operation by the West Bengal Police and the Central Intelligence Agencies. (1/2)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also hit back, saying the BJP did not like the fact that the people in the state "wanted to live in peace". "Heard one BJP leader (Child) saying that Bengal is not safe. The accused who were hiding here for two hours and within two hours they were arrested due to a prompt response by our State police. What about States where you are in power? What about Uttar Pradesh Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Gujarat, Bihar? People of Bengal want to live in peace but the BJP doesn't like this," she said. While BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar claimed that Bengal was the "epicentre of all terror activities" and had become "a hindrance in national security", TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh congratulated the West Bengal Police and alleged that it was a BJP leader's family that was running illegal activities from Contai in Purba Medinipur district.

"Well done @WBP Police in connection with the Bengaluru-cafe blast arrest. Even @NIA India has acknowledged it in their statements. Any anti-forces should be strictly dealt with. But let me ask to @BJP4India and their minions - where is this arrests made from? KANTHI We all know which family and BJP's main leader runs illegal activities from Contai. I urge the State agencies to investigate into this matter to find out that FAMILY'S links in providing shelter to ANTI-FORCES," Ghosh said in a post on X.

## Fresh jolt to Congress in Maharashtra as 2 district presidents resign over announcement of Dhule candidate

GNS News Agency, April 17

In a setback for the Congress in Maharashtra, its district presidents in Nashik and adjoining Dhule have resigned from their posts protesting the decision to nominate former MLA Dr Shobha Bachhav as its Lok Sabha candidate from the Dhule constituency. Dr Tushar Shewale and Shyam Sonar, the Congress presidents of Nashik and Dhule districts, respectively, said they resigned because the party insisted on "fielding an outsider".

Bachhav is a single-term MLA who was elected from Nashik in 2004. She had also served as a mayor of Nashik. While Bachhav's political arena has been limited to Nashik district, her candidature from Dhule has sparked dissent in both districts. "From Dhule, district president Shyam Sonar and I were interested in contesting the elections. While we both have roots in this constituency, the party has foisted an outsider on the party workers. I have sent my resignation from the post of Nashik district president to the party. If the party does not change the candidate then we might have to reevaluate our future association," Shewale said. "The decision to resign was because of the party's insistence on fielding an outsider from the constituency," Sonar said. The Dhule Lok Sabha constituency consists of six Assembly constituencies spread across the districts of Nashik and Thane. They include Dhule Rural, Dhule City, and Sindkheda in Dhule district and Malegaon Central, Malegaon Outer, and Baglan in Nashik district. The area also has a substantial Muslim population with 24 per cent of the electorate hailing from the community. There had been a de-



mand that the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance, which is yet to put up a Muslim candidate from the state, field a Muslim nominee. The Congress had been keen on fielding two-time MLA Kunal Patil as its candidate but he expressed his inability to contest the elections. The party then nominated Bachhav to take on sitting BJP MP Dr Subhash Bhamre.

However, Bachhav, who had to face hostility from local workers when she visited the Malegaon Congress office on Thursday, claimed that she had roots in the area and those who were protesting against her were disgruntled elements of the party. "I am not an outsider. I have roots in this area having studied in Dhule. My in-laws and their extended family hail from Baglan. I am not an outsider. Those who are protesting against me are disgruntled elements. It is the party that has decided to nominate me," Bachhav said.

## Ajit Pawar rallies party leaders behind BJP candidate as Madha seat becomes new warring point in ruling alliance

GNS News Agency, April 17

Amid growing discontent and fighting within the ruling alliance over Madha Lok Sabha constituency in western Maharashtra, Deputy CM Ajit Pawar on Friday summoned leaders of his faction of the Nationalist Congress Party, including former legislative council chairperson Ramraje Naik-Nimbalkar, and directed them to work only for BJP candidate Ranjitsinh Nimbalkar. The development comes a day after opposition NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar announced in Pune that Dhairyasheel Mohite-Patil, a member of influential Mohite-Patil family from Akhuj in Solapur district, will be joining his side. Dhairyasheel is a nephew of former deputy CM and Pawar's former colleague Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil. The Mohite-Patils are one of the most politically influential families in Solapur and they had joined the BJP in 2019.



BJP has given ticket to incumbent MP Ranjitsinh Nimbalkar whom various factions within the ruling alliance have opposed. With Mohite-Patil family member switching back to Sharad Pawar's party, speculations were rife that these factions may silently work against the BJP candidate. Sensing this, Nimbalkar and BJP MLAs Jaykumar Gore and Rahul Kul on Friday visited Deputy Chief Minister

Devendra Fadnavis in Nagpur. "Except for a few people within the NCP, everybody else is working for BJP candidate. We are going to fight, and we are going to win. It does not matter if anybody comes with us or not," said Gore.

Nimbalkar, while accepting disagreements within the ruling alliance, said there will be another meeting at the higher level. "Issues in politics are not solved by the push of a

single button. Those are solved through discussions and negotiations," said Nimbalkar. According to sources, apart from Mohite-Patil family, former chairperson of legislative council, Ramraje Naik-Nimbalkar of the NCP is also against Nimbalkar's candidature. At a meeting at Ajit Pawar's official residence, local leaders of Phaltan Assembly constituency were also present along with Naik-Nimbalkar.



## A toilet has been this 66-year-old woman's home for a year in Bengal



GNS News Agency, April 17

A toilet, built as part of the government's campaign to eradicate open defecation, has turned into a makeshift home for a 66-year-old woman in West Bengal's Purulia district. Mithila Mahato has been living within the cramped confines of her 4 feet by 3 feet sanctuary after she lost her home due to rains last year.

A toilet has been the elderly woman's makeshift shelter for past one year. Mahato is a resident of Sundradi village in Purulia district. Having lost her husband years ago and with her daughters settled elsewhere, Mithila lived alone in a modest mud house. However, tragedy struck when heavy rains flattened her humble abode last year, leaving her destitute and homeless. The woman tried to get assistance from local authorities, only to be met with temporary solutions and a plastic canopy. Faced with no viable alternatives, she sought refuge in a government-provided toilet, a structure meant for hygiene maintenance but now serving as her makeshift home.

Mithila Mahato lives alone in this tiny toilet. Sitting straight inside the cramped confines is difficult, sleeping is even more painful. And yet, the elderly woman has endured the conditions for well over a year. Mithila Mahato claimed the administration did not offer help despite repeated pleas from her side. "I've been sleeping in this bathroom since last one year. What else can I do?" Mahato asked, her despondency clear as she spoke to India Today TV. Mahato cannot even stretch her legs in this cramped space. As Mahato's plight drew attention, local officials expressed surprise and promises of action. Chandmoni Koranudi, the village head, said, "I was not aware of the incident. Nobody informed me about her. I cannot remember whether she requested me for house." Nivedita Mahato, the chief of Purulia Zilla Parishad, pledged interim aid in the form of a tent. "I got to know about the incident a few days ago. As soon as I got to know, I arranged a tent for her. We cannot arrange a house for her at the moment. I agree that panchayat members could have taken some initiative, but they have not done it. I am looking into this matter," Nivedita Mahato said. Speaking to India Today TV, the local MP Jyotirmoy Singh Mahato said, "An MLA or MP doesn't have any role in the Awas Yojana. The central government directly sends funds to state administration for this scheme. Then where is this fund is going? Why was this woman not provided a house under Pradhanmantri Awas Yojana? This should be investigated. What is the TMC-ruled Zilla Parishad doing?" Meanwhile, a source in the district administration said that Mithila Mahato had not applied to avail the benefits available under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana scheme.

## India relocates consulate staff in Myanmar, issues travel advisory



GNS News Agency, April 17

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that the security situation in Myanmar remains precarious amid fighting between the rebels and the military. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday cautioned Indians travelling to violence-hit Myanmar, saying they should observe proper safety protocols. India has also relocated its staff from its consulate in Myanmar city of Sittwe. Addressing a weekly media briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that the security situation in Myanmar remains precarious and deteriorating.

"Indians who are travelling to Myanmar should observe proper safety protocols and take care of themselves while the embassy is there to take care of them," Jaiswal

said. "The security situation in Myanmar remains precarious and deteriorating. You heard about the fighting that is going on, specifically in Rakhine state and other areas. Some time back, we issued an advisory to our nationals so that they could take due care," he further said.

The MEA said India has temporarily moved staff from its consulate in Sittwe to Yangon in view of the fighting in Rakhine state of Myanmar. However, the Consulate in Mandalay remains fully functional. The Southeast Asian nation plunged into chaos after its military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, sparking widespread armed resistance across the country. Recently, a relentless assault by anti-coup forces forced around 200 Myanmar military personnel to withdraw to the Friendship Bridge connecting the border town of Myawaddy to Thailand. The anti-junta forces declared they had gained control of the critical border town of Myawaddy.

"Today KNU-led joint resistance forces captured the remaining military base in Myawaddy," Kyaw Zaw, a spokesperson for Myanmar's National Unity Government, told news agency Reuters. The National Unity Government is a shadow administration of ousted lawmakers and anti-junta groups. The military has already lost its control of areas along Myanmar's borders with India, China and Bangladesh. Its manpower has also been depleted. At least 2,000 people have been displaced within Myanmar by the latest round of fighting between the rebels and the military.

## Tourist footfall in Karnataka's Hampi lowest in 10 years due to heatwave

GNS News Agency, April 17

According to the data provided by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Hosapete, MS Divakar, as many as 5,000 tourists visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site per day. However, with the mercury level shooting to 42 degrees Celsius, the number has slumped down to around 150 tourists on weekends and piffling double digits on weekdays. "Livelihoods are greatly affected for vendors, small shops and establishments. The only way to save us is if it rains for 2 days" Divakar said while speaking to the media. He also highlighted that in January this year, the tourist footfall was around 25,000 per day and the architectural marvel saw nearly 15 lakh tourists during the three-day Hampi Utsav. Notably, the southern state of Karnataka has been reeling from an intense heatwave with a sharp decline in rainfall.

Speaking on the decrease in tourist numbers, a local, while speaking to India Today TV, said that facilities for tourists are pitiable in the area and there was a dire need for hotels proximal to the Hampi temple for the working class. The hotel industry in the area has also taken a



hit due to the decrease in the number of tourists, with the occupancy coming down to 30 per cent. "Room occupancy has fallen to 30 per cent - 20 per cent. Out of the 200 rooms that we have, 180 rooms used to get filled. Now a pathetic 30 of them are getting occupied. The situation is really difficult for us," an owner of a popular hotel in Hosapete, who wanted his name to be kept reserved, told India Today TV.

## Eshwarappa to fight as independent, says Karnataka BJP 'under father-son control'

GNS News Agency, April 17

Former Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and senior BJP leader KS Eshwarappa filed his nomination as an independent candidate from the Shivamogga Lok Sabha seat on Friday. He will be contesting against sitting BJP MP BY Raghvendra, son of former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa. While speaking to the media about his decision to contest the Lok Sabha polls as an independent, Eshwarappa said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi is saying that a party should not be in the hands of a family, but in Karnataka, BS Yediyurappa's son is BJP president and the other is an MP. I am contesting to protest against it."

Eshwarappa announced his decision to contest as an independent from Shivamogga after his son Kantesh was denied the BJP's ticket for the Haveri seat. He alleged that BS Yediyurappa had promised that Kantesh would get a ticket and that he would campaign to assure his victory. Before filing his nomination on Friday, Eshwarappa held a roadshow in Shivamogga. He alleged that BJP workers in Karnataka are "angry" with the party leaders.

The former deputy Chief Minister said 'Hindutva' leaders of the party like CT Ravi, Anant Kumar Hegde, Nalin Kumar Kateel, Pratap Simha have been thrown out. He added that he is contesting to ensure that 'Hindutvavadi' gets a place in the party. KS Eshwarappa said that from Saturday, his supporters will launch a door-to-door cam-



campaign so voters can understand the "injustices" he faced and why the BJP is "under father-son's control". He added that around 25,000 to 30,000 people from all eight constituencies of Shivamogga came to support him as he filed his nomination. "Our supporters will do a door-to-door campaign as to why a loyal supporter of BJP is hurt and what kind of injustice the father-son did. They will go to every single house and tell the injustice served to Hindutva, why the party is under father-son. I have confidence that the party will get purified after the elections," said Eshwarappa. Eshwarappa is a five-time MLA from the Shivamogga assembly seat and one of the most prominent Kuruba leaders of the BJP.

## China reacts to PM's border remarks in interview: 'Great positive progress made'

GNS News Agency, April 17

China, reacting to comments made by PM Modi in an interview, said healthy China and India relations would serve the interests of the two countries. Days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the importance of stable India-China relations, China said the two nations had made "great positive progress" to resolve the border standoff along the LAC. Speaking to the media, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said India and China were maintaining close communication on the border issue, news agency PTI reported. "About the border issue, I can tell you that China and India have been remaining in close communication through diplomatic and military channels and great positive progress has been made," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning was quoted by the news agency as saying

"We also believe that healthy China and India relations serve the interests of the two countries," she said. "China hopes that India will work in the same direction with China to properly manage the differences and take the bilateral relations forward on a healthy, stable track," Mao further said. Earlier this week, PM Modi, in an interview with Newsweek, said a stable relation between India and China was important not just for the two nations, but for the entire region and world.

He also highlighted that the "prolonged situation" at



the borders should be addressed urgently. PM Modi expressed confidence that through bilateral talks, the two countries would be able to restore peace and tranquillity at their borders. "It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us," PM Modi said in his interview. The bilateral ties between India and China have been strained after a clash in Galwan in May 2020 resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers. Around 40 Chinese soldiers also reportedly lost their lives in the clash. The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of corps commander-level talks to resolve the standoff.

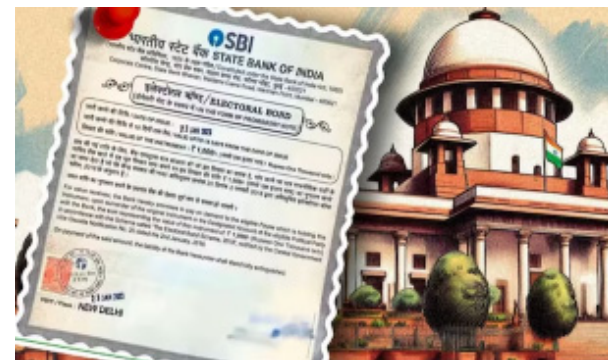
## SBI refuses to disclose electoral bonds' details under RTI Act

GNS News Agency, April 17

The State Bank of India (SBI) has refused to disclose under the RTI Act the details of the electoral bonds furnished to the Election Commission (EC), claiming that it is personal information held in a fiduciary capacity, even though the records are in the public domain on the poll panel's website. Holding that the electoral bonds scheme was "unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary", the Supreme Court directed the SBI on February 15 to furnish the complete details of the bonds purchased since April 12, 2019 to the EC, which would publish the information on its website by March 13. On March 11, the court dismissed the SBI's petition seeking an extension of the deadline and ordered it to disclose the details of the electoral bonds to the EC by the close of business hours on March 12.

RTI activist Commodore (retired) Lokesh Batra approached the SBI on March 13 seeking the complete data of the electoral bonds in the digital form, as provided to the EC after the Supreme Court's order. The bank denied the information citing two exemption clauses given under the Right to Information (RTI) Act -- section 8(1)(e) that is related to records held in a fiduciary capacity and section 8(1)(j) that allows withholding personal information.

"Information sought by you is containing details of purchasers and political parties and hence, cannot be disclosed as it is held in fiduciary capacity disclosure of which is exempted under sections 8(1)(e) and (j) of the RTI Act," the response furnished by the central public information officer and deputy general manager of the SBI said on Wednesday. Batra had also sought the details of the fees paid by the SBI to senior advocate Harish Salve to defend its case against the disclosure of the electoral bonds' records, citing that the records are held in a fiduciary capacity and the information is personal in



nature. On the question of Salve's fee, he said the bank has denied information that involves taxpayers' money.

The EC published the data furnished by the SBI on its website on March 14, with the details of the donors and political parties that redeemed the bonds. On March 15, the apex court pulled up the SBI for not furnishing the complete information by withholding the numbers unique to each electoral bond that would help match the donors with the recipient political parties, saying the bank was "duty-bound" to reveal the information. A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said it had directed the disclosure of all the details of the bonds, including the names of the purchasers, amounts and dates of purchase. All details have to be furnished by the SBI, the CJ observed, as the court admonished the bank for furnishing incomplete information, a day after the EC put out the entire list of entities that purchased the bonds for making political donations. The SBI had said a total of 22,217 electoral bonds of varying denominations were purchased by the donors between April 1, 2019 and February 15 this year, of which 22,030 were redeemed by political parties.

## Case against Pune teacher for thrashing Class 9 student



GNS News Agency, April 17

The parents of the student said that he didn't reveal the incident to them, and they found out about it after a video of it went viral on social media. A case has been registered against a teacher in Pune for allegedly beat-

ing up a Class 9 student. The student's parents have written a letter to the Chairman of Education Regulatory Board, demanding the dismissal of the teacher, Pooja Sunil Kedari.

In the complaint, the parents said Kedari came as a substitute teacher and started beating the student. However, the boy didn't reveal the matter to his parents fearing that the teacher would give him less marks in the final exams. However, a video of the incident went viral on social media, after which he told his parents about the incident.

A case of non-cognizable offence has been registered against the teacher at the Vishrambaug Police station and further investigation is on. Pune Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Sandip Gill said, "The incident took place a month back. A case has been registered at Vishrambaug police station under Section 323 of the IPC. Further, the school has commissioned an internal enquiry into the incident."

## Congress jabs PM Modi on India-China border row remark: 'Cowardly worst'

GNS News Agency, April 17

The Congress on Thursday came down heavily on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his remarks on the India-China border row during his interview with US-based Newsweek magazine. The party alleged that PM Modi was at his "cowardly worst" and his response was "feeble and ineffective". During an interview with Newsweek whose excerpts were published on the US magazine's website on Wednesday, PM Modi called for stable relations between India and China and said there was a need for "urgently addressing" the border dispute between both countries. In response, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh wrote on X, "In his interview with Newsweek, a US magazine, the Prime Minister was at his cowardly worst. His only comment on China's repeated infringements on Indian sovereignty was that the India-China border situation needs to be addressed urgently to resolve the 'abnormality' in the bilateral interactions." "The Prime Minister had a chance to send a powerful mes-

sage to China. However, his ineffective and feeble response is likely to only encourage China further in asserting its claim on Indian territory," he alleged. Ramesh asserted that PM Modi's remarks were not only "disgraceful" but also "disrespectful" to the soldiers who laid down their lives while defending the India-China border. He demanded that the Prime Minister should apologise to 140 crore Indians for his June 2020 statement that no one has entered India nor has anyone occupied any post. "The Prime Minister should apologise to the 140 crore Indians for deceiving them on national television on June 19th, 2020, with his statement 'Na Koi Ghusa Hai, Na Hi Koi Ghus Aaya Hai' (nobody entered India and nobody has entered any post) and keeping the nation in dark about his failures in protecting the borders with China," he said on X. During the Newsweek interview, PM Modi expressed hope that India and China will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity at their borders through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels.



## US National Security Advisor to visit India next week to discuss bilateral ties



GNS News Agency, April 17

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will travel to India next week to "compare notes on the Indo-Pacific," talk about technology cooperation and also meet his counterpart Ajit Doval and others to take the US-India relationship to the next level. Sullivan is likely to meet Doval for the annual review meeting for the initiative on critical and emerging technologies (iCET) that was postponed due to the cancellation of his visit in February due to other global commitments.

The India visit by a close Biden aide comes soon after Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra who is in the US for a series of meetings with senior officials from the US government and interacting with industry leaders to advance bilateral cooperation in areas such as defence and technology. Sullivan would be in India next week "to celebrate elements of our bilateral relationship, compare notes on the Indo-Pacific, and also talk about the next steps in technology cooperation. We think these are all effective, prudent elements of taking the US-India relationship to the next level," a senior White House administration official said without announcing the date of his visit. He was addressing a background press call on Wednesday, previewing the official visit of Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, who is on a US trip beginning April 9. The senior administration official was asked how the US was thinking of India within the context of the deepening military, defence, and security partnership that it has with treaty allies in East Asia and if the US looks at

India as part of this network. "I think if you ask the President, one of the things that he's proudest of is his efforts to build a stronger relationship between the United States and India. And I do believe, both in the Indo-Pacific and the Indian Ocean and on key issues like technology, the United States and India are working more closely together than ever before," the official said. "And I would simply say that I think the US-India relationship is trending substantially in a positive direction and that our level of engagement across every possible vector — security, intelligence, technology, people-to-people — has excelled," he added. Incidentally, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has told lawmakers that by bolstering the Indian military's capabilities, the two nations can work together to uphold a more stable balance of power across the wider Indo-Pacific region. He also told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a Congressional hearing this week on the annual budget of the Department of Defence that the militaries of the US and India are accelerating operational activities to boost maritime security in the Indian Ocean. On Wednesday, the senior administration official further said, "Not only have our relations with India improved in a bilateral context, but it is also the case that India's partnership with other countries, working with us and then working just independently, has also stepped up substantially. I would say, in many respects, engagement with India is some of the most — the most desired kinds of engagements on the global stage, and we've seen this with a variety of key players."

The official admitted that in the past, "on both sides, there perhaps had been some ambivalence or some uncertainty. I see very little of that now." I see leaders on both sides who are all in on the promise and prospects of the other, recognise the potential of this relationship that is deeply supported by an activist diaspora community here, and technology and other firms who understand the potential of India," he added. "And I would just simply say that I see the engagement with India as central to everything that we're seeking to do on the global stage. And I would simply say that I think, in many respects, it will be our most important bilateral partnership heading into the latter parts of the 21st century."

## What is prostate cancer that OJ Simpson was battling

GNS News Agency, April 17

Footballer and actor OJ Simpson's death has renewed focus on prostate cancer, the second most prevalent cancer in the US. What is prostate cancer, how common is it, and what are the symptoms? American footballer and actor OJ Simpson was diagnosed with prostate cancer two months ago. (Image: National Cancer Institute/File)

One of the major causes of millions of annual deaths, prostate cancer, is back in the headlines after the death of American football player and actor OJ Simpson on Wednesday. The 76-year-old football Hall of Famer passed away after battling prostate cancer. OJ Simpson was diagnosed with cancer, which he made public two months ago. OJ Simpson was receiving chemotherapy. However, Simpson acknowledged that he had "caught cancer" and had undergone chemotherapy, without mentioning that he was diagnosed with prostate cancer.

### HOW BAD IS PROSTATE CANCER?

Prostate cancer is the second most prevalent form of cancer in the United States, accounting for 15% of new cancer cases each year. It is the most common cancer amongst men, with approximately one in eight men projected to be diagnosed during their lifetime. The number of men diagnosed with prostate cancer is predicted to double by 2040, said a study in Lancet earlier in April. The Lancet study said that the annual prostate cancer cases are projected to rise from 1.4 million in 2020 to 2.9 million in 2040. The annual deaths caused by prostate cancer are set to rise by 85% to almost 7,00,000 over the same time-frame, mainly among men in low- and middle-income countries, the study revealed. Prostate cancer disproportionately affects African-American and Black men, who are 70% more likely to be diagnosed and nearly twice as likely to die from the disease compared to other men, say studies.

### WHAT IS PROSTATE CANCER AND ITS RISKS?

The prostate, a small gland between the bladder



and rectum in men, is important in producing a fluid that maintains the quality of sperm cells and lubricates the urethra. All men are susceptible to prostate cancer, with most cases diagnosed in people with no family history. Age is the main risk factor for prostate cancer, with it being rare before 40 but kicking in about 80% of men over 80. However, 1 in 44 men in the US who get prostate cancer will die from it, according to the American Cancer Society. Symptoms of prostate cancer include increased urge to urinate more frequently, often at night, feeling like rushing to the toilet, difficulty starting to urinate, feeling that your bladder has not emptied fully, and blood in the urine or semen.

The best way to detect prostate cancer early is through regular Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) testing, which measures blood levels of a biomarker of the cancer.

**PROSTATE CANCER IN INDIA** Prostate cancer accounts for 3% of all cancers in India, with an estimated 33,000 to 42,000 new cases diagnosed annually, says the recent Lancet study. Low awareness of prostate cancer and little systematic Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) Tests make the disease a menace in India too. However, because of under-reporting of cancer-related deaths, including prostate cancer, the numbers do not fully reflect the gravity of the situation.

## 20 years later, Abu Ghraib detainees get their day in US court



GNS News Agency, April 17

Twenty years ago this month, photos of abused prisoners and smiling US soldiers guarding them at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison were released, shocking the world. Now, three survivors of Abu Ghraib will finally get their day in US court against the military contractor they hold responsible for their mistreatment.

The trial is scheduled to begin Monday in US District Court in Alexandria, and will be the first time that Abu Ghraib survivors are able to bring their claims of torture to a US jury, said Baher Azmy, a lawyer with the Center for Constitutional Rights representing the plaintiffs. The defendant in the civil suit, CACI, supplied the interrogators who worked at the prison. The Virginia-based contractor denies any wrongdoing, and has emphasised throughout 16 years of litigation that its employees are not alleged to have inflicted any abuse on any of the plaintiffs in the case. The plaintiffs, though, seek to hold CACI responsible for setting the conditions that resulted in the torture they endured, citing evidence in government investigations that CACI contractors instructed military police to "soften up" detainees for their interrogations.

Retired Army General Antonio Taguba, who led an investigation into the Abu Ghraib scandal, is among those expected to testify. His inquiry concluded that at least one CACI interrogator should be held accountable for instructing military police to set conditions that amounted to physical abuse. There is little dispute that the abuse was horrific. The photos released in 2004 showed naked prisoners stacked into pyramids or dragged by leashes. Some photos had a soldier smiling and giving a thumbs up while posing next to a corpse, or detainees being threatened with dogs, or hooded and attached to electrical wires.

The plaintiffs cannot be clearly identified in any of the infamous images, but their descriptions of mistreatment are unnerving. Suhail Al Shimari has described sexual assaults and beatings during his two months at the prison. He was also electrically shocked and dragged around the prison by a rope tied around his neck. Former Al-Jazeera reporter Salah Al-Ejaili said he was subjected to stress positions that caused him to vomit black liquid. He was also deprived of sleep, forced to wear women's underwear and threatened with dogs. CACI, though, has

said the US military is the institution that bears responsibility for setting the conditions at Abu Ghraib and that its employees weren't in a position to be giving orders to soldiers. In court papers, lawyers for the contractor group have said the "entire case is nothing more than an attempt to impose liability on CACI PT because its personnel worked in a war zone prison with a climate of activity that reeks of something foul. The law, however, does not recognise guilt by association with Abu Ghraib." The case has bounced through the courts since 2008, and CACI has tried roughly 20 times to have it tossed out of court. The US Supreme Court in 2021 ultimately turned back CACI's appeal efforts and sent the case back to district court for trial.

In one of CACI's appeal arguments, the company contended that the US enjoys sovereign immunity against the torture claims, and that CACI enjoys derivative immunity as a contractor doing the government's bidding. But US District Judge Leonie Brinkema, in a first-of-its-kind ruling, determined that the US government can't claim immunity when it comes to allegations that violate established international norms, like torturing prisoners, so CACI as a result can't claim any derivative immunity. Jurors next week are also expected to hear testimony from some of the soldiers who were convicted in military court of directly inflicting the abuse. Ivan Frederick, a former staff sergeant who was sentenced to more than eight years of confinement after a court-martial conviction on charges including assault, indecent acts and dereliction of duty, has provided deposition testimony that is expected to be played for the jury because he has refused to attend the trial voluntarily. The two sides have differed on whether his testimony establishes that soldiers were working under the direction of CACI interrogators.

The US government may present a wild card in the trial, which is scheduled to last two weeks. Both the plaintiffs and CACI have complained that their cases have been hampered by government assertions that some evidence, if made public, would divulge state secrets that would harm national security. Government lawyers will be at the trial ready to object if witnesses stray into territory they deem to be a state secret, they said at a pretrial hearing April 5.

Judge Brinkema, who has overseen complex national security cases many times, warned the government that if it asserts such a privilege at trial, "it better be a genuine state secret." Jason Lynch, a government lawyer, assured her, "We're trying to stay out of the way as much as we possibly can." Of the three plaintiffs, only Al-Ejaili, who now lives in Sweden, is expected to testify in person. The other two will testify remotely from Iraq. Brinkema has ruled that the reasons they were sent to Abu Ghraib are irrelevant and won't be given to jurors. All three were released after periods of detention ranging from two months to a year without ever being charged with a crime, according to court papers.

## Israel officer reveals how AI tool was used during 2021 Gaza offensive: Report

GNS News Agency, April 17

Amid recent reports of the Israeli military using an artificial intelligence-powered tool, called Lavender, to identify bombing targets in Gaza, a year-old video has surfaced on social media in which an official speaks on how the country has been using machine learning to identify targets. Even though the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have denied that AI was being used to identify suspected terrorists, the official at Israel's cyber intelligence agency details how machine learning techniques were used during the 2021 offensive in Gaza, The Guardian reported.

Citing an example of "one of the tools", the official, named "Colonel Yoav", said, "Let's say we have some terrorists that form a group, and we know only some of them... By practising our data science magic powder we are able to find the rest of them." The video was shot at a conference at Tel Aviv University in February 2023. Interestingly, the gathering was instructed not to take any photos of the official or record his presentation.

The official, part of Unit 8200, said his unit had used machine learning to find Hamas squad missile commanders and anti-tank missile terrorists in Gaza during IDF's military operation in May 2021. "We take the original subgroup, we calculate their close circles, we then calculate relevant features, and at last we rank the results and determine the threshold," The Guardian quoted the intel official as saying. The colonel said feedback from intelligence officers was used to enrich and improve the algorithm. He, however, underscored that "people of flesh and blood" make the decisions. "These tools are meant



to help break the human barrier," the Israeli official further said. The intel officer said his unit managed to produce more than 200 new targets. Speaking on the benefits of the AI tool, he said, "Suddenly you can react during battle with applied data-science-driven solutions."

The description by the colonel bears similarities with the recent revelation by six Israeli intelligence officials to +972 Magazine and a Hebrew-language media outlet. The six IDF officials said an AI-based tool called "Lavender", which had a 10% error rate, was used to assist intelligence officers involved in the bombing campaign in Gaza and identify tens of thousands of potential human targets. The IDF, however, said some of the accounts were "baseless". The IDF denied AI was being used to identify suspected terrorists even though it did not dispute the existence of the tool.

## 3 US sailors rescued from island after their 'HELP' sign made of leaves spotted

GNS News Agency, April 17

Three US sailors, stranded on a desert island in the Pacific Ocean for over a week, were rescued earlier this week after their 'HELP' sign made of palm leaves was spotted on the white sandy beach. In a statement, the US Coast Guard said that a Navy aircraft searching for the men, noticed the sign and rescued the three men, all in their 40s. The men, whose identities and nationalities were not released, were found in good health on April 9, on Pikelot Island - an uninhabited, 32-acre islet lined by palm trees. The US Coast Guard called the three sailors' idea to spell out 'HELP' on the beach a "remarkable testament to their will to be found" and a "crucial factor in their discovery." "This act of ingenuity was pivotal in guiding rescue efforts directly to their location. This successful operation underscores the effective coordination and partnership between the US Coast Guard, the US Navy, and regional partners. We extend our gratitude to everyone involved," Lieutenant Chelsea Garcia, the search and rescue mission coordinator on the day, said. The three men had gone on an Easter fishing trip, beginning March 31, when their 20-foot open skiff sailboat outboard motor got damaged and became non-functional, leaving them stranded on the Pikelot Atoll, the US Coast Guard said.

Six days later, after the men failed to return home, their niece alerted the authorities, prompting the Coast Guard and the US Navy to launch a search and rescue



operation. The niece's distress call wanting her uncles back home resulted in an initial search operation that spanned over 78,000 nautical miles. Mobilising air assets posed a challenge at the start because of operational commitments, weather conditions and availability. Then, a US Navy aircraft crew from Kadena Air Force Base in Japan jumped in to speed up the rescue operation. The three mariners were spotted by a US Navy P-8 Poseidon aircraft on April 7. Survival packages such as food and water, among other items, were deployed to the men until further assistance could arrive. Later, the coast guard ship - already on the mission from the beginning - was rerouted to Pikelot Atoll to rescue the men.

## Iran could attack Israel in 48 hours, says report

GNS News Agency, April 17

Iran could launch a direct attack within 48 hours on Israel, which it blames for the deadly attack on its consulate in Damascus, reports The Wall Street Journal. Israel is preparing for the attack even as Iran's supreme leader weighs the political risks associated with such an attack, says the report. Iran is likely to launch a direct attack on Israel within the next 48 hours and the Jewish nation is preparing for it, according to a report. The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, citing a person who had been briefed by the Iranian leadership.

The confrontation with Israel's age-old rival Iran comes even as it is engaged in a war with Hamas in Gaza. There is no end in sight to the Israel-Hamas war. The person quoted by The Wall Street Journal said that Iran was still weighing the political risks of a direct attack on Israel.

"The strike plans are in front of the Supreme Leader, and he is still weighing the political risk," an adviser to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, according to reports. The latest escalation comes with Iran vowing to avenge the strike on its consulate in Damascus, Syria, that killed a top Iranian general and six other military officers. Iran blamed Israel for the attack, while the Jewish state hasn't publicly acknowledged or denied its role in the attack.

Israeli warplanes reportedly attacked Iran's consulate in Damascus on April 1, killing the top Iranian military commander and six officers. The attack that demolished the Iranian consulate in Syrian capital, killed Mohammad Reza Zahedi of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps.



The strike in Damascus signified the escalation of Israel's targeting of Iranian military officials, who supported militant groups fighting against Israel. Acknowledging the risks of an imminent attack on Israel, the US issued a travel advisory for Americans in the Jewish state. Following the attack on its consulate, Iran vowed that it would respond to the Israeli attack but would avoid a major escalation of the Israel-Hamas war.

"Israel must be punished, and it shall be," said Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei after the attack. However, Tehran said that it would not act hastily, as it pressed demands including a Gaza truce. Since Iran-backed Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7, resulting in an Israeli onslaught on the Gaza Strip, Israel ramped up airstrikes on Syria against Lebanon's Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia and Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).



## Asian Development Bank raises India's GDP growth forecast to 7% for FY25



strong momentum in manufacturing and services. It will continue to grow rapidly over the forecast horizon. Growth will be driven primarily by robust investment demand and improving consumption demand. Inflation will continue its downward trend in tandem with global trends," said the April edition of the Asian Development Outlook released on Friday. Growth will be robust despite moderating in FY2024 and FY2025, it said. For the 2025-26 fiscal, the ADB has projected India's growth at 7.2 per cent.

The ADB said exports are likely to be relatively muted this fiscal as growth in major advanced economies slows down but will improve in FY2025. "Monetary policy is expected to remain supportive of growth as inflation abates, while fiscal policy aims for consolidation but retains support for capital investment. On balance, growth is forecast to slow to seven per cent in FY2024 but improve to 7.2 per cent in FY2025," it said. To boost exports in the medium term, India needs greater integration into global value chains, the ADB added. The ADB's growth forecast for FY25 is in line with the projections made by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The RBI last week had said GDP growth in the current fiscal is projected at seven per cent on expectations of normal monsoon, moderating inflationary pressures and sustained momentum in manufacturing and services sectors.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday raised India's GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7 per cent from 6.7 per cent earlier, saying the robust growth will be driven by public and private sector investment demand and gradual improvement in consumer demand. The 2024-25 growth estimate is, however, lower than 7.6 per cent projected for the 2022-23 fiscal. Strong investment drove GDP growth in the 2022-23 fiscal as consumption was muted, the ADB said.

The ADB had in December last year projected the Indian economy to expand 6.7 per cent in the 2024-25 fiscal. "The economy grew robustly in fiscal 2023 with

## Ex-Fed chair Ben Bernanke finds 'significant shortcomings' in Bank of England's economic forecasting

A review of the Bank of England's economic forecasting that was published on Friday and undertaken by Ben Bernanke, the former chair of the US Federal Reserve, has found "significant shortcomings" that should be addressed to better inform future interest rate decisions.

Following widespread criticism about the Bank of England's forecasts, Bernanke was tasked last year to review the forecasting models. Though noting that all central banks have had problems over the past few years as a result of a series of economic shocks, notably the coronavirus pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis heightened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Bernanke said the Bank of England's issues were made worse by out-of-date software that had not been properly maintained. The review said that "insufficient resources have been devoted to ensuring that the software and models underlying the forecast are adequately maintained". Bernanke, who led the Fed between 2006 and 2014, a period that included the global financial crisis, made a series of recommendations that the Bank of England said it was committed to fulfilling.

Bank of England Gov. Andrew Bailey said the review was a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" for the central bank to update its models and make them fit for purpose to a "more uncertain world". One recommendation is that the Bank of England start producing its own forecasts of what might happen to interest rates in future, something that could help inform its inflation forecasts. Over the past couple of years, the Bank of England has faced criticism for being too slow to respond to surging inflation stoked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine,



which sent energy costs soaring, and supply issues connected to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. As a result, critics have argued that inflation ended up rising higher than it should have done to a multidecade high of more than 11 per cent — two percentage points more than in the US, for example.

The consequence of that, they say, is that the Bank of England's rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee then had to raise interest rates by more than would otherwise have been required and will have to stay higher for longer. The bank's main interest rate has been held at 5.25 per cent since August. Higher interest rates, which cool the economy by making it more expensive to borrow, thereby bearing down on spending, have contributed to easing inflation worldwide, though they also have affected economic activity. The British economy has barely grown over the past year, and few economists expect much of an uptick in 2024.

## Retail inflation declines to 5-month low of 4.85% in March

Retail inflation declined to a five-month low of 4.85 per cent in March mainly due to cooling food prices, according to official data released on Friday.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation was 5.09 per cent in February and 5.66 per cent in March 2023. Previously, CPI-based inflation was the lowest at 4.87 per cent in October 2023. The inflation in the food basket was at 8.52 per cent in March, down from 8.66 per cent in February, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

The government has tasked the Reserve Bank to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. According to the Reserve Bank, which factors in consumer inflation while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy, food price uncertainties continue to weigh on the inflation trajectory going forward.



The central bank has projected retail inflation at 4.5 per cent for the current fiscal assuming a normal monsoon.

## Forex kitty jumps \$2.98 billion to new high of \$648.562 billion



India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.98 billion to a fresh peak of USD 648.562 billion for the week ended April 5, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the forex kitty had increased by USD 2.951 billion to USD 645.583 billion, which was an all-time high.

In September 2021, the country's forex kitty reached an all-time high of USD 642.453 billion, a level that was breached in March this year. The reserves took a hit as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global events, but there has been a steady accretion over the past few months.

For the week ended April 5, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 549 million to USD 571.166 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by USD 2.398 billion to USD 54.558 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 24 million to USD 18.17 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was also up by USD 9 million to USD 4.669 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

The reserves took a hit as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global events, but there has been a steady accretion over the past few months.

## 5 signs of boredom in your marriage and how to revitalise the relationship



Every marriage experiences an initial honeymoon phase, where excitement permeates the air. Gradually, these passionate emotions may temper away with time, potentially leaving you feeling a bit indifferent or bored in your relationship. However, recognising the signs of boredom and taking proactive steps to address it is crucial for maintaining a healthy and fulfilling relationship. "Signs of boredom in your marriage can be a gift if they are helping you notice you are going in a different direction in your marriage than you want to," notes Julia Woods, a couples coach, in a recent Instagram post.

Here are five telltale signs that boredom might be knocking on your marital door and practical steps to reignite the spark: marriage boredom signs, reignite marriage spark, recognizing relationship boredom, signs of marriage monotony. Are you experiencing any of these signs in your marriage? (Source: Freepik)

### 1. Repetition in routine

If your marriage has fallen into a monotonous routine where each day feels indistinguishable from the last, it might be a sign of boredom. Woods cautions, "If you go out, do you go to the same restaurant? Do you talk about the same things?" Recognising these patterns is the first step toward rejuvenation.

### 2. Dwindling conversations

When discussions revolve around mundane topics or meaningful conversations start to dwindle, it could indicate a sense of boredom. Woods suggests asking yourself these questions: "Do those quiet moments in the car, at dinner, or amid life feel awkward? Do you long to connect in conversation but struggle to know how to start the conversation or what to talk about? Do you miss the 'old' days when you could easily talk for hours and not even realise it?"

### 3. Intimacy takes a backseat

A decrease in physical intimacy or a lack of interest in being close to your partner may point to underlying issues. Woods says if you need to think about the last time you had sex with your spouse or if it doesn't excite you anymore, it's a sign your marriage could be facing boredom.

### 4. Temptation by others

Woods warns that daydreaming about alternative scenarios or fantasising about a different life, questioning your choices, could subconsciously indicate a need

for excitement and change. Additionally, feeling jealous of the way your friends and colleagues talk about their spouses and wishing your spouse was like theirs could be a sign.

### 5. Neglecting quality time

If you actively avoid spending quality time with your partner or feel reluctance towards shared activities, it may show a lack of interest in the relationship. Woods notes signs such as not finding time for a date night or preferring to do things on your own. To combat this boredom, Sidhharth S Kumar, relationship coach, NumroVani suggests the following steps:

1. Know yourself: While spending time together is crucial, maintaining individual interests and hobbies can invigorate your partnership, providing more discussion topics and enriching your connection.

2. Express the unexpressed: Small gestures of love and appreciation can make a significant impact. Strengthen your relationship by expressing your feelings through compliments, thank-you cards, or unexpected acts of kindness, creating a positive and nurturing atmosphere.

3. Revisit special places and activities: Rediscover the magic by revisiting places and activities that hold special memories for both of you. Nostalgia can reignite the emotional connection and remind you of the joy you once shared.

4. Plan joint activities: Break free from the monotony of everyday life by planning activities that interest both of you. Whether trying a new hobby together, embarking on a weekend adventure, or learning something new as a couple, shared experiences can create lasting memories and deepen your bond.

5. Set common goals: Collaborate on setting common goals and aspirations for the future, fostering a sense of purpose as a couple and strengthening your commitment to supporting each other in achieving those goals.

6. Increase physical intimacy: Rediscover passion through spontaneity, trying new things in the bedroom, or openly expressing your desires.

7. Seek expert guidance: Proactively seeking expert guidance through couples counseling can be a wise step. A trained therapist can provide valuable insights, help navigate communication challenges, and offer strategies to reignite the passion in your marriage. Seeking

## Digital eye strain is a real problem and this is how to manage it

Being mindful of your screen time and adopting these strategies not only enhances visual comfort but also contributes to your overall well-being. Being mindful of your screen time and adopting these strategies not only enhances visual comfort but also contributes to your overall well-being. (Source: Freepik) In our modern, fast-paced world, screens have seamlessly integrated into our daily routines. Whether we are working on computers, scrolling through social media on smartphones, or indulging in our favourite shows on tablets, the time spent in front of screens has increased manifold.

This increased screen exposure, however, brings with it a growing concern — digital eye strain, said Dr Rishi Raj Borah, country head, Orbis. Also known as computer vision syndrome, it encompasses a range of eye and vision-related issues resulting from prolonged digital device use such as headaches, eyestrain, blurred vision, and dry eyes, he explained. As our reliance on screens continues to rise, it becomes imperative to adopt strategies to manage and minimise the impact of digital eye strain on our overall well-being. When working on a desktop, ensure that your screen is at eye level, about an arm's length away and that you are sitting in a comfortable, well-supported chair. Prolonged exposure to screens without breaks is a significant contributor to digital eye strain. The 20-20-20 rule proves invaluable in mitigating this strain: take a 20-second break every 20 minutes of screen usage and look at something 20 feet away. Incorporating this simple habit into your routine helps reduce eye strain and keeps your eyes refreshed. This can also be done by setting timers or using apps that remind you to take these regular breaks, ensuring your eyes get the rest they need. The brightness of your screens plays an important role in eye comfort. Adjust your device brightness to match your surroundings, avoiding both



excessive and low brightness that can put a strain on your eyes. Besides, consider using dark or night mode in the evenings to decrease exposure to blue light, which has been associated with disrupted sleep patterns.

Eye blindness Striking a healthy balance between screen use and eye care is key to preserving your vision in a screen-centric world. Blinking, often overlooked, is crucial for maintaining eye moisture. Extended screen time can lead to reduced blinking frequency, resulting in dry and irritated eyes. Therefore, make a conscious effort to blink regularly as it keeps your eyes lubricated. If necessary, use artificial tears recommended by a healthcare professional to alleviate persistent dryness. Invest in high-resolution screens with anti-glare technology to minimise eye strain. Anti-glare filters can be added to existing screens, diminishing reflections and glare. Besides, regular eye check-ups are essential to address any underlying vision problems promptly. Striking a healthy balance between screen use and eye care is key to preserving your vision in a screen-centric world.

## Rising heat sparks fear of waterborne diseases, heat strokes

Hyderabad: It's only February and the mercury in Hyderabad has already started to rise, which is a major cause of concern for public health officials and also for general public not only in twin cities but also in the adjoining districts of Medchal-Malkajgiri and Rangareddy districts. As temperatures rise, cases of water-borne ailments are expected to rise, which puts a lot of pressure on public and private healthcare facilities. The onset of

summer signals extreme pressure on water resources, which leads to water-borne ailments like cholera, dysentery, diarrhoea, etc., as people throw caution to the wind and consume foods that are prepared from untreated water sources. To beat the heat, people also consume refreshments like soda, juice, cut fruits that are stored in unsafe industrial ice for cooling and drink sugarcane juice with iced water.



## Vidya Balan on nepotism in Hindi film industry: 'Kissi ki baap ki industry nahi hai'



Vidya Balan and Pratik Gandhi, who are eagerly awaiting the release of their upcoming film *Do Aur Do Pyaar*, graced the inaugural session of The Indian Express Expresso series on Friday. Both Vidya and Pratik have carved out successful careers in the film industry despite not having any familial connections in Bollywood. During the interaction, Vidya spoke on the perennial debate surrounding nepotism, expressing her indifference towards it.

Vidya said, "I don't know how to respond to this ques-

tion because nepotism or no nepotism I am here. Kissi ki baap ki industry nahi hai, nahi toh har baap ka beta, har baap ki beti successful hote (The film industry doesn't belong to somebody's father otherwise all the star kids would be successful)."

She added, "I just feel that I have been a lone ranger. There were instances when I felt like maybe if I had the protection of certain people, people would have been a bit kinder but in terms of opportunities I don't think anybody has been able to deny me my share. So, I feel it really doesn't matter." The Indian Express group, HSBC and Taj Hotels have come together to build a unique platform- The Indian Express 'Expresso' with an aim to create content that is eclectic, intimate, intelligent and fun with personalities from sphere of art, culture and entertainment.

*Do Aur Do Pyaar*, starring Vidya Balan and Pratik Gandhi, revolves around a couple on the brink of separation who find themselves entangled in extramarital affairs. As they contemplate revealing their secrets and parting ways, life has unexpected plans in store for them. The film, which also stars Ileana D'Cruz and Sendhil Ramamurthy in pivotal roles, is set to hit theaters on April 19.

## Oshin Brar on being misreported as Diljit Dosanjh's wife: 'Never did I think the image would remain so pervasive...'

Actor Diljit Dosanjh, whose latest film *Amar Singh Chamkila* is garnering positive reviews, has been in the headlines for a few days now. Earlier this week, it was reported that Diljit is married to an Indo-American woman and they even have a son. After these claims from his friend went viral, the internet was flooded with pictures of his rumored wife Sandeep Kaur. However, turns out Oshin Brar in the photos is not Diljit's wife but his co-star Oshin Brar from the 2015 Punjabi film *Mukhtiar Chadha*. A note supposedly written by Oshin is doing rounds on Reddit with a series of pictures of Oshin and Diljit.

The note read, "Hi friends. A while ago I worked as a model and did a music video shoot called *Shoon Shaan* for the movie *Mukhtiar Chadha* with Diljit Dosanjh. Ever since then, somehow or the other, I was made aware by friends and relatives that my image was being used maliciously to be "Diljit Dosanjh's wife" on the internet. At first, I laughed it off as I had no idea how this happened, and I did attempt some take-down requests across YouTube and Quora. Never did I think the image would remain so pervasive for so many years. This news continues to go viral every so often, and here we are again with my image being used on a lot of TikTok's and Instagram posts recently. I just want to clear the air that this picture is of me and I am not Sandeep Kaur. I don't want to doxx myself any further. If you could all do me a favor and if you see this image out there in the wild, please just report or comment and let the public know this is not his wife. I'm not looking for any internet fame or anything



like that. Thank you all so much!"

Oshin Brar worked with Diljit Dosanjh in 2015 on the Punjabi film *Mukhtiar Chadha*. Not only her, singer Nisha Bano's pictures also surfaced online as Diljit's wife. She had even taken to Instagram and wrote, "Hahahahaha koi menu v puchlo mai ave hi wife bnati eh news bhut viral ho rahi n bhut Sare lok menu video n pics tag n share kar rabe but punjabiya nu ta pta k mai Sameer Mahi di wife aa Bollywood nu kon samjave. (Someone ask me too, just like that I am being made someone's wife. This news is going viral and a lot of people are sharing and tagging me in videos and pictures. Punjabi's know that I am Sameer Mahi's wife, but who would explain this to Bollywood.)" On the work front, Diljit Dosanjh's latest film, a biopic titled *Amar Singh Chamkila* has released on Netflix today.

## Amar Singh Chamkila's last day: Singer foreshadowed his own death, saw his wife being shot and asked, 'Babbi, tenu ki hoya'

Lal Chand, the dholak player who accompanied Amar Singh Chamkila on the day he died, has often spoken about the impression that he had of the slain folk singer. Lal Chand himself took a bullet when Chamkila and his wife, Amarjot, were shot dead in the village of Mehsampur in Punjab, in the year 1988. Chamkila's story was retold by director Imitiaz Ali in a new biopic, released on Netflix on Friday. As interest in the singer's life grows, here's looking back at Lal Chand's stories about him, and his recollection of what transpired on the day that Chamkila and Amarjot were shot dead by unknown assailants.

Speaking to Noble TV Canada in 2020, Lal Chand looked back at the threats that Chamkila had been receiving prior to his death. Having risen to the pinnacle of Punjab's local music scene, Chamkila was extorted for money by several local goons, Lal Chand said. His rise coincided with political conflict in Punjab, which reached a peak in the year 1984, when anti-Sikh riots broke out in North India. In the interview, Lal Singh retracted Chamkila's steps on the fateful day, recalled how he escaped from the scene of the crime, and offered his theories about who could, and could not have been responsible for his murder, which remains unsolved.

He said in Punjabi, "All of us showed up at the office at around noon. Chamkila came by, and we sat around for about 10 minutes before departing for the show. Just as we were about to leave, Chamkila told everybody to not be afraid. He said, 'I sing the songs, not you. Jis goli pe mera naam likheya hoga, o mere te vajni hi vajni aa (The bullet that has my name written on it will strike only me).' Some of our older friends had stopped associating with us. But I knew that I had to work somewhere, so it might as well be with Chamkila."

Lal Chand continued, "On our way to Mehsampur, we saw posters of the film *Patola*. I pointed them out to him. Chamkila was a part of that film, and he said that after the show, we'd all go to watch it together. But that time never came. Before the show, we decided to eat." The troupe decided to stop by at a nearby house to have a meal that they didn't realise would be Chamkila and Amarjot's last. When they got word that the venue for the final show was ready, they squeezed into a car and drove over the short distance. They parked the car on the side of the road. And that's when the bullets started flying.

"Everybody exited the car, including Chamkila. Amarjot and I were the only ones still inside. I stepped out and opened the boot to take my dhol, Amarjot was still inside. No sooner had I picked up the dhol, I saw from the corner of my eye a man with a covered face pull a machine gun out and start firing. I bolted from the spot, but as I was trying to find cover, I saw Amarjot get hit. She was just about to step out of the car. I could hear them swearing at Chamkila while they were shooting. They shot him



Lal Chand, the dholak player who accompanied Amar Singh Chamkila on the day he died, has often spoken about the impression that he had of the slain folk singer. Lal Chand himself took a bullet when Chamkila and his wife, Amarjot, were shot dead in the village of Mehsampur in Punjab, in the year 1988

in the back, but before being hit, he looked at Amarjot and noticed the blood coming out of her. He asked, 'Babbi, tenu ki hoya (Babbi, what happened to you)?' I never knew before then that this is what Chamkila called Amarjot," Lal Chand narrated.

After the shooting, Lal Chand discovered that he'd been hit as well. Bleeding, he hitched a ride to the nearby town of Phillaur, where he went to the police and told them what had happened. Opening up about the threats that Chamkila would receive, Lal Chand said, "The militants wouldn't interfere. They would leave artists alone. But lenders and other goons would extort money through intimidation. But from what I know, the militants would leave us alone. Some singers would give in to the intimidation, but Chamkila wouldn't. And this angered them. He even wrote a song about them."

Four people died that day, including Chamkila and Amarjot. In the interview, Lal Chand said that Chamkila was a grounded person, despite his fame. Other singers develop egos, he said, but Chamkila didn't. "He would smoke cheap beedis even though he could afford cigarettes," Lal Chand recalled. Starring Diljit Dosanjh and Parineeti Chopra, the biopic *Amar Singh Chamkila* was released to positive reviews on Netflix on April 12. This is the second time that Diljit has attempted to tell Chamkila's story, after having played a facsimile of the slain singer in the Punjabi film *Jodi*.

## Jai Ganesh movie review: A loud Unni Mukundan is only one of the several problems in this weakly penned film



Growing up, I always wondered why our movies never featured characters with disabilities in prominent roles, exploring their lives instead of relegating them to the background or using them as mere sources of comedy. However, upon encountering movies that depicted the stories of persons with disabilities (PwDs), my desire for such representation waned. This was due to filmmakers' tendency to use PwDs as central figures solely to evoke melodramatic emotions, portraying their lives as filled with perpetual pain and sadness, reducing them to constant sources of tears. Unfortunately, such movies continued to be made, as filmmakers found it simpler to craft "touching" movies around their "struggles". Ranjith Sankar's *Jai Ganesh*, starring Unni Mukundan in the lead role, is the latest movie on the block with a person with a physical disability at the centre of the narrative, and it's certainly not an easy watch.

An aspiring bike rider, Ganesh (Unni Mukundan), sees his life take a downward spiral after a fateful motorcycle accident costs him the mobility of his legs permanently. Confined to a wheelchair, Ganesh learns graphic design and joins a TV channel, which thrives on sensationalism. With a talent for ethical hacking, he secretly aids lawyer Parvathy Marar (Jomol) in solving complex cases under the guise of "Jai Ganesh", a comic superhero character he has created. Facing constant ridicule and pity, Ganesh finds solace in his father (Ashokan) and a young boy named Ayaan, who lives in his building. Frustrated with his job and aspiring to publish his own comics, Ganesh meets Nidhi (Mahima), the owner of a new kids' app. Together, they launch the *Jai Ganesh* comics through Nidhi's app, which quickly becomes a success. Meanwhile, Ayaan, the son of an MLA, is kidnapped in front of Ganesh. Despite police efforts, the perpetrator remains elusive. Devastated by his inability to save Ayaan, Ganesh decides to assist the police using his tech skills. As they delve deeper, they uncover a motive beyond mere ransom: the perpetrator seeks to inflict suffering upon the MLA. The rest of the film explores whether Ganesh and the police can rescue Ayaan.

From the outset, the movie's perspective on Ganesh is unmistakably clear, and it is very similar to the privileged ableist gaze. The film wastes no time in showcasing the numerous "hardships" he faces daily. From having to sit on the floor while showering to a character questioning him about the urine bottle attached to his wheelchair and people saying "how sad" as soon as they meet him, *Jai Ganesh*'s choice of instances in the first few minutes itself underscores the way it is about to treat the character for the runtime of 125 minutes.

By "carefully" selecting moments that accentuate Ganesh's misery and perpetual suffering, the film reinforces its lack of sensitivity towards the character. While Ganesh's lament about his lack of friends and romantic prospects due to others' pity or aversion towards him resonates with the experiences of many real-life people with disabilities, the movie too seldom portrays him as worthy until he begins showcasing his skills as a designer and hacker and eventually turns into a real-life version of the superhero character he created, as if suggesting that he (or any PwD for that matter) is worthy of attention and compassion only if highly-skilled. By consistently portraying others either pitying Ganesh or be-

having poorly towards him, and predominantly eliciting sympathy, the film un/knowingly aligns with these treatments. Although these instances may have been included in the narrative to enhance his eventual triumph, the fact that *Jai Ganesh* rarely depicts him experiencing happiness is insensitive. Beyond Ganesh's portrayal, Ranjith's inadequately crafted script often lacks depth even in ordinary moments. The only scenes that offer the film some relief are those when the clock is ticking. However, many of the usual scenes, including casual conversations between characters, lack a natural flow and the dialogue feels forced and artificial, prompting one to facepalm.

At the same time, the film's attempt to unnecessarily incorporate elements from Hinduism, seemingly for the sake of it, raises questions about whether they were included merely to align with Unni's new image. Nidhi's dialogue regarding people's forgetfulness of superheroes in "Indian culture" and how *Jai Ganesh* could revive it makes it clear that the film is not talking about real-life superheroes but just Hindu gods, thus reinforcing the aforementioned observation. Additionally, the portrayal of a character, Uma Murthi, bearing a striking resemblance to Rajya Sabha MP and former chairperson of the Infosys Foundation Sudha Murty, prompts speculation about the movie's underlying intentions disguised as a "superhero" film targeted at children. Unni Mukundan's performance, while occasionally genuine, tends to be overly loud, particularly given the numerous instances of Ganesh simply shouting at people throughout the film. His handling of emotional moments also comes across as amateurish. Paired with the lack of depth in the character, which renders everything rather superficial, Unni's mediocre performance only exacerbates the situation. Even in casual moments, he seems unnecessarily intense, thus making the character appear even more aberrant.

*Jai Ganesh*, *Jai Ganesh* review, *Jai Ganesh* movie review, unni mukundan, mahima nambiar, ranjith sankar, ranjith sankar jai ganesh, jai ganesh movie rating, jai ganesh movie plot, unni mukundan movies, unni mukundan new movie, mahima nambiar movie, ranjith sankar movies, ranjith sankar new movie, film review, movie review, malayalam movies unni mukundan's performance, while occasionally genuine, tends to be overly loud. Unni "Thanks" to the shallowness of her character, Mahima also fails to provide anything substantial to the film. However, Ravindra Vijay and Ashokan stand out among the other actors. Vijay, portraying the antagonist on a suicide mission akin to Johnson (Kamal Haasan) in *Chanakya* (1989), seeking vengeance for his daughter's death due to harmful gas from a nearby dumping yard facilitated by Ayaan's MLA father, adeptly handles the role, although it may remind viewers of Guru Somasundaram's recent roles in Malayalam cinema. Ashokan excels as Ganesh's father despite limited screen time, much like his recent performances. Chandru Selvaraj's cinematography partly salvages *Jai Ganesh*, particularly in the tense moments, but the thin script mostly undermines his efforts. Sangeeth Prathap's editing, though neat, only manages to keep *Jai Ganesh* afloat to a limited extent. Like Unni Mukundan's performance, Sangeeth Prathap's background tracks are often overly loud and only occasionally complement the film effectively.

## Manoj Bajpayee says society is in 'hopelessness stage', decodes success of 12th Fail, Pushpa, KGF: 'Hindustan is sad...people search for heroes who win'



South Indian stars like Yash and Allu Arjun, he explained how people seek solace and inspiration from their screen heroes in an otherwise unfulfilling reality.

In conversation with Raj Shamani, Manoj said, "You get success in commercial films when suddenly the audience finds the hero that they have been looking for, and each era is different. Like 20 years back *Hindustan* was aspirational so they found Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan as their heroes." Explaining why films like *12th Fail*, *Pushpa* and *KGF* found massive success, he said, "Today's *Hindustan* is sad because the people somewhere feel that they don't have what they want so they are searching themselves in Allu Arjun's *Pushpa* and Yash's *KGF*. They are searching their heroes who win in the end, and that's also the reason *12th Fail* was such a big hit, because people think that they too will succeed one day."

The actor added, "Currently, we are in the hopelessness stage. So, the society goes through a cycle and in each cycle they search for their heroes and their own story. So the films that reflect that time and the actor that leads this type of cinema, the audience likes to watch them." On the professional front, Manoj Bajpayee is currently engrossed in promoting his upcoming film *Silence 2: The Night Owl Bar Shootout*. Additionally, he has projects like *Bhaiyya Ji*, *Despatch* and *The Fable* in the pipeline.

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Bollywood actor Manoj Bajpayee, who is known for his contribution toward contemporary parallel cinema, recently delved into the current state of Indian cinema. He shed light on why audiences are drawn to massy actors and larger-than-life films. Drawing examples from



## Rishabh Pant blunder against LSG: DRS drama as the DC skipper disputes gesturing for a review



GNS News Agency, April 17

The Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant ended up on the wrong side of the Decision Review System once again during the ongoing Indian Premier League 2024 season. The incident took place during DC's game against the Lucknow Super Giants on Friday at the Ekana International Stadium.

Keeping the stumps during Ishant Sharma's second over, Pant was seen gesturing for a review after the umpire had deemed an attempted fourth delivery by Ishant

as a wide down the leg side. However, just as the umpire went upstairs for a check with the third umpire, Pant would walk his way towards the on-field official and dispute that he never called for a DRS check. The umpires however, went with the review. Broadcast replays then showed Pant gesturing the captain's call for a DRS, perhaps asking for a confirmation from one of his fielders before making the final call. The umpires would stick with it as a review from DC's account, one that didn't overrule the original decision of the delivery being a wide ball.

Earlier during the season, in the game against Kolkata Knight Riders, Pant had been involved in another much-talked about incident pertaining to a DRS check. With Mitchell Marsh appealing for a caught behind dismissal of Sunil Narine, Pant seems disinterested at first but as he signaled for a DRS check, the on-field umpires would tell him that the DC skipper had run out of the stipulated time to take a review. Although, the timer on the broadcast still displayed one second left as Pant had signaled for a check. For Pant, IPL 2024 marked a return to professional cricket for the first time since his car accident dating back to December 2022. The DC skipper has 153 runs from five innings so far that include a half century against the Chennai Super Kings.

## Mary Kom steps down as India's Chef de Mission for Paris Olympics because of 'problems that have crippled me partly'



GNS News Agency, April 17

Citing 'problems' that have 'partly crippled' her, Mary Kom resigned as the Chef de Mission of India's contingent on Friday. Her decision comes weeks after the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) chose the boxing legend for the post. In a letter to IOA President PT Usha, the Union Sports Ministry and the Sports Authority of India, the London Olympics bronze medallist said: "It is embarrassing for me to retreat from a pronounced commitment, which I seldom do, but I am left with no choice."

The IOA, on March 21, announced contingent officials for the Paris Olympics, which begin on July 26. While Mary was chosen as the chef de mission, winter Olympian Shiva Keshavan was named her deputy. While accepting her resignation, Usha said in a statement that the IOA would 'respect her decision and her privacy'. "I shall make the appropriate consultations and soon make an announcement about the replacement for Mary Kom," Usha added. Mary's decision leaves the IOA in a precarious position. While a majority of countries named their contingent leaders well in advance, India - in the absence of a formal appointment - has been represented in the Chef de Mission meetings by individuals with no prior Olympic experience.

Now, with a little more than 100 days left for the Opening Ceremony, the IOA will have to restart the whole process. Government officials said Mary had initially been

reluctant to take up the role but accepted after being convinced by Usha and government officials. In her letter, Mary expressed her 'heartfelt gratitude' for putting faith in her. "I considered it an honour to serve my country in every way possible and I was mentally prepared for it." She added: "However, I regret to inform you that I will not be able to uphold the prestigious responsibility conferred on me as Chef de Mission for the Paris Olympics 2024, and would like to resign from the same, reasoning from the problems that have crippled me partly."

Mary said she searched for 'several alternative means to cover my place'. "But it is getting tougher for me to leave my family behind at this point, even for a short while. My presence is much needed here," she said. "Having stated the abovementioned facts, though I am unable to put them transparently and vividly, I humbly request you take into consideration my plea to step down as Chef de Mission for the 2024 Paris Olympics." Chef de Mission is the most important administrative member of a contingent for a multi-discipline event. The CDM is responsible for ensuring the welfare of the athletes, liaising with the organising committee on a range of issues and being ready for fire-fighting if any controversy erupts.

Mary competed at the Tokyo Olympics, where she lost in the round of 16. The 41-year-old isn't eligible in Olympic-style boxing any longer because of the rules that bar anyone aged 40 and above from competing. Apart from Mary and Keshavan, the IOA made London Olympics bronze medallist Gagan Narang, also an IOA vice-president, in charge of 'overseeing the shooting village operations'. Unlike most sports that will be held in Paris and its suburbs, shooting will be hosted in Chateauroux, a town roughly 300 km away. Renowned sports medicine expert Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala has been appointed as the chief medical officer. Table tennis star Sharath Kamal, who will head into his sixth Olympics, was named as the male flag-bearer, with a woman flag-bearer - as mandated by the International Olympic Committee - expected to be announced in the coming days. Mary said despite stepping down as the Chef de Mission, she will be 'there to cheer on my country and the athletes.'

## For India's Candidates contenders, rest day means chance to work harder, rest longer

GNS News Agency, April 17

Before they left for Toronto to compete at the biggest tournament of the year, Viswanathan Anand hosted four of India's five Candidates contenders at his home over dinner. There, five-time world champion Anand reached into his memories of playing at big-ticket events like the Candidates to offer insights. "There is no greater joy on earth than winning before a rest day," he declared at one point. It's a feeling that none of the five Indians at the Candidates are experiencing as the tournament reaches its second rest day. R Praggnanandhaa is probably the most satisfied out of the Indian quintet, after playing out a calm draw with Fabiano Caruana, the top-ranked player in the eight-man field and a fifth-time participant at the high-stakes event. Vidit Gujrathi might have mixed feelings, having stemmed the sequence of defeats with a win and a draw heading into the rest day, even if the latter came against rank outsider Nijat Abasov. On the women's side, while R Vaishali lost to Lei Tingjie and Koneru Humpy agreed to a draw with Anna Muzychuk, both the Indians are at the bottom of the standings at the halfway mark. But it's the youngest among the five, Gukesh, who will be the most restless after blundering away his advantage against Alireza Firouzja due to time pressure. Gukesh's defeat after holding an advantageous position for most of the evening prevented him from sitting on top of the open standings after the first half of the tournament.

Incidentally, at the dinner he hosted for the Indian Candidates, Anand had lobbed a hypothetical question at the quartet: 'what do you hate most? Losing (on any other day) or losing right before a rest day at a competition?' Most of those sitting on the dinner table agreed that losing before the rest day was a particularly infuriating experience.

"But at least when you have a rest day, 'okay, I can break things and then I can come back,'" chimed 17-year-old Gukesh in the video of the dinner posted on YouTube by chess.com. "I was always - I mean, I'm not happy to lose - but (Gukesh later elaborated: "At Wijk aan Zee (Tata Steel Masters), I lost two games in a row. But I was so happy I had a rest day afterwards. Then I won three games in a row." "Everyone disagreed with Gukesh. "Losing right before the rest day is the best way to spoil that rest day," Anand said.

Whatever good-form genie Gukesh had summoned at the Tata Steel Masters, he needs it now more than ever. Despite the latest defeat, he is still within half a point of the top of the standings, sharing the spot with Pragg and Caruana. At long events like the Candidates,



rest days provide an opportunity to hunker down with the group of seconds and trainers, take stock, and recalibrate. Barring Humpy, none of the five Indians have played at the high-pressure Candidates event before. For Humpy, Pragg, Gukesh and Vaishali, it's the first time ever in Canada. But a rest day for most chess players is a chance to work harder and rest longer. Spend more time in the hotel room. On the first rest day of the Candidates, FIDE had organised a cruise for players to watch the solar eclipse from Lake Ontario. While the organisers had invited all the 16 players, barring Nijat Abasov and Anna Muzychuk, no one accepted. "The eclipse was interesting to watch. Perhaps it was not the best idea because after that I lost two games," Abasov said wryly after his defeat against Praggnanandhaa while he sat on stage for his press conference with the Indian teenager.

Praggnanandhaa was then asked how he had spent his rest day. "I was just in my room. I go for walks. But a walk for me means just one kilometre around the hotel. Besides that, not much," said the 18-year-old. After his draw with Caruana, he was asked again what he planned to do on the rest day. "I'll be resting," he said, with a look of mild surprise at the thought that anyone could imagine that he would spend his additional day doing anything else. "In Pragg's case, generally when we get a rest day, he will rest, and then prepare. He'll rest more on these days (as compared to days with games), but the training is about the same time," Pragg's long-time coach RB Ramesh told The Indian Express. "Players prepare a lot for every game at an event like the Candidates. They spend a lot of energy on that. And then when you're playing, you're again losing a lot of energy. The rest days in the middle will give you a chance to sleep more, get that energy back into the system. Of course, there are players who go out on rest days and explore the city."

## Hockey Test series: Lack of goals from forwards remains an issue as India lose fourth consecutive game to Australia

GNS News Agency, April 17

If your glass is half full, you could say the Indian men's hockey team put up their best performance yet on the tour of Perth. If your glass is half empty, a mystical force that keeps hitting them where it hurts. Pragmatically, performances are all that matters at this stage of the season, knowing where the team stands as they look to head to the Paris Olympics and match or better the bronze from Tokyo. But at some point, the habit of losing repeatedly to an opponent who are in the same pool is bound to leave some scars.

India's 1-3 defeat against Australia on Friday certainly had some positive takeaways. But ultimately, it's a fourth straight defeat and an upward trending performance graph shouldn't take the focus away from the inability to win - or even manage a draw - against the Kookaburras. One of those positives is that for the third time in four matches, India had a lead to protect. Captain Harmanpreet Singh powered home a thundering drag flick in the 12th minute, the ball thudded on the board to send out a ringing noise around the venue.

But for the third straight match, India let the lead slip, succumbing to the inevitable, relentless Aussie attack. This time around too Jeremy Hayward was at the heart of it all. His goals (19', 47') helped Australia turn the deficit around. In the end, Jack Welch (54') rounded it off, with all three Aussie goals coming from penalty corners too. Before the match, India head coach Craig Fulton told the broadcasters that he wanted to see his side win a few more Penalty Corners. It has consistently been India's main source of goals, and while they scored two from set pieces in the previous match, they won just two as well. "Not winning enough PCs concerns us because we score 1 from 2 or 3 chances we create. Our PCs are good but we are not getting enough of them," Fulton said. But he also wanted to see more from the forwards in general. Indian hockey team vs Australia 2024 Captain Harmanpreet Singh powered home a thundering drag flick in the 12th minute. (Hockey India) "Our biggest focus is on the final third, we haven't shown really anything offensively. We get there, disconnected kinda. There is a big emphasis on improving our counterattacks and keeping the ball for longer periods in the opposition half, and also do something with it. We haven't won enough corners consistently in each quarter either. "To be fair to India, they ticked both those boxes. Give or take a few re-takes, India won at least six PCs through the match (with



their solitary goal once again coming from a short corner). And the forwards too tested Australia's goalkeeper Johan Durst more often, and the Aussie custodian had to pull off a few sharp saves. As early as the first minute, Mandeep Singh was found in the circle with a superb diagonal pass by Harmanpreet, the forward made space and took a strike on goal but it was straight at Durst. Mandeep was instrumental in India winning their first PC, as were Abhishek and Gurjant Singh later. The second brought about India's goal, expertly converted by Harmanpreet. India had chances to retake the lead in the second quarter, with Raj Kumar Pal and Abhishek both drawing out saves from Durst with reverse hits. Arajjeet Singh Hundal, the tall forward who was getting his first match of the tour, also had many bright moments going forward. It certainly had the Aussies on the backfoot at least in the first half, prompting Tom Wickham to say at the half-time chat: "India have come to play!"

Australia, of course, course-corrected in the second half and even sacrificed some of their intensity for passive, patient possession, not something you'd associate with them. India's chances up front started to dry up even if they did have the occasional chance to counter. The ball control that Fulton hoped for in transitions was lacking though. Another positive came in goal. Playing as the second goalkeeper instead of Krishan Pathak, Suraj Karkera had a stormer of a second quarter when he produced one of the saves of the series with his left glove to keep a fine strike from Lachlan Sharp out. The India No 3 did have a good game overall. Fulton might have gotten most of what he wanted to see, but the end result wasn't different. Eventually, as much as India huffed and puffed, the Australian house wouldn't be broken down again. A fifth and final chance presents itself on Saturday.

## Hyderabad FC aim to end season on a high

GNS News Agency, April 17

Hyderabad: Hyderabad FC are all set to face Kerala Blasters in their last game of the Indian Super League, season 10 campaign in GMC Balayogi Stadium, Hyderabad on Friday.

In a disastrous season, the Nizams have collected eight points from 21 games - winning once, drawing five times and losing 15 times. In the entire season, the club made headlines for off-field chaos - facing financial problems and an exodus of players mid-season. The young and inexperienced players from the youth ranks were called up, they had the spark but fell short every time. But on March 9, the club registered their first win of the season beating Chennaiyin FC 1-0 and became the first ISL club to win a game with an all-Indian starting eleven.

The team led by Thangboi Singto, will next meet Blasters at home, who with 30 points from 21 games have

already qualified for the playoffs. "We have to give our best in the last game as we want to end the season on a good note. My team is considering this game as important as it was the first game of the season," the HFC head coach said.

Ivan Vukomanovic's side saw a downward slide in their results in the second half of the season, registering one win and suffering seven losses from nine games. In the head-to-head stat, both sides stand at five wins each but the Blasters are the clear favourites for the tie at Gachibowli.

For KBFC, this game serves as a preparation before they head into the playoffs and for the home side, it is a test for the young players' character and probably the last chance to showcase their credibility on the pitch and make a good impression with the club's management for the next season.

## Hardik Pandya must be enjoying getting booed, says

### Ishan Kishan: 'People will start loving him again'

GNS News Agency, April 17

Mumbai Indians keeper batter Ishan Kishan believes a part of his franchise skipper Hardik Pandya would be relishing the challenge of getting jeered at the early stages of IPL 2024, including at their home ground, Wankhede Stadium. "He loves challenges. He has been in this situation before. He is in that situation right now. He is not someone who will come out and talk about this and that. I know he is someone who works really hard off the field. On the field, he is on a very different level," Kishan said in the post-match press conference following MI's seven wicket win against RCB on Thursday. "I know he must be enjoying it. I have spent a lot of time with him. He must be enjoying it. He is ready for the challenges, because you can't complain to the fans. They will come up with their expectations, they will come up with their point of view. But at the same time, me knowing how Hardik Pandya thinks, he is someone who loves challenges," Kishan added.

Having taken over as the MI captain ahead of this season, replacing Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya has been subjected to loud jeers at multiple venues. During their most recent game against RCB, Virat Kohli appeared to ask those in the stands at the Wankhede Stadium to stop booing Pandya.

"He is happy with people doing it. In the coming games, he will do (well) with the bat and people will start loving him again. Because you're doing well and people will also recognise your hard work. What you're going through and still what you're doing for the team. I think people do recognise that and our fans are like that. They can be a little harsh on you but at the same time, when you show that it isn't bothering you, and you're in a good head space and willing to perform well, that might change. If not today, then tomorrow. If not tomorrow, then day after," said Kishan. On Thursday, Pandya would lead MI to



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their second successive win of the season after having started with three defeats in a row. Coming in to bat at number four, Pandya scored a quickfire six-ball-21 and closed the game with a six. The performance induced chants of the MI skipper reverberating around the venue. "I just feel happy for him that he is keen on performing even in this situation. He is going out there in the middle and hitting a six of the very first ball, knowing that things can do in a different way. People can question you as well. But that is something that Hardik Pandya has in himself and do it," Kishan added.