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Fly91 launches Hyderabad-Jalgaon route, offering affordable flights

Hyderabad: Fly91, a new regional airline headquartered in Goa, has announced the commencement of flight services connecting Hyderabad to Jalgaon. This announcement comes as part of the airline's expansion strategy after successfully launching flight operations last month, which already include routes connecting Hyderabad to Goa and Sindhudurg. Fly91's newest route will operate thrice-weekly flights between Hyderabad and Jalgaon. Jalgaon, famously known as the "Banana city" for its substantial banana crop production, attracts a significant number of travelers for business and leisure purposes.

Huge crowd gathers at Ram Kote College after Lord Krishna idol discovery

Hyderabad: People in large numbers thronged a private college in Ram Kote on Friday following reports that an idol of Lord Krishna was recovered during a construction activity. As news soon spread that the idol was found when the premises were being dug up, devotees from nearby places rushed to the spot to witness it and some even started to offer prayers. However, the Sultan Bazaar police suspect that the entire episode was staged by unscrupulous elements. On Thursday night, unidentified miscreants managed to break the college gate lock, entered into the college premises and intentionally placed the idol, the police said.

Fire in TTD Forest in Tirumala



GNS News Agency, April 19

Fire broke out in TTD Forest near Parvetu Mandapam, 3 km from Tirumala on Friday. Tirumala: Fire broke out in TTD Forest near Parvetu Mandapam, 3 km from Tirumala on Friday. The TTD forest of who noticed fire acted immediately and put off the fire. DFO along with staff and fire tenders, water tanks went to the area and saw the fire was extinguish. Many trees including Sri Gandham trees were destroyed in the Fire, the cause of which was not known. Rising temperature was suspected to reason which took place at afternoon.

'Previous govts cheated SC, ST, OBC communities in name of social justice'

GNS News Agency, April 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 19 accused previous governments of cheating SC, ST and OBC communities in the name of social justice, and said he was working to fulfil the dreams of Jyotiba Phule, Dr BR Ambedkar and Chaudhary Charan Singh. The prime minister also took a veiled dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav, saying the "do shehzade ki jodi" has been rejected by people. Addressing a poll rally here in support of Kanwar Singh Tanwar, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from the Amroha Lok Sabha constituency in western Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Modi said, "Previous governments have only cheated the people of SC (Scheduled Caste), ST (Scheduled Tribe) and OBC (Other Backward Classes) communities in the name of social justice." "Modi is work-



ing day and night to achieve the social justice dream of Jyotiba Phule, Ambedkar and (former prime minister) Chaudhary Charan Singh." he added. The prime minister addressed the rally as polling was underway in eight western Uttar Pradesh constituencies in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls. In a veiled attack on Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Yadav, Mr. Modi said, "The shooting of the film, 'do shehzade ki jodi (pair of two princes)', is going on. But their film has already been rejected. Every time these people go out to seek votes from the people of Uttar Pradesh, they carry a basket of dynasty, corruption

and appeasement. They do not leave any chance to attack our faith." Hitting out at the Congress candidate from Amroha, Danish Ali, the prime minister claimed that he has objections in saying "Bharat Mata ki jai". "Will a person, who cannot accept Bharat Mata ki jai, look good in the Indian Parliament? Should such a person be allowed entry into the Indian Parliament?" he asked the rally. Slamming the opposition, Mr. Modi said, "The SP and the Congress declined the invitation to the Ram temple's consecration ceremony in Ayodhya. People hankering for vote banks refused the invitation to the ceremony."

"They are not satisfied after refusing the invitation, so they abuse the Ram temple and Sanatan Dharma. The SP, for its vote bank, call Ram bhakts 'pakhandi' (hypocrite). Those in the INDIA bloc hate Sanatan Dharma." The prime minister alleged that when he went under the sea to offer prayers in Gujarat's Dwarka, where Lord Krishna had gone from Amroha, "the prince of the Congress said there is nothing to pray under the sea. They are rejecting our faith only for their vote banks." Hitting out at Mr. Yadav and Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav, he said, "Those in Bihar who say they are Yaduvanshis, in Uttar Pradesh, the leader who takes the benefits of being a Yaduvanshi, I want to ask them, how can they sit with a party that insults Lord Krishna? How can you have an agreement with them?" Accusing vote-bank politics for communal riots, Mr. Modi said, "This vote-bank politics burnt western Uttar Pradesh in the fire of riots."

Zero voter turnout in 6 Nagaland districts over separate state demand



GNS News Agency, April 19

Nagaland voted in a single phase for the lone Lok Sabha seat on Friday. However, six districts in the north-eastern state saw no voter turnout as people abstained from voting over the demand for a separate state. The Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) had urged people in six districts of the region to not vote in the elections as form of protest.

Additional Chief Electoral Officer of Nagaland Awa Loring said election officials were stationed in the 738 polling stations in the six districts of the region. The six districts has over 4 lakh voters. They chose to show solidarity with ENPO and remained indoors on polling day. Till 1 pm, there was no voter turnout in the six districts. The ENPO has been demanding separate statehood - Frontier Nagaland - since 2010. It said that its area comprising six districts of Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Shamatore and Noklak has been neglected on all fronts. The ENPO area has 20 seats in the 60-member Nagaland Assembly. The ENPO comprises of seven tribal bodies of Nagaland.

The ENPO, which is demanding a separate state carved out of Nagaland, declared a "public emergency" in six districts, stating that it would not allow any political party to campaign for the Lok Sabha polls. Ahead of the polls, the ENPO had declared a "public emergency" in six districts, stating that it would not allow any political party to campaign for the Lok Sabha polls. "In view of the Government of India delaying to settle the offer for creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT) through the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Tribal Bodies and Frontal Organisations hereby declare Public Emergency all over Eastern Nagaland with immediate effect," it said in a statement.

Amit Shah Recalls Political Journey As He Files Nomination From Gandhinagar



GNS News Agency, April 19

Union Home Minister Amit Shah reflected on his political journey, starting as a booth worker in Gujarat to becoming a Member of Parliament, as he submitted his nomination from Gandhinagar on Friday. Shah expressed pride in contesting from a seat previously held by BJP stalwarts like LK Advani and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Having served as an MLA and MP from Gandhinagar for 30 years, Shah, accompanied by Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, submitted his nomination papers to the Gandhinagar collector and district election officer at precisely 12:39 pm, considered an auspicious 'Vijay Muhurat.'

Addressing the media post-nomination, Shah highlighted the developmental projects worth Rs 22,000 crore sanctioned in Gandhinagar over the last five years. He underscored his connection to the constituency, emphasizing the affection and support he received from its people. Amit Shah's political journey traces back to his upbringing in a village in Gujarat's Maansa. He is credited with transforming the BJP into an electoral powerhouse, inspired by his early involvement with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

Transitioning from a booth-level worker to a prominent figure in Indian politics, Shah's pivotal moment arrived in 1991 when he managed LK Advani's election campaign in the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency. Since then, he has been a trusted ally of Narendra Modi, ascending to the position of BJP national president in 2014 and later becoming the Home Minister in 2019.

Rajasthan registers 22.51 pc voting in 12 LS seats



GNS News Agency, April 19

Jaipur: A total of 22.51 per cent voter turnout was recorded in Rajasthan's 12 Lok Sabha seats till 11 a.m. on Friday. The highest voting was registered in Sriganganagar with 27.70 per cent followed by Jaipur Parliamentary Constituency with 26.48 per cent, Alwar with 24.58 per cent, and Churu with 24.56 per cent. Jaipur Rural registered a 22.02 per cent voter turnout, Bharatpur had 20.93 per cent voter turnout, Nagaur 22.13 per cent and Dausa had 20.88 per cent voting.

Karauli Dholpur registered the lowest voting turnout with 18.74 per cent and Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan registered the second lowest voting per cent which is 18.74. The voter turnout in Bikaner was 21.50 per cent, Sikar 20.97 per cent and Bharatpur 20.93 per cent.

Hawa Mahal MLA Balmukundacharya went to vote at around 7.15 a.m. and stood in a queue. However, he soon realised that he was standing in the wrong polling centre. Later to the right booth and cast his vote. In one of the booths in Bharatpur, the EVM machine stopped working and the voters raised a hue and cry. The voting was started again after a new machine was brought in. Rajasthan State Minister Kirori Lal Meena took out a procession in Jhera village in Dausa where villagers together went to the polling booth dancing and playing dhol. He said this procession has been named a 'vote baraat' where women sing songs and dance to folk music. The Minister also danced with them. State PCC chief Govind Singh Dotasra went to his native village Sutod Panchayat in Sikar to cast his vote. He was seen with his family at the polling station. Nagaur INDIA Bloc candidate Hanuman Beniwal also cast his vote in his native village Barangaon in Nagaur with his wife. Former deputy CM Sachin Pilot cast his vote in Jaipur.

Mahabubnagar MP Seat Witnesses Intense Competition among Congress, BJP, and BRS Candidates



GNS News Agency, April 19

Mahabubnagar: On Friday, Congress MP Candidate Challa Vamshi Chand Reddy submits two sets of nomination papers to Returning Officer and District Collector G Ravi Nayak. Accompanying him were Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Mahabubnagar MLA Yennam Srinivas Reddy, AICC secretary Sampath Kumar, and Makhthal MLA SriHari. Earlier, a massive rally commenced from the Clock Tower, drawing thousands of Congress activists and the general public, showing their support for the Congress MP candidate. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy made a special trip from Hyderabad to accompany Challa

Vamshi Chand during the nomination submission procession. Given the Chief Minister's prioritization of the Mahabubnagar Parliament constituency and his unwavering determination to secure victory, all necessary steps are being taken to unify Congress cadres and attract other party leaders to strengthen the party base in the district. The Mahabubnagar Lok Sabha constituency braces for a fierce contest between the Congress, BJP, and BRS candidates.

While Congress fields Challa Vamshi Chand, BJP nominates D.K Aruna, and BRS presents its sitting MP candidate Manne Srinivas Reddy. Recent survey reports suggest that BJP's D.K Aruna holds a lead, followed by Congress party's Challa Vamshi Chand, with BRS trailing third. However, with the Election Commission's notification released and the nomination process underway since April 18th, all three parties are intensifying their efforts to attract voters by making lofty promises. According to political analysts, upon learning of BJP's advantage in Mahabubnagar from internal survey reports, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has taken it upon himself to ensure Congress victory. His personal visit to Mahabubnagar for Challa Vamshi Chand's nomination process serves as a morale boost to Congress cadres, reflecting his determination to secure the Mahabubnagar MP seat for the Congress party.

'I made INDIA alliance in Bengal, don't waste vote on Congress': Mamata Banerjee

GNS News Agency, April 19

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday criticised the opposition bloc INDIA partners -- CPI (M) and Congress -- for "joining hands with the BJP" in West Bengal and asserted that the opposition front ceases to exist in the state. The Chief Minister also urged people not to cast their votes in favour of Congress and the CPI (M). She was addressing a poll campaign rally in Murshidabad.

"There is no INDIA alliance in West Bengal. I played a key role in the formation of the opposition alliance INDIA. Even the name of the alliance was given by me. But here in West Bengal, the CPI (M) and Congress are working for the BJP," Mamata Banerjee said. "Don't cast your vote in favour of the Congress and the CPI (M) if you want to defeat the BJP," she added. Earlier in January, Mamata Banerjee had announced that her party would contest the Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal alone, rebuffing efforts by the Congress leadership to negotiate a seat-sharing agreement. Mamata Banerjee also accused the BJP of inciting violence during Ram Navami celebrations in the state, claiming that the violence in the Murshidabad district was "pre-planned". The BJP, however, hit back at Mamata Banerjee and said she should be held to account for failing to protect Bengali Hindus, holding her responsible for the violence during Ram Navami celebrations in Murshidabad district.



Mamata Banerjee on Thursday criticised the opposition bloc INDIA partners -- CPI (M) and Congress -- for "joining hands with the BJP" in West Bengal and asserted that the opposition front ceases to exist in the state.

Two Indian students drown while hiking in Scotland: reports

GNS News Agency, April 19

The students have been identified as Jitendranath 'Jitu' Karuturi (26) and Chanhakya Boliseti (22). Two Indian students drowned during a hike at a popular tourist destination in Scotland, according to local media reports. The students have been identified as Jitendranath 'Jitu' Karuturi (26) and Chanhakya Boliseti (22). Both of them were pursuing Masters at Dundee University.

According to the Courier, the two were trying to capture a picture of the Linn of Tummel at Blair Atholl in Perthshire, when they fell into the water on April 17.

"Around 7 pm on Wednesday (April 17), we received a report of two men, aged 22 and 26 years, in the water at the Linn of Tummel waterfall near Blair Atholl," a spokesperson of the Scotland Police was quoted as saying by Daily Record. "Emergency services attended and following searches in the area, the bodies of two men were recovered from the water." "Enquiries are ongoing to establish the full circumstances, however, there would not appear to be any suspicious circumstances surrounding these deaths. A report will be submitted to the procurator fiscal," the spokesperson added. The Indian high commission in London said that the students hailed from Andhra Pradesh, reported The Times of India. The mission said that it is in touch with their families

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Haryana hospitals

THE dire state of facilities at hospitals in Haryana paints a grim picture of a system in desperate need of attention and reform. It is evident from recent reports that the health infrastructure is failing to meet the needs of the public. This negligence not only perpetuates suffering but also erodes trust in the institutions meant to safeguard public health.

The case of the Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical College and Hospital in Faridabad stands out as a glaring example of inefficiency and mismanagement. Despite substantial investments and the passing of two years since its establishment, the hospital remains largely inactive, failing to offer essential in-patient and emergency services. While outpatient services may be operational, the lack of comprehensive care facilities severely undermines its purpose and renders it incapable of fulfilling its potential as a referral centre. In Rohtak, patients at the PGIMS endure hours-long wait and chaotic scenes due to a severe shortage of medical and paramedical staff. As a result, vulnerable patients are subjected to hardships and delays in receiving even basic medical care. Meanwhile, the scarcity of tuberculosis medicines in Karnal underscores the systemic challenges in drug procurement and distribution. TB patients, already burdened by the challenge of managing a chronic illness, are facing hurdles in their treatment due to the unavailability of essential medicines. Along with compromising individual health outcomes, this jeopardises public health efforts aimed at combating the spread of infectious diseases. It's time for concerted action to revitalise healthcare in Haryana and ensure that patients have access to quality treatment. Immediate steps must be taken to address staff shortage and ensure timely availability of essential medicines.

An end to Punjab's drug problem: AAP now repeats 2022 vow — with a new deadline



GNS News Agency, April 19

Punjab Cabinet minister and the AAP candidate for the Amritsar Lok Sabha seat Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal has been telling voters during his poll campaign that the state's drug problem will be erased by the end of this year — a promise that has been repeated so often by the party now that very few appear to still believe it. While campaigning for the 2022 Assembly elections, Aam Aadmi Party national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had vowed that Punjab would be made drug-free within three months if the party formed the government in state. On Independence Day in 2023, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann promised that the state would be free of drugs in a year.

"The CM has said that Punjab will be drug-free by December 31, 2024. He has held three meetings with Union Home Minister Amit Shah to use foreign technology to stop the use of drones at the border," Dhaliwal tells voters now. However, Mukhtiar Singh Patti says he has lost all hope in such promises. In 2016, Patti had written a message on the shroud of his son — who succumbed to drug addiction — and sent it to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to flag the rampant drug menace in the state during the SAD-BJP rule. It was the data provided by Patti on the number of addicts in the state that Kejriwal had relied on during the 2017 Punjab Assembly election campaign when the AAP had first promised to end the issue within a month if it came to power.

"Captain Amarinder Singh (while being sworn in as chief minister in 2017) had taken an oath on the Gutka Sahib (holy Sikh text) to make Punjab drug-free. But he did nothing. Now, the AAP government has been running for two years. The drug problem has only increased on the ground," Patti points out.

Patti, who founded the organisation Kafan Bol Peya to combat drug addiction, has been facing health issues. On behalf of the organisation, Jagtar Singh Sandhwan from Bhikhiwind in Tarn Taran has been sitting on a dharna outside the office of the deputy commissioner to highlight the issue. Recently, Kafan Bol Peya activists held a protest next to an addict who was found unconscious on the streets in Bhikhiwind, Tarn Taran. "I have three sons, two of whom are addicts. My elder son's wife left him due to this issue. I have sent my younger son abroad to save him from the problem. People hesitate to admit that their sons are addicts. But if we don't raise our voices, this problem will multiply," says Jagtar Singh, who recently accused two police officers at Bhikhiwind police station in Tarn Taran of being part of the local drug nexus.

Meanwhile, Dhaliwal claims in his speeches that the government has already broken the police-smuggler nexus. "We couldn't keep only two of the guarantees made during the 2022 Assembly elections. One is giving Rs 1000 per month to women. We will start giving it by the end of this year. The second was making Punjab drug-free. Our government has been successful in breaking the nexus between the police, politicians, and smugglers. The problem is that heroin is coming from Pakistan via drones continuously. Every day, the police and BSF are capturing such drones," he says in an election meeting. Jagtar Singh, however, alleges that the nexus between the police and smugglers is nowhere near broken. "I am not saying that all policemen are part of the nexus but there are many such policemen. I have no doubt about the intentions of the chief minister against smugglers. But his command is not effective on the ground," he adds. "There is no truth in the claims that Punjab will be drug-free by December 31, 2024. Either the politicians are not serious about the drug problem or they are not aware of the ground reality," says Patti.

On Naxal turf, Congressman with PhD in Gandhian thoughts takes on Gadchiroli-Chimur BJP MP



GNS News Agency, April 19

In Gadchiroli-Chimur, the largest Lok Sabha constituency in terms of area in Maharashtra and with a huge region affected by Naxal violence, the Congress party has fielded a scholar in Gandhian Thought against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate. Dr Namdeo Dasaram Kirsan, 65, will contest the Lok Sabha elections 2024 against Ashok Mahadeorao Nete of the BJP. Nete is the sitting Member of Parliament (MP), who won Lok Sabha polls from the same constituency two consecutive times in 2014 and 2019.

Marotrao Kovase of the Congress defeated Nete in the Lok Sabha elections 2009. But Nete had won the state Assembly elections from Gadchiroli seat twice in 1999 and 2004. Nete may face anti-incumbency but is still seen as an experienced man with a solid ground network in Gadchiroli, where he once operated a small hotel and started politics as a worker of the BJP's youth wing. On the other hand, Kirsan's pamphlets, distributed by Congress workers, focus on his educational qualifications and activism. In his affidavit, Kirsan has said he holds a PhD in Gandhian Thought from RTM Nagpur University. Kirsan also has a Master of Arts in the same subject. His other degrees include Master of Commerce, Master of Philosophy, Master of Law, and Master of Business Administration, the affidavit mentions.

The party pamphlets mention that Kirsan was a college professor in Nagpur for seven years. He left his job and contested Assembly elections from Amgaon constituency in Gondia, but lost. He then cleared the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC) exams to join government service. Interestingly, after 18 years of service, when he was a deputy commissioner in the state excise department, Kirsan took voluntary retirement and joined the Congress Party. The Congress leader wanted to contest the Lok Sabha polls in 2014 and 2019, but the party gave a ticket to its former MLA Dr Namdeo Usendi, who lost both elections to Nete. In 2014, Usendi got 2,99,112 votes against Nete's 5,35,882. In 2019, Usendi's vote count rose to 4,42,442, whereas Nete got 5,19,968 votes and Ramesh Gajabe of the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) secured 1,11,468 votes. Congress had alleged that the VBA's vote share prevented their victory.

The VBA has now fielded Hitesh Madavi in this constituency. Usendi wanted to contest the Lok Sabha polls

Indian Air Force's oldest pilot Dalip Singh Majithia passes away at 103

GNS News Agency, April 19

The oldest living pilot of the Indian Air Force, Squadron Leader Dalip Singh Majithia, died at the age of 103 at his farm in Uttarakhand on Monday night. The cremation will take place on Tuesday noon at his farm in Rudrapur, Majithia's daughter Kiran told The Indian Express. "The bhog ceremony will be held in New Delhi and we shall inform the date later," she said.

Born on July 27, 1920 at Shimla, Squadron Leader Majithia joined the Indian Air Force (IAF) volunteer reserve in 1940 during World War-II, following in the footsteps of his uncle Surjeet Singh Majithia (grandfather of Akali politician Bikramjit Singh Majithia). His father Kirpal Singh Majithia was a prominent figure in Punjab during the British rule as was his grandfather Sundar Singh Majithia who was associated with the Chief Khalsa Diwan and one of the founders of Khalsa College Amritsar. Dalip Singh Majithia with his uncle Surjeet Singh Majithia Dalip Singh Majithia with his uncle Surjeet Singh Majithia. Dalip Singh Majithia initially learnt the basic nuances of flying on a Gypsy Moth aircraft at Karachi Flying Club. According to historian Ankit Gupta, Majithia joined the 4th Pilot's Course at the Initial Training School (ITA) in Walton, Lahore, in August 1940 and three months later he was awarded the best pilot trophy and was posted to the No. 1 Flying Training School in Ambala to continue advanced flying training.

Interestingly, Ankit Gupta points out that Dalip Singh Majithia and his uncle, Surjit Singh, who was approximately eight years his senior in age, were both commissioned together. In June 1941, Dalip Singh Majithia was assigned to the No. 1 Coastal Defence Flight (CDF) based at St Thomas Mount in Madras, where he spent the next 15 months. "During this period, he piloted a variety of aircraft, including the Wapiti, Hart, Audax, and Atlanta, undertaking missions critical to coastal security such as patrols, convoy escorts, and naval reconnaissance," says Gupta. Dalip Singh Majithia and his wife Joan Sanders Majithia Dalip Singh Majithia and his wife Joan Sanders Majithia.

Later, Majithia was posted to 151 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Risalpur to undergo conversion training on the Harvard and Hurricane aircraft, in preparation for deployment to the warfront.

In March 1943, Majithia joined No. 6 Squadron in the rank of flying officer under the command of the 'Baba' Mehar Singh, another famous name in the annals of IAF's history. In January 1944, Majithia was posted as Flight Commander of No. 3 Squadron flying Hurricanes. He flew extensively in Kohat where Air Marshal Asghar Khan, a future Chief of Air Staff of Pakistan Air Force, was one of his squadron mates. Air Marshal Randhir Singh, who was later awarded Vir Chakra in 1948 also served in the same squadron at the time. In his next posting, Dalip Singh Majithia was stationed in Burma as Flight Commander of No. 4 Squadron. After a long bout of illness which kept him out of active flying, Majithia served a stint in the Air HQs and later in Melbourne, Australia, as the IAF's Liaison Officer to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Australia.

again. Upset with Kirsan's nomination, Usendi joined the BJP recently. While this could be a setback for the Congress, Satish Vidhate, the party's Gadchiroli city president said, "It will not matter. Dr Kirsan was also denied a ticket twice, but he continued to work at the ground level across the constituency for 10 years focusing on important problems like employment, health and irrigation, where the BJP has failed to deliver". Nete claims his efforts in the last 10 years brought many development projects in the Gadchiroli-Chimur constituency. His pamphlets list works like sanctioning of roads and bridges worth Rs 15,000 crore, starting the Surjagad mine project and various schemes for tribals, OBCs, farmers, and other sections. Meanwhile, BJP workers believe that equations in the six Maharashtra Assembly constituencies in the Gadchiroli-Chimur Lok Sabha would benefit Nete. Amgaon and Bramhapuri Vidhan Sabha constituencies are with the Congress. While Chimur, Armori, and Gadchiroli have BJP MLAs, Aheri is represented by the Ajit Pawar-led National Congress Party (NCP) MLA Dharmarababa Atram. Kidnapped and later released by the Naxals in 1991, Atram is now a minister and an influential political figure. Atram wanted to contest the Lok Sabha this year, but the seat went to the BJP and he has been campaigning for Nete. Polling in the Gadchiroli-Chimur Lok Sabha constituency, reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs), will take place on April 19, the first of the five-phase polling in Maharashtra. There are about 948 polling booths in the Gadchiroli-Chimur constituency, of which 428 are sensitive and some in deep Naxal-affected areas are considered critical polling stations.

During the Lok Sabha elections in 2019, there were six incidents of IED blasts, leaving a few policemen injured on polling day in Gadchiroli. On May 1, 2019, a landmine blast killed 15 police personnel at Jambhulkhedda village in Kurkheda block in Gadchiroli. On April 13 this year, the South Sub Zonal Bureau of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) issued a press release appealing to the people to boycott the "18th false Lok Sabha elections." It asked the people to kick out the "Brahmanic Hindutva Fascist RSS-BJP terrorists". The press release also said it has been proved that choosing any party in the elections has never benefited the people in the last 77 years.

Neelotpal, Superintendent of Police, Gadchiroli, said, "We have deployed 87 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh... This is the biggest deployment in the history of Lok Sabha elections in Gadchiroli. During the last Lok Sabha elections, 74 companies were deployed here". The police said a fleet of 120 drones is being used to keep a watch on Naxal movements. Vehicles mounted with deep search metal detectors (DSMD) have also been pressed into action for road openings at 20 kilometres per hour. The elite C60 commandos of the Gadchiroli police are carrying out area search operations at strategic locations. While there have been rallies in talukas, political parties usually avoid election campaigning in the villages prone to Maoist attacks. "An advisory regarding elections campaigns in the Maoist-prone region has been given to political parties. We asked the political parties to inform the police about their election campaign schedule in sensitive locations,"

Congress candidature blues: Jalandhar out, Chaudhary family now game for Hoshiarpur seat



GNS News Agency, April 19

Denied the ticket from Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat by the Congress, the Chaudhary family is now hoping to get lucky when party declares candidate from Hoshiarpur parliamentary constituency. Both seats are located in the Doaba region, the hub of Dalit politics, and both are reserved constituencies. Congress has fielded Charanjit Singh Channi from Jalandhar, something that was opposed by the family of former Jalandhar MP Santokh Singh Chaudhary whose son Vikramjit Chaudhary even resigned as Congress chief whip in protest. Santokh Chaudhary, who served as MP for nine years from Jalandhar, passed away last year during Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra'. Following his demise, a by-election took place in which Congress fielded his wife Karamjit Kaur. However, Karamjit Kaur lost the seat by over 58,000 votes to AAP's Sushil Kumar Rinku, a Congress turncoat. Now, Rinku has ditched the AAP and joined the BJP and is the candidate of the saffron party from Jalandhar. Despite Chaudhary family's desire to contest from Jalandhar again, the Congress high command decided to field Channi following feedback from local leaders.

Channi's name had been doing the rounds as the potential candidate much to the chagrin of Vikramjit, who is also MLA from Phillaur. While resigning as the party's chief whip in the Punjab Assembly, the Phillaur MLA had pointed towards Channi's electoral defeats from both the Chamkaur Sahib and Bhadaur segments he had contested in the 2022 Assembly polls. Now, party insiders suggest that the Congress is considering fielding a Chaudhary family member from Hoshiarpur. The Chaudhary family exerts significant influence over the Scheduled Caste votes in certain areas, making it crucial for the Congress to handle the family's discontent strategically. A senior Congress leader said, "Amid discussions revolving around Channi's candidacy for Jalandhar, the Chaudhary family had met with the party high command, which assured them of a ticket from Hoshiarpur. Speculations are rife that either Vikramjit or Karamjit could be given the ticket. There are also talks of giving the ticket to MLA Sukhwinder Singh Kotli from Adampur, a close confidant of Channi." On Sunday, the Congress high command named candidates for six Lok Sabha seats, including Jalandhar, in Punjab for the June 1 parliamentary elections. However, sources say, the official announcement of Channi's candidature from Jalandhar seat only aggravated the Chaudhary family's resentment.

Channi belongs to the SC community which makes up nearly 32% of Punjab's population. Channi became the CM of Punjab in 2021 after the Congress replaced Captain Amarinder Singh with him. Meanwhile, in Hoshiarpur, former Congress minister Santosh Chaudhary has expressed her desire to secure the party ticket for herself or her daughter, Namita Chaudhary, citing her family's long-standing dedication to the party and her own track record as a minister. Amritsar: Channi Monday offered prayers at the Golden Temple a day after the Congress named him as its candidate from Jalandhar. He was accompanied by party MLA Pargat Singh and other party leaders. Channi said he was going to Jalandhar as 'Sudama' and urged the people of the Doaba region to take care of him like 'Lord Krishna'. He said he came here to seek the blessings of the almighty to give him strength to live up to the expectations of the people. Channi said he had served the people of the Chamkaur Sahib assembly constituency and brought "unprecedented" development in that area.

'Address violence against us, better conditions for healthcare workers': What doctors seek from future leaders

GNS News Agency, April 19

For Dr Jayant Navrange, medico-legal expert and former president, Indian Medical Association, it is of vital importance that doctors are able to practice without fear of criminal proceedings and one of the critical issues that the medical community has highlighted is addressing violence against doctors.

"Decriminalisation of medical professionals was promised by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, however promises have not been fulfilled. Violence against doctors and medical establishments must be dealt with the strongest and firm actions," said Dr Jayant Navrange. Among the list of expectations that the medical fraternity has according to Dr Navrange include removing or minimising GST on health insurance for patients (12-18%), medical equipment (12-18%) and oxygen (12%). "The cost of medicines need to be brought down with logical and rational analysis as well as uniformity. There must also be a cap on exorbitant compensation and variable interest components," he said. Most doctors have vouched for a right to health, that is in the interest of citizens, with primary health being an important concern. According to Dr Navrange, what is not acceptable is linking the license for biomedical waste disposal to the cost of a hospital's investment. "This is totally irrational and our elected representatives must look into these matters," he added. For Dr Nina Mansukhani, senior obstetrician and gynaecologist at Jehangir hospital, ensuring road safety, basic cleanliness and sanitation around the city is of utmost importance. "Regular garbage collection and disposal can prevent the spread of diseases, while cleaning and maintaining public spaces can help promote a better environment," Dr Mansukhani said. She made a strong case for elected representatives to implement robust road safety measures to protect the lives of commuters and pedestrians. "Roads should be maintained regularly, potholes repaired, clear road signs installed and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure must be ensured," Dr Mansukhani said.

Telangana TB officials closely monitoring drug availability

GNS News Agency, April 19

Hyderabad: The State TB authorities, responding to a news report published in Telangana Today on April 10 about shortage of TB drugs, on Monday said that they are closely monitoring the availability of TB drug stocks at district and sub district level and ensuring the available drugs are optimally utilized and treatment services are not affected.

"The Central TB Division, Government of India had advised to optimally utilize available stocks and also to procure locally for a period of quarter. The State TB Cell, Telangana has informed the TSMDC to procure and supply certain drugs locally and the drugs are expected to be received shortly," the authorities said.

Procurement, maintenance of stock and in time distribution of anti-TB drugs and other materials are being done at the Central level under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) and the States maintain stocks and dispatch to the districts as per the indents placed through Nikshay Aushadhi, State TB officials added.

Yellow ribbon campaign, birding marathon, manifesto for election candidates: How citizens have stood up to save Pune's hills



GNS News Agency, April 19

Slogans of 'tekdi vachava, khurchi vachava (save the Vetal hillock, save your political seat)' reverberated at the massive rally that was held on April 15 last year to protest against three projects being proposed in the area and to press the demand to declare the hillock as a no-construction, no-development zone.

The three projects proposed by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) that citizens have raised an objection to include the Balbharti Paud Phata Road, two tunnels (Sutardhara, Gokhale Nagar and Panchavati exits), and the High Capacity Mass Transit Route project (HCMTRP). Incidentally, on the same day this year, a single-member from the central-empowered committee of the Supreme Court visited the site of the Balbharti Paud Phata Road proposed on a stretch of 2.1 km. On the anniversary of the rally, citizens took to social media to share their memories of the rally and what the Save Pune's hills movement means to them, especially this election season.

As part of the yellow ribbon campaign held first on August 7, 2022, around 2,000 citizens assembled at Maruti temple on the tekdi to tie yellow ribbons to trees made of biodegradable materials. The awareness campaign also had artists who tried to convey the message through Kathak performances, street plays and paintings. In October, as part of the same campaign, Pune's running group organised a marathon called 'Run for the hills' at Vetal Tekdi. It was called a "green run", which had no bins, paper cups, water bottles, flex banners or loud

music. Ranjit Rane, an environmentalist, had conducted bird watching marathons to raise awareness of the diversity of species on the hillock. Rane, along with others, had also participated in the Great Backyard Bird count, which showed that Vetal tekdi is the top birding hotspot in the city. During the rally last year, the Vetal Tekdi Bachav Kruti Samiti (VTBKS) had said they would release a citizens' manifesto and a year later, it came out with 'Citizen Manifesto for Pune Lok Sabha Candidates 2024' highlighting environmental concerns of Pune residents such as adequate water supply, proper implementation of public transport and conservation of the city's hills. About the conservation of Vetal Tekdi, the manifesto reads, "Our Lok Sabha representative should champion our Pune's tekdis that make up...the pride of our city... Vetal Tekdi should be notified as a 'natural heritage' of Pune in our development plan as per the draft list of natural heritage sites identified in Maharashtra government notice dated September 27, 2000. Note that this draft list has 46 sites listed under natural heritage sites but were not notified when the development plan 2007-2027 was approved...in 2017."

Apart from this, there have been RTIs, meetings with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), approaching the CEC committee and also demonstrations at Kalakar Katta, in front of Wadeshwar on Law college road, etc. The issue of saving Vetal Tekdi has been constantly in talks. "Whoever is standing for any election, whether it is Lok Sabha, state elections or local elections, candidates have to factor in climate change. We are not living in the 1980s, the ideas of developments have changed. We have to look at issues like rising temperature, clean air, protecting green spaces, mainly water, we don't have to go the Bangalore way. These must be included in the manifesto of political parties," said Sushma Date, Member of Save Vetal Tekdi Foundation. Prajakta Divekar, another member, said, "The rally included common citizens who came out for the Tekdis. Whoever the candidates are, they need to understand and take cognisance of the importance of tekdis. We want development but not at the cost of natural heritage. It needs to be understood that conserving heritage is also part of development. A flyover is not the only definition of development."

'Address violence against us, better conditions for healthcare workers': What doctors seek from future leaders

GNS News Agency, April 19

For Dr Jayant Navrange, medico-legal expert and former president, Indian Medical Association, it is of vital importance that doctors are able to practice without fear of criminal proceedings and one of the critical issues that the medical community has highlighted is addressing violence against doctors. "Decriminalisation of medical professionals was promised by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, however promises have not been fulfilled. Violence against doctors and medical establishments must be dealt with the strongest and firm actions," said Dr Jayant Navrange.

Among the list of expectations that the medical fraternity has according to Dr Navrange include removing or minimising GST on health insurance for patients (12-18%), medical equipment (12-18%) and oxygen (12%). "The cost of medicines need to be brought down with logical and rational analysis as well as uniformity. There must also be a cap on exorbitant compensation and variable interest components," he said. Most doctors have vouched for a right to health, that is in the interest of citizens, with primary health being an important concern. According to Dr Navrange, what is not acceptable is linking the license for biomedical waste disposal to the cost of a hospital's investment. "This is totally irrational and our elected representatives must look into these matters," he added. For Dr Nina Mansukhani, senior obstetrician and gynaecologist at Jehangir hospital, ensuring road safety, basic cleanliness and sanitation around the city is of utmost importance. "Regular garbage collection and disposal can prevent the spread of diseases, while cleaning and maintaining public spaces can help promote a better environment," Dr Mansukhani said. She made a strong case for elected representatives to implement ro-



bust road safety measures to protect the lives of commuters and pedestrians. "Roads should be maintained regularly, potholes repaired, clear road signs installed and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure must be ensured," Dr Mansukhani said. She also pitched for jobs at the local level and the need to ensure law and order. According to Dr Harshal Pandve, professor and head, Department of Community Medicine, Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation's PGI-YCM hospital, the most important concerns include healthcare infrastructure and trained manpower in the public sector. "Apart from protecting the medical community from violence, our elected representatives should ensure more funding for the health sector and public health as per WHO norms," Dr Pandve said. He also called for regulatory reforms in healthcare and medical education, promoting medical/health research and evidence-based medicine apart from intersectoral coordination for better health care services, like education, child and women welfare and road infrastructure in rural areas. "We also need better working conditions for healthcare workers," Dr Pandve said.

Brace for traffic on Mathura Road: Sarita Vihar flyover to be shut for repairs for 60 days from May 1

GNS News Agency, April 19

Starting next month, commuters travelling via Mathura Road can expect traffic snarls as the Sarita Vihar flyover will be shut for extensive repairs for 60 days. The flyover, used by lakhs of people daily, connects South-east Delhi to Faridabad in Haryana. Officials in the Public Works Department (PWD) Monday said work will be carried out on the carriageways in four phases between May 1 and June 30 to ensure at least half a lane is open to traffic. "According to the plan, it will take 30 days to repair each carriageway. The portion from Ashram to Badarpur will be repaired in the first and second phases, and work will be carried out on the stretch from Badarpur to Ashram in third and fourth phases. Over the four phases, the flyover will never be shut completely... half a lane of the carriageway would be open for traffic," said a PWD source



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Commuters to make their travel plans in advance and choose an alternate route to avoid delay, especially if they are heading to the airport and railway stations. It has been also decided that movement of heavy and commercial vehicles on Mathura Road, towards Sarita Vihar flyover, would be restricted as and when required to ensure smooth vehicular movement.

3 terms as MLA, never an MP: Will Sukhpal Singh Khaira's tryst with Lok Sabha polls give him a second chance



GNS News Agency, April 19

After much waiting, the Congress has fielded its Bholath MLA and AAP critic Sukhpal Singh Khaira as the party's choice for a 2015 NDPS case in September 2023 and again by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to a drug and fake passport racket in November 2021, the 59-year-old veteran politician has always been vocal on social media platforms. Even recently, unlike other Congress leaders, Khaira spoke against Arvind Kejriwal when he was arrested by the ED in Delhi liquor policy scam. Son of Akali stalwart Sukhjinder Singh Khaira, who also served as education minister of Punjab, Khaira chose to deviate from the SAD and decided his own political path by starting as a panchayat member from his native village Ramgarh in Kapurthala when he was 29. While his father was Akali Dal's Bholath MLA in 1977, 1980 and 1985, Khaira, a graduate from Bishop Cotton school in Shimla, became the Punjab Youth Congress vice-president in 1997 after joining the party the same year. His first victory came as a Congress MLA in 2007 when Congress was in opposition in Punjab after two failures in 1997 and in 2002. However, he lost to SAD's Bibi Jagir Kaur in 2012. He was also the party's spokesperson during the 2012 Assembly elections but he resigned from the post after Congress' defeat that year. In 2015, he joined the AAP and was elected as AAP MLA from Bholath in 2017.

He was also appointed as the leader of opposition (LoP). However, in July 2018, he was removed as LoP by AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal with just an announcement through a social media post. An apparently upset Khaira then started speaking in the open against Kejriwal and days after that, he was suspended from the party. He resigned as AAP's Bholath MLA in March 2019. In his first tryst with Lok Sabha elections, Khaira formed his own

party — Punjab Democratic Alliance — in 2019 and contested general elections from Bathinda against SAD's Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Congress's Amrinder Singh Raja Warring and AAP's Baljinder Kaur. While his party couldn't even clinch a single seat, he himself finished fourth by securing only 38,199 votes. Reeling under defeat, he did a ghar wapsi of sorts and rejoined the Congress in June 2021. The next year, he again won the Bholath Assembly seat on Congress ticket despite a huge AAP wave in the area. For Khaira, this will be his second chance at contesting a Lok Sabha elections but this time from a different seat.

He has been pitted against AAP candidate and state cabinet minister Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer, sitting MP and SAD (Amritsar) president Simranjit Singh Mann and SAD's candidate and former Dhuri MLA Iqbal Singh Jhundani. BJP is yet to make an announcement on the seat. While Sangrur became the centre stage after its MP Bhagwant Mann became the CM in 2022, the seat has over the years has seen different parties at its helm. AAP first won Sangrur in 2014 when Mann defeated SAD's Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa by a margin of over 2 lakh votes. In 2019, Mann won the seat again but this time, the margin reduced by half. A bypoll was necessitated in 2022 after Mann resigned as MP after being elected as Dhuri MLA and eventually became the CM. However, in June 2022, Sangrur surprised the ruling AAP, which had won 92 seats in the state assembly in March 2022, by giving it away to Simranjit Mann of SAD (Amritsar). AAP's embarrassing defeat was attributed to singer Sidhu Moosewala's murder a month before the bypoll, inaccessibility of its elected representatives as major factors. However, keeping his Lok Sabha fate in the past, Khaira, who is considered as an outsider for Sangrur, has already started his campaign. He posted a video of Ranike village of the CM's Dhuri constituency of a dilapidated government dispensary where a pharmacist works for "just Rs 11,000 per month". When asked, Khaira said that he deviated from the SAD and joined the Congress on his father's advice. "My father always had ideological differences with Parkash Singh Badal. He asked me to choose my own path and focus on my growth as by then he had realised that Akali Dal will just remain a family party," he said, adding that "over the years, the Congress hasn't disappointed him ever". When asked about his campaign plans, Khaira said that he will visit the constituency in the next few days. "My real contest is with sitting MP Simranjit Singh Mann and AAP stands no chance in the seat," said Khaira, who is also the chairman of All India Kisan Congress (the party's farmer cell).

2 accused involved in shooting outside Salman Khan's house arrested from Gujarat's Bhuj

GNS News Agency, April 19

The Mumbai police late on Monday arrested the two accused allegedly involved in the firing incident outside the Bandra residence of Bollywood actor Salman Khan on Sunday. Identified as Vicky Gupta and Sagar Pal, the two men were arrested from Bhuj in Gujarat where they had escaped after the incident. Gupta and Pal belong to Champaran in Bihar. Lakhmi Gautam, Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime), said the men had fled to Surat from Mumbai from where they went to Bhuj and lay low. "They are being brought to the city where they will be produced before the court. We will be interrogating the accused to find out who gave them the contract for the firing," added Gautam. Sources said the two men were likely working at the behest of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. Soon after the firing incident, Anmol Bishnoi, the younger brother of Lawrence who is currently in jail, claimed responsibility for the attack

The firing outside Salman Khan's residence Galaxy in Bandra had taken place early on Sunday when the two accused came on a bike and fired five rounds. One of the bullets landed on the balcony of the actor's residence. According to the police, after Gupta and Pal fired five rounds outside Salman Khan's residence, they



left their bike and headed to Bandra Railway Station. They took a train from Santacruz and hired an autorickshaw to Mira Road. From Mira Road, they went to Surat and then took a train to Bhuj where the Crime Branch arrested them.

The Bishnoi gang has in the past sent two threats to the actor who has been accused of killing a blackbuck in Rajasthan while shooting a movie in 1998. Blackbuck is considered sacred by the Bishnoi community which had filed a complaint against the actor soon after the incident.

Insurance company told to pay Rs 3 lakh to Mohali resident for rejecting her medical claim

GNS News Agency, April 19

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission of Chandigarh has asked an insurance company to pay Rs 3 lakh to a Mohali resident for rejecting her claim. Anjna Sharma of Mohali alleged that she bought a medical insurance policy commencing from November 4, 2019, to November 3, 2022, and paid Rs 1,129 extra premium being an asthmatic patient to TATA AIG Insurance Company Limited.

Sharma said that she fell sick on December 30, 2019, and was admitted to the Max Super Specialty Hospital for a period of eight days and the hospital sent pre-authorisation request to the insurance firm but the same was rejected, vide letter December 31, 2019, on the grounds that the complainant had disclosed cough symptoms. Sharma alleged that she was discharged from the hospital on January 6, 2020, and she had to pay a bill raised by the hospital to the tune of Rs 3 lakh. The daughter of the complainant again requested the insurance firm to reconsider the medical claim but they again repudiated the same. On service of notice, TATA AIG Insurance Company Limited in reply stated that after scrutinising the documents/indoor case papers, the pre-authorisation request was rejected on the grounds that the disease/symptoms of cough for three months is prior to policy inception, which is November 11, 2019, because as per terms and conditions of the policy any pre-existing condition will not be covered until 48 months of continuous coverage with insurance firm.

The commission observed that the claim of the complainant was rejected by the insurance company on the grounds that the disease/symptoms of cough, fever and diabetes are prior to the inception of the policy and any pre-existing conditions will not be covered until 48 months of continuous coverage as per Section 3-General Exclusions of the terms and conditions of the insurance policy. However, the submission of the Company deserves to



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be rejected because symptoms of cough, fever and diabetes cannot be termed to be pre-existing diseases for rejection of the claim and rather the same are result of normal wear and tear of modern day life, which is full of tension at the place of work, in and out of the house and are controllable on a day-to-day basis by standard medication. Besides this, prior to obtaining the insurance policy, the complainant had disclosed to the insurance company that she is an asthmatic patient and she had also paid extra premium of Rs 1,129 on this count to the insurance company, held the Commission. Finding the rejection of the genuine claim of the complainant by insurance company to be illegal and unjustified, the commission asked the TATA AIG Insurance Company to pay Rs 3 lakh to the complainant.

Anti-graft body moves to book him, Haryana IAS officer rushes to EC: 'I am on poll duty..'



GNS News Agency, April 19

A senior Haryana IAS officer has complained to the Election Commission that the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has sought an approval from the state government for registration of an FIR against him at a time when he is on election duty in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. A principal secretary-level IAS officer, D Suresh is a Haryana cadre officer of 1995 batch. He is principal resident commissioner at Haryana Bhawan in New Delhi and principal secretary, human resources department in the state government. He is already facing an FIR in connection with Gurgaon plot case in which he is accused of causing financial losses to state exchequer, an allegation denied by him.

The ACB says that it has sought approval for an FIR after receiving complaints in three cases of plot re-allotment. In 2019, Suresh was chief administrator of Haryana Urban Development Authority (now HSVP) and decided several matters of plot allotments while exercising quasi-judicial powers.

In his communication to the EC on Saturday, the IAS officer informed the poll panel that "in spite of the fact that I'm on election observer's duty in Chennai Central parliamentary constituency and discharging my constitutional obligations, the ACB had the audacity to send an illegal proposal to the Chief Secretary for registration of an FIR

against me and two of my former colleagues for passing quasi-judicial orders more than five years ago". "This was done deliberately and surreptitiously so that a quick approval could be taken for registration of FIR and such approval could be obtained easily in my absence without my being able to contest it officially," the IAS officer has written in his letter. Raising further questions on the timing of seeking registration of an FIR against him, Suresh said that "either they (ACB officials) are unaware of the fact that they are all on deemed deputation to the Election Commission of India and they feel that they are above law or law unto themselves". The IAS officer has also blamed the ACB officials "for creating hurdles in discharge of my constitutional obligations as election observer". However, a senior officer of the ACB has dismissed his allegations. "An officer is always on some duty, so it's not fair to say that the approval was being sought in his or her absence. The file for approval for registration of an FIR against an IAS officer is sent to the Chief Secretary and it is not routed through the officer, who is facing allegations, if he is here or somewhere else," said the ACB officer requesting anonymity. A senior officer of the state government said: "In such cases, the state government may hold its decision till the election duty of the officer or may seek his comments before taking a call. The Election Commission too may refer the matter to the state government for seeking its response."

In July 2023, the Haryana government had granted approval for an investigation against Suresh in an FIR lodged in connection with financial loss to the state exchequer by re-allotting a school site in Gurgaon in 2019. The ACB had sought the government approval under Section 17-A of the Prevention of Corruption Act to launch an investigation against him. It was alleged that the school site was re-allotted to a society in 2019 at the rates prevailing in 1993, thus causing a financial loss to Haryana. Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP). This was the first case in recent years when the state government had granted approval to the ACB (earlier, State Vigilance Bureau) to probe such a senior IAS officer in an FIR.

Abhishek plans legal action against I-T officials, Mamata asks will BJP leaders be also searched

GNS News Agency, April 19

A day after Income Tax Department officials searched the helicopter used by Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee at Behala Flying Club in Kolkata, party chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday lashed out at the Centre asking whether any central agency would search the helicopters of BJP leaders. "Income tax officials searched his chopper before the trial run but found nothing. The officials claimed that they had inputs that there was money and gold in the chopper, but they found nothing," CM Banerjee said at an election rally in Cooch Behar, adding, "We don't engage in such acts. It's the BJP that does. Only any central security official dare check BJP leaders' choppers?"

The TMC in a post on X, said, "The chopper was undergoing a trial run at Behala Flying Club for Abhishek Banerjee's visit to Haldia in Purba Medinipur district on Monday when a team of I-T officials arrived and extensively searched it." Meanwhile, Abhishek Banerjee on Monday stated that he plans to take legal action against income tax officials for allegedly stopping the trial run of the helicopter he used during a raid on Sunday. While speaking to reporters, Banerjee said, "I have no problems with I-T raids. But after the I-T officials did not find anything, they decided to not allow the trial run of the chopper."

The Diamond Harbour MP also claimed that when his security personnel videographed the raid, I-T officials forcefully had it deleted. "According to rules, trial run of the chopper is mandatory. The IT officials can't stop it. They even forcibly erased the video of their verbal spat with my security personnel. The IT officials can't intimidate in this manner. I am considering legal action against it. I have also lodged a police complaint against it," he said.

Further, pointing out that the BJP is "misusing" cen-



tral agencies and not allowing a "level playing field for all political parties," in the elections, CM Banerjee said, "The BJP might use the NIA just days before the first phase of the election to arrest our leaders so that they can have a free run." The TMC chief claimed that BJP would destroy India's federal structure and wanted to form an autocratic government. "When I said this everyone said it is not true. Now from their (BJP's) manifesto, you can see their policy. There is a fish whose head is the CAA, tail is the NRC and stomach is the Union Civil Code. Minorities, tribals, mothers and sisters will not have their rights. What you have to eat in the morning and at night will also be decided by them," she said.

Mamata Banerjee said that there will be no elections if the BJP returns to power. "If this government returns to power, there will be no election in this country. They will destroy the federal structure. There will be one nation and one leader. An autocratic government will be formed," she said. "BJP is a party of dacoits. Gali gali mein shor hai, BJP chor hai. If they have guts they should publish a white paper on why they did not give MGNREGA wages for two years. They should also publish details of corruption that happened in West Bengal as well as Gujarat, UP and Maharashtra," she added.

13, including mastermind, held after MICA director targeted in Rs 1.15-cr cyber fraud

GNS News Agency, April 19

Mudra Institute of Communications, MICA, cyber fraud, Shailendra Raj Mehta, Ahmedabad Police Cyber Crime Branch, Indian Express news The Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Cell subsequently launched a probe and formed four teams to identify and apprehend the accused.

Thirteen people, including the alleged mastermind, have been arrested amid an ongoing probe over cyber fraud to the tune of Rs 1.15 crore that targeted Mudra Institute of Communications (MICA) president and director Shailendra Raj Mehta, officials said on Monday. The accused were arrested by Ahmedabad Police's Cyber Crime Branch last week for allegedly running an elaborate racket, and more people are suspected to have fallen prey to the fraud. Mehta had received calls on March 20 from unknown people, posing as police officials, who allegedly extorted Rs 1.15 crore on the pretext that a package with his name was found by the Mumbai Customs officials. The package contained five passports, three mobile phones, one laptop, 5 kg of clothes and 200 gram of banned MDMA drug, he was told. The accused also told Mehta that several transactions, which may not be visible to him, were undertaken from his bank account and were reflecting on the servers of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). They then allegedly blackmailed Mehta to transfer money to two other bank accounts. The accused posed as officials of the Mumbai Cyber Crime and CBI. The Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Cell subsequently launched a probe and formed four teams to identify and apprehend the accused. Twelve people were arrested on March 12. The alleged mastermind was arrested on March 13. While the 12 arrested were remanded to three days of police custody, the purported mastermind has been remanded to six days of remand, a cyber crime branch official said on Monday.

Of the 13 accused, four, including the key accused



— Moin Ingariya (26) — are from Dhoraji in Rajkot. Other accused from Dhoraji are Mihir Topiya (23), Praful Valani (43), and Rohit Vaghela (24). Four others are from Rajkot — Ronak Sojitra (23), Yogirajsinh Jadeja (36), Ravi Savsheta (26) and Sagar Dabhi (31). Two accused are from Porbandar: Merubhai Karmata (24) and Kisha Bharai (45), said officials. Three men— Ankit Desai (29), Kiran Desai (29) and Rohan Leuva (26) — are from Ahmedabad. Inspector Paras Makwana, the investigating officer in the case, said that the accused "do not have steady source of income" and the key accused Ingariya is a Class 10 pass out. Of the 13, six had the bank accounts in their names where the money was to be transferred. "Our probe has revealed that Moin would ask Mihir for accounts where the extorted money can be transferred, following which Mihir would provide with the bank accounts of the six other accused. They would then withdraw the money and hand over the cash to Moin through Mihir. We have reason to believe that there is someone Moin was working for because the cash would then be handed over by Moin to be converted to cryptocurrency by this unknown accused. It was an elaborate scheme where they were duping people across the country and we believe there are several victims," said Makwana.

CM reviews preparation ahead of likely heat wave, stresses on 'zero casualty'



GNS News Agency, April 19

Bhupendra Patel reviews preparations, zero casualty approach, Mumbai heatwave, Indian Express news In view of the voting day on May 7, the state government, along with the action plan, has issued the guidelines on the Dos and Don'ts to the administration of all 33 districts through the Chief Electoral Officer of the state. Emphasising a 'zero casualty approach', Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel Monday urged various departments to strictly adhere to and implement the guidelines issued in the action plan to protect citizens against a possible heat wave in the state, according to an official release. He chaired a meeting at the Chief Minister's residence in Gandhinagar to plan in advance against the possible heat wave.

An action plan, prepared by the Gujarat State Di-

saster Management Authority, to fight the possible heat wave has consolidated inputs from eight departments — health and family welfare, labour and employment, water supply, education, tourism, energy, transport, urban development and panchayat departments. In view of the voting day on May 7, the state government, along with the action plan, has issued the guidelines on the Dos and Don'ts to the administration of all 33 districts through the Chief Electoral Officer of the state. During the meeting, Relief Commissioner Alok Pandey said that safety and precautionary measures, including operationalisation of multipurpose cyclone centre, involvement of charitable organisations in the relief work such as distribution of buttermilk and ORS packets, preparation of special beds in hospitals for heat stroke patients, and closure of tourist places during afternoon hours are necessary, the statement added. He added that while heat waves are not expected due to the prevailing conditions of unseasonal rains and gusts in some areas of the state as a result of the Western Disturbance, the state government is ready with an effective action plan in case of a heat wave. Following rain and high winds in some parts of the state Sunday, Vadodra recorded the highest temperature of 41.6 degrees Celsius on Monday, followed by Amreli at 41.3. Mahuva recorded 41.2 degrees Celsius, Keshid 41.1, Rajkot 40.9, Surendranagar 40.7, Ahmedabad 40.2, Surat and Porbandar 40, Gandhinagar 39.2, and Bhavnagar 39.6 degrees Celsius.

In Surat, Essar Projects accused of fraud to tune of Rs 3.5 crore by outsourcing firm over pending dues

GNS News Agency, April 19

A firm that outsourced labourers to Essar Projects (India) Limited in Surat has alleged fraud to the tune of Rs 3.5 crore by the officials of the engineering and construction company. Surendra Modi, the owner of the Surat-based labour outsourcing company, told police that he had been supplying labourers on contract to Essar Projects in Hazira since 1995. He has filed a cheating complaint against former HR head V L Rajyaguru among others with Hazira police station on Monday. Police registered offences under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 409 (criminal breach of trust), 467 (forgery of valuable security, will), 468 (In his complaint, Modi alleged that he had submitted a bill of around Rs 16 crore for the services between 2007 and 2012. Essar officials, he said, paid Rs 13 crore through cheque and the remaining amount was pending. He was later denied the pending payment, he alleged. Feeling cheated, Modi approached Surat district court and on directions of the court a complaint was filed in this connection against the accused at Hazira police station. As per sources, he had to approach the local court after not getting a proper response from police initially. A A Vaidya of Surat district court a few days ago passed judgment directing the Surat police to register an offence over the complaint of the applicant.

Speaking with The Indian Express, inspector G S Patel said, "We have registered an offence and have sought details from the complainant against the accused. Currently, it is difficult to say anything in this matter as it is under investigation. We will also question the Essar officials and get details from their side. We will carry out free and fair investigation into the complaint and take steps accordingly." According to the FIR, "Apart from the regular labourers, Essar had, in 2007, demanded more



labourers for a civil construction project from Modi. The company used to give a single amount of cheque and after keeping commission, Modi distributed remaining amount among the labourers as their monthly salaries. This continued for sometime. Later, the company started delaying the payment by 35 to 40 days and it then took up to two to three months. Modi contacted the company HR manager V L Rajyaguru, and complained about delay in the payment... he then cited financial issues." "Facing problems in giving salaries to the labourers, I took a bank loan of Rs 18 lakh," said Modi in the complaint. The FIR adds, "As per the work order bills, the amount surged to Rs 16.50 crore and company had paid Rs 13 crore. Modi demanded Rs 3.50 crore from the company; and the company responded with different excuses. Again in 2013, when Modi went to the company for pending dues, the company authorities told him that all the payment has been done. They later kicked him out of the office." Despite repeated attempts by The Indian Express, Essar officials did not give a response on the matter.

After donating life earnings worth over Rs 200 crore, Ahmedabad businessman and wife set to take monkhood pledge

GNS News Agency, April 19

An Ahmedabad businessman has donated his life earnings worth over Rs 200 crore as he and his wife are set to adopt monkhood next week. Inspired by their children to "walk on the path of renunciation and salvation", Bhavesh Bhandari and his wife Jinal Bhandari say the decision was not easy. "It was hard for me to convince my parents to give me the permission to take the pledge of monkhood. 'It is too early, take some more time,' they told me. But I remained firm. Now, my father and my elder brother will take care of the business. I have decided to choose the right path for living, and for that I have selected monkhood. I have lived a lavish life and have not faced any difficulties... not even in my business. I am happy with the decision," Bhavesh Bhandari told The Indian Express on Monday.

The Jain couple will take the pledge with 33 others from the community at the Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad on April 22 at an elaborate diksha ceremony. Among the 35 mumukshus, who will renounce all worldly pleasures to seek liberation, 10 are below 18. Gujarat-based businessman Bhavesh Bhandari and his wife donated their lifetime earnings of over Rs 200 crore to adopt monkhood. The couple led a proces-



Apart from the Bhandari family, others who will take pledge of monkhood from Acharya Yogtilaksuriji Maharaj at the event are Sanjaybhai Sadariya, a textile trader based in Surat, and his wife Binaben. The couple's son and daughter had taken diksha in 2021.

sion in Sabarkantha, Gujarat, yesterday as they donated all their belongings.

Bhandari is a real estate businessman. In 2022, his 19-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son adopted monkhood at one such event in Surat under the guidance of Acharya Dev Vijay Yog Tilak Suri Maharaj. According to the Bhandari family, they have been following the teachings of the spiritual leader for nearly 10 years. Earlier too, the businessman has donated for community and diksha events organised in different parts of Gujarat. "We have a family business. We mainly deal

with finance and land developers. We deal with business finance, auto finance and other finances run by the name of Simandhar Finance. Pursued BBA (Bachelors of Business Administration) and later joined our family business. I am the proprietor of the company and my father Girish Bhandari and my elder brother Riddish Bhandari, are also taking care of the business." Apart from the Bhandari family, others who will take pledge of monkhood from Acharya Yogtilaksuriji Maharaj at the event are Sanjaybhai Sadariya, a textile trader based in Surat, and his wife Binaben. The couple's son and daughter had taken

diksha in 2021.

Jashvant Shah, another Surat-based textile trader, and his wife Dipika will also take diksha (pledge of monkhood), walking on the footsteps of their sons who took the pledge a year ago. The five-day diksha event will start on April 18, and is expected to see a gathering of thousands from the Jain community from India and abroad. The grand ceremony will be held at Sabarmati Riverfront. The main pavilion at the venue will have seating arrangements of 30,000 people. In the night, over 2,000 lamps will light up the place, according to people in the know.

Israel found help from unlikely quarters in foiling Iranian missile strikes



GNS News Agency, April 19

As Israel thwarted a barrage of Iranian missile and drone strikes last week, it received help from unlikely sources -- Saudi Arabia and Jordan. A source close to the Saudi Royal family said the country had a system that automatically intercepted suspicious entities in its airspace as Israel claimed more than "99 per cent" of the Iranian weapons were shot down. The Jerusalem Post reported. The development comes nearly a year after Saudi Arabia and Iran restored diplomatic relations and reopened embassies in their respective capitals with help from China. The Arab nation has criticised Israel over its campaign in Gaza and in February warned of "very serious repercussions" for storming and targeting the city of

Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. The shortest distance from Iran to Israel is about 1,000 km and the drones and missiles had to travel over Saudi Arabia and Jordan to reach Israel.

Another Arab nation, Jordan, which has repeatedly hit out at Israel over its offensive in Gaza, claimed it shot down missiles fired by Iran that entered its airspace, a Business Insider report said. Moreover, Jordan also reportedly opened up its airspace to Israeli and US fighter jets. Defending the move, a former Jordanian minister said the country's foremost duty was to protect its lands and citizens. "What Jordan did yesterday was to simply protect its airspace," the minister said. A report in The Wall Street Journal, quoting US officials, said Iran tipped off several Gulf countries about the timing and nature of the attack. "Arab countries quietly passed along intelligence about Tehran's attack plans, opened their airspace to warplanes, shared radar tracking information or, in some cases, supplied their own forces to help," the US officials said. Apart from Saudi Arabia and Jordan, the unprecedented aerial attack by Iran was also thwarted by the US, the UK, and France. In fact, a report in The Intercept quoted US military officials as saying that a majority of the missiles and drones launched by Iran were shot down by the United States. Iran launched more than 300 drones and missiles towards Israel in retaliation for an airstrike on Tehran's consulate building in Syria's Damascus. The attack killed 13 people, including two Iranian generals.

Attack on Hindus on rise in US, community under fear, says Congressman

GNS News Agency, April 19

Indian-American Congressman Shri Thanedar alleged a surge in attacks against Hindus in the United States, calling it the onset of a coordinated anti-Hindu campaign. An Indian-American member of the US Congress has alleged that the United States is witnessing an increase in attacks against Hindus and Hinduism, calling it the "beginning of a coordinated anti-Hindu attack". Congressman Shri Thanedar stated that such attacks have created a lot of fear among the Indian Hindu communities in the US.



"We have seen lots of attacks happening on Hindu temples across US. It is time for us to seek support. Hindu communities are in fear. A local law enforcement hasn't taken enough action, not seen any suspects or arrests, not seen any resolution to this issue," Thanedar said. Citing the recent attacks on Hindu temples, the Congressman said "We have experienced substantially more events of this kind in recent months. I have a feeling that this is just the beginning of a very coordinated attempt against this community and the community must stand together. The time has come and I will stand with you".

Thanedar and four other Indian American lawmakers -- Ro Khanna, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Ami Bera and Pramila Jayapal -- had recently written to the US Depart-

ment of Justice seeking a probe into the attack on Hindu temples in the country. Addressing a press briefing organised by a non-profit group, HinduAction, in Washington, he also added that a lot of misinformation is being circulated whether it is online or otherwise. "Having practised Hinduism, having grown as a Hindu in a Hindu household, I know what Hinduism is. It is a very peaceful religion. However, this community continues to be misrepresented, misunderstood, sometimes deliberately so," he further noted. Thanedar alleged that such attacks were seen happening in California, New York and "all across America" and added, that inaction by the local authorities leaves the Hindu community feeling like they have nobody who cares about them.

'Disruptive' Trump says only 5 words on record on Day 1 of hush money trial

GNS News Agency, April 19

Donald Trump has pleaded not guilty to a 34-count indictment charging him with falsifying business records in connection with a hush money payment his then-attorney Michael Cohen made to an adult film actor to boost his electoral prospects in the 2016 presidential election. The first criminal trial of any former US president began as Trump vies to reclaim the White House, creating a remarkable split-screen spectacle of the presumptive Republican nominee spending his days as a criminal defendant while simultaneously campaigning for office.

He's blended those roles over the last year by presenting himself to supporters, on the campaign trail and on social media, as a target of politically motivated prosecutions designed to derail his candidacy. "It's a scam. It's a political witch hunt. It continues, and it continues forever," Trump said after exiting the courtroom, where he sat at the defence table with his lawyers. After a norm-shattering presidency shadowed by years of investigations, the trial amounts to a reckoning for Trump, who faces four indictments charging him with crimes ranging from hoarding classified documents to plotting to overturn an election. Yet the political stakes are less clear because a conviction would not preclude him from becoming president and because the allegations in this case date back years and are seen as less grievous than the conduct behind the three other indictments. The day began with pretrial arguments--including over a potential fine for Trump-- before moving in the afternoon into jury selection, where the parties will decide who might be picked to determine the legal fate of the former, and potentially future, American president. After the first members of the jury pool, 96 in all, were summoned into the courtroom, Trump craned his neck to look back at them, whispering to his lawyer as they entered the jury box. "You are about to participate in a trial by jury. The system of trial by jury is one of the cornerstones of our judicial system," Judge Juan Merchan told the jurors, adding, "The name of this case is the People of the State of New York vs. Donald Trump."

Trump's notoriety would make the process of picking 12 jurors and six alternates a near-herculean task in any year, but it's likely to be especially challenging now, unfolding in a closely contested presidential election in the heavily Democratic city where Trump grew up became a celebrity decades before winning the White House. Underscoring the difficulty, only about a third of the 96 people in the first panel of potential jurors remained after the judge excused some members. More than half the group was excused after telling the judge they could not be fair and impartial. At least nine more were excused after raising their hands when Merchan asked if they could not serve for any other reason. A female juror was excused after saying she had strong opinions about Trump. Earlier in the questionnaire, the woman, a Harlem resident, indicated she could be neutral in deciding the case. But when asked whether she had strong opinions about the former president, the woman answered matter-of-factly, "Yes." When Merchan asked her to repeat the response, she replied, "Yeah, I said yes." She was dis-

missed.

Merchan has written that the key is "whether the prospective juror can assure us that they will set aside any personal feelings or biases and render a decision that is based on the evidence and the law." No matter the outcome, Trump is determined to benefit from the proceedings, casting the case, and his indictments elsewhere, as a broad "weaponization of law enforcement" by Democratic prosecutors and officials. He maintains they are orchestrating sham charges in hopes of impeding his presidential run. He's lambasted judges and prosecutors for years, a pattern of attacks that continued Monday as he entered court after calling the case an "assault on America." "This is political persecution. This is a persecution like never before," he said. The judge denied a defense request to recuse himself from the case after Trump's lawyers claimed he had a conflict of interest. He also said prosecutors could not play for the jury the 2005 "Access Hollywood" recording in which Trump was captured discussing grabbing women sexually without their permission. However, prosecutors will be allowed to question witnesses about the recording, which became public in the final weeks of the 2016 campaign. Prosecutors with the Manhattan district attorney's office also asked Merchan to fine Trump \$3,000 over social media posts they said violated the judge's gag order limiting what he can say publicly about witnesses. Last week, he used his Truth Social platform to call his former lawyer Michael Cohen and the adult film actor Stormy Daniels "two sleaze bags who have, with their lies and misrepresentations, cost our Country dearly!" Trump's lawyer Todd Blanche maintained Trump was simply responding to the witnesses' statements. "It's not as if President Trump is going out and targeting individuals. He is responding to salacious, repeated veiled attacks by these witnesses," Blanche said. Merchan set a hearing for next week on the request. Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records. Prosecutors say the alleged fraud was part of an effort to keep salacious--and, Trump says, bogus--stories about his sex life from emerging during his 2016 campaign. The charges centre on payments Trump's company made to Cohen to reimburse him for \$130,000 he paid to keep Daniels from going public, a month before the election, with her claims of a sexual encounter with the married mogul a decade earlier. Prosecutors say the payments to Cohen were falsely logged as legal fees to cloak their actual purpose. Trump's lawyers say the disbursements were legal expenses, not a cover-up. After decades of fielding and initiating lawsuits, the businessman-turned-politician now faces a trial that could result in up to four years in prison if he's convicted, though a no-jail sentence also would be possible. Trump's attorneys lost a bid to get the hush money case dismissed and repeatedly sought to delay it, prompting a flurry of last-minute appeals court hearings last week. Among other things, Trump's lawyers maintain that the jury pool in overwhelmingly Democratic Manhattan has been tainted by negative publicity about Trump and that the case should be moved elsewhere. An appeals judge turned down an emergency request to delay the trial while the change-of-venue request goes to a group of appellate judges, who are set to consider it in the coming weeks.

Atlantic City mayor, wife abused daughter for years, beat her with broom: Cops



GNS News Agency, April 19

Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small and his wife were charged Monday with abusing and assaulting their teenage daughter on multiple occasions, including hitting her in the head with a broom and knocking her unconscious. The Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office said it filed charges against both parents of endangering the welfare of a child. Marty Small was also charged with making terroristic threats, aggravated assault, and simple assault. LaQuetta Small was additionally charged with three separate counts of simple assault. The prosecutor's office said in a news release that "the defendants physically and emotionally abused their 15/16-year-old daughter on multiple occasions" in December 2023 and January 2024.

It said that in one incident, Marty Small is alleged to have hit his daughter multiple times in the head with a broom, causing her to lose consciousness. He also is accused of punching his daughter in the legs multiple times, leaving bruises, and threatening to throw her down a staircase and "smack the weave out of her head," the

release said. LaQuetta Small, who is Atlantic City's superintendent of schools, is accused of punching her daughter multiple times in the chest, leaving bruises, and punching her in the mouth during a separate argument. LaQuetta Small also is accused of dragging her daughter by the hair, and striking her with a belt on her shoulders, leaving marks, according to the prosecutor's office.

Reached by telephone, Small declined comment. He referred a reporter to his lawyer Ed Jacobs, who emphasized that the charges do not involve public corruption or any impropriety in the mayor's discharge of his official duties. Instead, they involve "a private family matter, including the challenges that Mayor Small and his wife have dealt with raising a teenage daughter," Jacobs said. The attorney would not address the substance of the charges regarding the couple's interactions with their daughter. But said she has not been removed from their home. "This is an intact family," Jacobs said. "She's right where she belongs."

The president and vice president of the Atlantic City Board of Education did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment. Both Smalls were issued summonses with the charges against them. Earlier this month, Small held a news conference in City Hall to say that a search of his home in late March involved "a private family issue," not a crime. Small said at the news conference that he and his wife have been interacting with state child welfare authorities and have nothing to hide. "We're going through family therapy, and that's what this should be, a family matter," he said. A spokesman for the state Division of Child Protection and Permanency, said it cannot publicly discuss its cases to protect the privacy of those involved. Small's wife and two children attended the news conference with him but did not speak, and left before it was completed.

Ukraine pulled out of Black Sea shipping deal after consensus

GNS News Agency, April 19

Russia and Ukraine negotiated for two months with Turkey on a deal to ensure the safety of shipping in the Black Sea and reached agreement on a text that was to be announced by Ankara, but Kyiv suddenly pulled out, said Reuters' sources. Russia and Ukraine negotiated for two months with Turkey on a deal to ensure the safety of shipping in the Black Sea and reached agreement on a text that was to be announced by Ankara, but Kyiv suddenly pulled out, four people familiar with the matter told Reuters. The negotiations were mediated by Turkey after nudging by the United Nations, according to the sources who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of such talks. A deal was reached in March "to ensure the safety of merchant shipping in the Black Sea", and though Ukraine did not want to sign it formally, Kyiv gave its assent for Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan to announce it on March 30, the day before critical regional elections, the sources said. "At the very last minute, Ukraine suddenly pulled out and the deal was scuttled," said one of the sources.

Three other people confirmed that version of events. Russia, Ukraine and Turkey declined to comment. It was not immediately clear why Ukraine pulled out. The people who spoke to Reuters said they did not know what had prompted Kyiv's decision. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in February that without new U.S. military aid, Ukraine would not be able to defend a Black Sea shipping corridor hugging its western Black Sea coast near Romania and Bulgaria.

The talks on the shipping deal, which have not been reported before, offer a glimpse of the quiet diplomacy going on behind closed doors on ways to bring the two warring sides to negotiation, if only, at first, about merchant shipping. When asked for a comment on the Reuters reporting, United Nations Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said: "We still hope that freedom of navigation in the Black Sea will prevail." Turkey and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres have been trying to months to get merchant shipping sailing more freely through the Black Sea, which in some areas has been turned into a naval war zone since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. The Black Sea is a key route for both Russia and Ukraine to get bulk products such as grain, fertiliser and oil to world markets, though sea shipping volumes have fallen significantly



since the war.

The text of the deal, a copy of which Reuters has seen, said that Turkey "as part of its mediation efforts" had reached agreements with Ukraine and Russia "on ensuring free and safe navigation of merchant vessels in the Black Sea" in compliance with the Montreux Convention of the Regime of the Straits. That 1936 deal gives Turkey control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and the power to regulate transit of naval warships. It also guarantees the free passage of civilian vessels in peacetime and restricts the passage of ships not belonging to Black Sea countries. Under the deal almost announced on March 30, both Moscow and Kyiv would have offered security guarantees to merchant vessels in the Black Sea, committing not to strike or to seize or search them as long as they were either empty or had declared a non-military cargo.

"These guarantees do not apply to warships, civilian vessels carrying military goods (with the exception of maritime transportation agreed upon by the Parties within the framework of international missions)," the draft agreement said. "The Republic of Turkey informs the UN Secretary General that the agreement has been reached and is being implemented through the mediation of the Republic of Turkey," the draft said. "The agreement comes into force upon announcement." Turkey and the United Nations helped mediate the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a deal struck in July 2022 that had allowed the safe Black Sea export of nearly 33 million metric tons of Ukrainian grain. Russia withdrew from the agreement in July 2023, complaining that its own food and fertiliser exports faced serious obstacles.

US shot down most Iranian missiles and drones, not Israel: Report

GNS News Agency, April 19

A majority of the missiles and drones launched by Iran towards Israel on April 13 were intercepted and shot down by the United States, not by Israel, a report analysing the attack data stated. US military officials, who spoke to an American news outlet, The Intercept, stated more than half were destroyed by US aircraft and missiles before they reached Israel. In a first, Iran launched a direct attack on Israel on Saturday, firing more than 300 missiles and drones. Immediately after the attack, Israel said more than "99 per cent" of the weapons were intercepted by their forces with the help of its allies, including the US, Jordan, France, and Britain.

Preliminary estimates by US military sources mentioned that half of Iran's weapons experienced some sort of technical fail-



ure. Of the remaining missiles, more than 80 were destroyed by the US. The US Central Command said its forces "successfully engaged and destroyed more than 80 one-way attack uncrewed aerial vehicles (OWA UAV) and at least six ballistic missiles intended to strike Israel from Iran and Yemen", the report said. However, the US has not disclosed where its aircraft intercepted these

weapons. The US has an active military base in Saudi Arabia. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF), in a statement, said approximately 25 cruise missiles "were intercepted by IAF (Israeli Air Force) fighter jets outside the country's borders".

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also said that Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) intercepted "a number" of Iranian missiles, while the Jordanian gov-

ernment too hinted at downing some Iranian weapons, without specifying any numbers. According to Israel, Iran had launched over 330 drones, low-flying cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles. This arsenal included 30 Paveh-type cruise missiles, approximately 180 Shahed drones, and 120 Emad intermediate-range ballistic missiles.

Explained: Why Jio Financial Services shares jumped 5%



Jio Financial Services shares: The company's stock has surged by nearly 57% this year and over 63% in the past six months. Shares of Jio Financial Services (JFS) surged nearly 5% in early trade, following an announcement about a strategic collaboration.

In a stock exchange filing, JFS said it has partnered with global investment giant BlackRock to establish a

joint venture focusing on wealth management and broking services in India. "This joint venture further strengthens the Company's (Jio Financial) relationship with Blackrock, Inc., with whom the Company had announced a 50:50 joint venture on July 26, 2023 to transform India's asset management industry through a digital-first offering and democratise access to investment solutions for investors in India," JFS said. It is worth mentioning that this joint venture marks the second collaboration between Jio Financial and BlackRock, aiming to capitalise on India's flourishing wealth management sector.

Jio Financial's shares were up 3.36% to Rs 366.30 on the Bombay Stock Exchange. The company's stock has surged by nearly 57% this year and over 63% in the past six months. At present, the company's market capitalisation stands at around Rs 2.34 crore. With the country's stock indices consistently reaching new highs, there's a growing interest from retail investors in wealth management services.

Find yourself single this Valentine's Day? Here's how you can celebrate the day of love



Valentine's Day is often portrayed as a celebration reserved for couples, but singles can also take advantage of this day to indulge in self-love. While traditional romantic gestures may not be on the agenda, there are plenty of alternative activities that can make February 14 an enjoyable and fulfilling day for those flying solo. Exploring the city for singles looking to embrace their independence, exploring the city can be a liberating experience. Whether it's visiting local museums, trying out new restaurants, or simply strolling through picturesque neighbourhoods, Valentine's Day offers the perfect opportunity to discover hidden gems and enjoy the freedom of solo exploration.

Self-care and pampering

What better way to celebrate Valentine's Day than by indulging in some much-needed self-care? From spa days and pampering sessions to at-home relaxation ritu-

als, singles can treat themselves to a day of rejuvenation and self-love. Whether it's a DIY facial, a bubble bath, or simply curling up with a good book, taking the time to prioritise self-care can leave singles feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. Valentine's Day is not just about romantic love — it's also about spreading kindness and compassion to those in need. Singles can use this day as an opportunity to give back to their community by volunteering at local shelters, food banks, or charity events. Whether it's serving meals to the homeless, participating in a beach cleanup, or simply lending a listening ear to those in need, giving back can be a deeply rewarding experience that brings joy to both the giver and the recipient.

Creative pursuits For singles with a creative streak, Valentine's Day can be the perfect time to indulge in artistic pursuits. Whether it's painting, writing, crafting, or playing music, expressing oneself creatively can be incredibly cathartic and fulfilling. Singles can use this day as an opportunity to unleash their creativity and explore new artistic endeavours, whether alone or with friends who share their passions. Contrary to popular belief, being single on Valentine's Day doesn't have to be lonely or depressing. In fact, many singles find solace and fulfillment in embracing their solitude and enjoying their own company. Whether it's spending the day alone in nature, practicing mindfulness and meditation, or simply enjoying a quiet evening at home, singles can use Valentine's Day as an opportunity to connect with themselves on a deeper level and appreciate the beauty of solitude.

UPA ministers wanted RBI to be government cheerleader: Ex-Reserve Bank chief

Duvvuri Subbarao writes in his book 'Just A Mercenary?: Notes from My Life and Career' that the government during his tenure lacked comprehension and appreciation for the importance of maintaining the central bank's autonomy. Former RBI Governor Duvvuri Subbarao said that during Pranab Mukherjee and P Chidambaram's tenures, the finance ministry used to exert pressure on the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to lower interest rates and paint a rosier picture of economic growth in his latest book.

Subbarao, in his new book 'Just A Mercenary?: Notes from My Life and Career' has highlighted that the UPA government lacked comprehension and appreciation for the importance of maintaining the central bank's autonomy.

"Having been both in the government and in the RBI, I can say with some authority that there is little understanding and sensitivity within the government on the importance of central bank autonomy," said Subbarao in the book. Subbarao served as the finance secretary from 2007 to 2008 before assuming the role of RBI governor for a five-year term starting on September 5, 2008. This tenure started just days before the onset of the Lehman Brothers crisis, which resulted in the company's bankruptcy on September 16, marking one of the biggest corporate failures in history. The former governor recalled a particular incident during Pranab Mukherjee's time as finance minister when government officials opposed the RBI's estimates and suggested projecting a rosier economic outlook.

"I remember one such occasion when Pranab Mukherjee was the finance minister. Arvind Mayaram, the finance secretary, and Kaushik Basu, the chief economic adviser, contested our estimates with their assumptions and estimates, which I thought was par for the course," he wrote in the book. Subbarao expressed discomfort with the idea that the RBI should act as a cheerleader for the government's policies in a chapter of his book titled 'Reserve Bank as the Government's Cheerleader?'. Mayaram went to the extent of saying in one meeting that 'whereas everywhere else in the world, governments and central banks are cooperating, here in India, the Reserve Bank is being very recalcitrant,' he recalled. He mentioned the importance of the RBI maintaining its professional judgement and not altering projections to manipulate public sentiment.

"It also dismayed me that the Ministry of Finance would seek a higher estimate for growth while simultaneously arguing for a softer stance on the interest rate without seeing the obvious inconsistency between these



two demands," he wrote. In his book, Subbarao detailed his interactions with both Chidambaram and Mukherjee, noting their different approaches but shared desire for softer monetary policies. He recalled instances where Chidambaram publicly expressed disagreement with the RBI's stance on interest rates.

"Chidambaram typically argued his case like the lawyer that he so eminently is, while Mukherjee was the quintessential politician," he said in his book. "Mukherjee let his view be known and left it to his officers to argue his case", he said, adding that "the net result was an uncomfortable relationship". The former RBI governor recounted events from October 2012, when Chidambaram resumed his role as finance minister after a stint at the Home Ministry, and aimed to rectify the fiscal extravagance of the previous Mukherjee administration, perhaps to offset the fiscal tightening measures he was initiating. "So, he very much wanted a softer monetary regime and put enormous pressure on the RBI to lower the interest rate. On objective considerations, I could not oblige him though," Subbarao wrote. Subbarao noted that his refusal to back down clearly upset Chidambaram to an extent when he took an unusual and uncharacteristic step of publicly expressing his disagreement with the Reserve Bank's position. "In his 'doorstep' media interaction outside the North Block about an hour after the Reserve Bank put out its hawkish policy statement, expressing concern on inflation, Chidambaram said (that) 'growth is as much a concern as inflation. If the government has to walk alone to face the challenge of growth, we will walk alone,'" Subbarao recalled. His memoir also reflects on his career journey, from his early days as a sub-collector to his tenure as RBI governor, offering insights into the challenges faced by emerging economies in a global context. Subbarao currently serves as a senior fellow at the Yale Jackson School in the US, reflecting on his extensive experience in economic governance.

Why autoimmune diseases affect more women than men, scientists answer. Is there any way to stay protected from them?

Researchers discovered that specific molecules linked to the extra X chromosome women carry might hold the key, sometimes confusing the immune system and leading to these devastating conditions. Researchers discovered that specific molecules linked to the extra X chromosome women carry might hold the key, sometimes confusing the immune system and leading to these devastating conditions.

Imagine your body's defences turning against itself — that's the plight of millions suffering from autoimmune diseases like lupus and MS, which disproportionately affect women. Telling news from a Cell Journal study shines a light on a possible culprit: the X chromosome! Researchers discovered that specific molecules linked to the extra X chromosome women carry might hold the key, sometimes confusing the immune system and leading to these devastating conditions.

Dr Sourav Pradhan, consultant rheumatologist, Manipal Hospital, Salt Lake, Kolkata, explained that various hypotheses support why women suffer from more autoimmune diseases and one such hypothesis is regarding the female sex hormone in the female i.e. estrogen and progesterone. "Estrogen has a strong effect on the immune system. When there is an imbalance or inflammation of the estrogen hormone, the risk of autoimmune disease increases among women," Dr Pradhan said. Another is the chromosomal difference. Male and female embryos carry 22 identical pairs of chromosomes. The 23rd pair is different: Females carry two Xs, while males carry an X and a Y, which leads to the development of male sex organs. Most of the genes in the second X-chromosome in females are inactive and non-functional but few of the genes in this second X-chromosome are active. Dr Pradhan said that these active genes play an important role in maintaining the immunity in females. Thus, these genes are also the reason that plays a pathological role in increasing the chances of autoimmune disease. There is no stated rule to prevent the autoimmune disease because of the biological set-up of a woman, however, there are some things that you can do.

A few lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, both active and passive, will minimise the chances of autoimmune diseases, according to Dr Pradhan, who described them as the following.

1 While these strategies can be helpful, it's important to consult your healthcare professional for personalised guidance based on your unique health profile and risks. (Source: File) Embrace a Whole Food Diet: Ditch processed foods laden with sugar and unhealthy



fats. Focus on consuming a diverse range of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. These provide essential nutrients that support a healthy immune system. Move Your Body Regularly: Exercise isn't just for fitness; it's a potent tool for immune health. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous activity weekly. Include activities you enjoy, like dancing, swimming, or cycling. Prioritise Quality Sleep: Aim for 7-8 hours of restful sleep each night. Sleep deprivation weakens your immune system, making you more susceptible to various health issues.

Manage Stress Effectively: Chronic stress can wreak havoc on your immune system. Practice relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation, or deep breathing to manage stress effectively. Maintain a Healthy Weight: Excess weight puts strain on your body and can contribute to inflammation, a key player in autoimmunity. Aim for a healthy weight through a balanced diet and regular exercise. Limit Smoking and Alcohol: Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption weaken your immune system and increase your risk of various health problems, including autoimmune diseases. While these strategies can be helpful, it's important to consult your healthcare professional for personalised guidance based on your unique health profile and risks. Early diagnosis and intervention can significantly improve outcomes for many autoimmune diseases. Don't hesitate to seek medical advice if you have any concerns.

What PM said on Elon Musk's 'I am Modi fan' remark



Prime Minister Narendra Modi responded to Tesla CEO Elon Musk's remark that he is a "fan of Modi" and said the businessman is a "supporter of India". Musk had made the remark after meeting the Prime Minister in New York in June last year. In an interview with ANI news agency, PM Modi said, "Look, the first thing saying that Elon Musk is a supporter of Modi is one thing, basically, he is a supporter of India. And I just met him. It's not like that." The Prime Minister also responded to an answer about the possible entry of Tesla and Starlink into India and said investments are welcome from whoever wishes to invest in India, but the products should be built by Indians so that young people can get employment opportunities. I want investment to come to India. It doesn't matter who has invested money, (but) the sweat put into the work must be that of our own people. The product should have the essence of our soil, so that the young people in the country will get employment opportunities,"

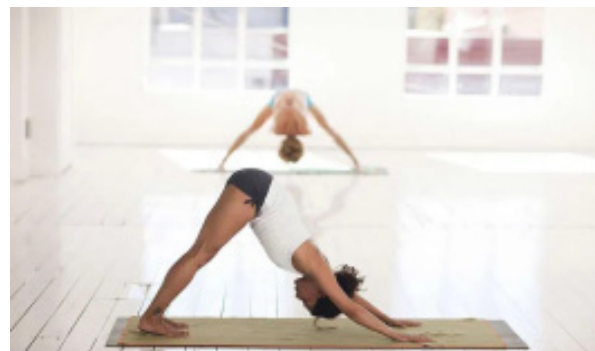
he told ANI. The Prime Minister's remark came on a day when Reuters news agency reported that Tesla is searching for suitable locations to set up showrooms in New Delhi and Mumbai with the aim of beginning sales later this year. Tesla CEO Elon Musk is also planning to visit India later this month to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he confirmed on X a few days ago. The Prime Minister also narrated about their meeting in 2015 and said Elon Musk cancelled his pre-scheduled commitment to accompany him during a factory visit. "He showed me everything in his factory. And I understood his vision from him. I went there just now (to the US in 2023) and met him again. And now he is about to come to India," PM Modi said. The Prime Minister also invited electric vehicle companies to invest in India and said the country is "moving very fast" in the domain. The sale of electric vehicles rose from 2,000 in 2014-15 to 12 lakh units in 2023-24, he added.

Beat depression better with walking, jogging, yoga & strength training

London: Battling hard against depression? Walking or jogging, yoga and strength training seems to be the most effective exercises to ease depression, either alone or alongside established treatments such as psychotherapy and drugs, suggests a study. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that more than 300 million people worldwide have depression.

Exercise is often recommended alongside psychotherapy and drugs, but treatment guidelines and previous evidence reviews disagree on how to prescribe exercise to treat depression best. The new evidence, based on a review of 218 trials involving 14,170 participants with depression and published by The BMJ, suggests that the more vigorous the activity, the greater the benefits are likely to be. Researchers from Spain, Denmark, Australia and Finland noted that these forms of exercise "could be considered alongside psychotherapy and drugs as core treatments for depression." Compared with active controls, large reductions in depression were found for dance and moderate reductions for walking or jogging, yoga, strength training, mixed aerobic exercises, and tai chi or qigong.

Moderate, clinically meaningful effects were also found when exercise was combined with SSRIs or aerobic exercise was combined with psychotherapy, suggesting that exercise could provide added benefit alongside these established treatments. Although walking or jogging were effective for both men and women, strength training was more effective for women, and yoga or qigong was more effective for men. Yoga was also more effective among older adults, while strength training was more ef-



fective among younger people. While light physical activity such as walking and yoga still provided clinically meaningful effects, the benefits were greater for vigorous exercise such as running and interval training. Exercise appeared equally effective for people with and without other health conditions and with different baseline levels of depression. Effects were also similar for individual and group exercise. The team acknowledged that the quality of evidence is low, and very few trials monitored participants for one year or more. Many patients may also have physical, psychological, or social barriers to participation, they noted. Nevertheless, they suggest a combination of social interaction, mindfulness, and immersion in green spaces that may help explain the positive effects. "Our findings support the inclusion of exercise as part of clinical practice guidelines for depression, particularly vigorous-intensity exercise."

Karthik has golden chance to be India's match-winner in T20 World Cup: Ambati Rayudu



to what it is in the IPL 2024. Pathan was of the opinion that bowlers in the mega event will be of top-most quality and it would not be easy for him to get them away. "He is playing in full flow; he is looking in great rhythm. But Indian cricket and World Cup are on a different level. In World Cups, you won't see uncapped players bowling. There is no Impact rule either. Your batting becomes a little limited there and playing in that pressure is different," he added.

Coverage | IPL 2024 Points Table and Standings | 2024 IPL Full Schedule RCB, as their head coach Andy Flower pointed out, need to treat each and every game from here as a knockout. RCB need to win their next 7 matches to make sure they get to 16 points. Even 16 points might not prove enough if they are tied with one or more teams on the points table as their Net Run Rate has taken a beating. Whenever IPL has had more than 8 teams (in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2022, 2023), 16 points have been the minimum to take to the playoffs. RCB were at the receiving end in 2013 when they missed out on the playoffs despite having been tied on 16 points with SunRisers, who finished 4th due to a better Net Run Rate.

In IPL 2023, MI sneaked through to the playoffs with 16 points at the 4th spot, having finished the league stage with 2 more than Rajasthan. In IPL 2022, RCB sneaked through to the playoffs with 16 points at the 4th spot, having finished the league stage with 2 more than Delhi. It's not going to be easy for RCB as they face 4 former champions in their last 7 matches of the season. IPL 2024 points table after April 15 match between RCB and SRH (Screenshot)

Yes. Take the 2009 season for example. RCB were reeling at the bottom of the points table after winning only 1 out of their first 5 matches. However, they won 7 of their next 9 matches to reach the semi-finals and eventually the final. RCB were not able to win the title in 2009 as they lost to now-defunct Deccan Chargers Hyderabad in Johannesburg. While RCB's batting has clicked in the IPL 2024 season, their bowling attack has looked ordinary, promoting Faf du Plessis to concede that they don't have any more options left on the bench to bolster their bowling unit. RCB have used as many as 20 players so far, struggling to find a settled XI. Monday was a glimpse of what has been going wrong with the bowling side of things as 4 of their bowlers conceded in excess of 50 runs, a first in the IPL. Virat Kohli is the leading run-getter in the IPL 2024 season with 361 runs in 7 matches and Dinesh Karthik has been in fine form as a finisher. However, RCB have not managed to get the best out of their overseas stars, especially Glenn Maxwell. The Australian all-rounder said on Monday that he opted to be dropped for the game against SunRisers, saying he wanted a 'mental and physical' break.



is now at 80th in the world. He takes a break this week to come back refreshed #Nagal

2024 has been a memorable year for Nagal, who has grown leaps and bounds. After beating Alexander Bublik in the opening round of the Australian Open, he won the Chennai Open to break into the top 100 for the first time in his first round. After his first round in Monte Carlo in an interview with Tennis Channel, Nagal said that he feels at home while playing on clay. The Indian star will now be looking to advance further in the ranks with some strong performances before the French Open starts two months later.

Selectors, Dravid, Rohit meet: Hardik Pandya's T20 World Cup spot hangs on his bowling

unhappy that he replaced Rohit as Mumbai Indians' captain. His performances with both bat and ball hasn't been up to the mark, as yet. On Sunday night, he was smashed for three consecutive sixes by MS Dhoni in the final over of the CSK's innings, triggering more handwringing over him. With a good pool of batsmen already in the mix, India want Pandya the allrounder at the World Cup as that would lend them with the much-needed balance. Since making his comeback during the IPL, Pandya has bowled in four of the six matches. In the first two matches against Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad, where he opened the bowling, he sent down three and four overs. Then after not bowling in the next two matches, against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, he bowled one over and on Sunday against Chennai Super Kings, Pandya bowled three overs.

RCB not giving up on playoffs hopes despite SRH hammering: 'Every game a semi-final'

GNS News Agency, April 19

RCB head coach Andy Flower tried to console the glum faces in the dressing room after the home side was hammered by 25 runs in a record-breaking IPL 2024 match against SRH. The M Chinnaswamy Stadium witnessed a storm of sixes and a total of 549 runs, an all-time T20 record, was scored as bowlers from both sides were taken to the cleaners. RCB conceded 287, the highest-ever total in the history of the IPL and the second-highest total ever in T20 cricket. RCB also became the first team in the IPL to have four or more bowlers conceding in excess of 50 runs in their quota of 4 overs.

RCB came up with a valiant effort, riding on Faf du Plessis's 28-ball 62 and Dinesh Karthik's sensational 35-ball 83. RCB posted 262, the highest total in T20s during a chase, but it was still not enough for the home side, who slipped to their 6th loss in 7 matches. RCB are reeling at the bottom of the IPL 2024 points table and need a miracle to even finish in the top half of the stand-



ings, let alone make it to the playoffs. Speaking to the players, who were dejected, in the dressing room, head coach Andy Flower urged them to take a backseat, reflect and analyse before making a strong comeback. "It was a really tough night in the field, of course. They finished off so powerfully, it probably took the wind out of our sails. We will have a think. We will come back stronger. It's obviously knock-out time. Every game is a semi-final for us," Flower said in a video shared by RCB.

No team has qualified with 16 or fewer points for

the playoffs when the league had 9 or more teams in the IPL. And RCB need to win each of their next 7 matches to get to the 16-point mark.

DK FOR WORLD CUP? Andy Flower heaped praise on Dinesh Karthik for leading RCB's fight with the bat. RCB's total of 262 was the 5th highest total in the IPL and their second-best after 263 in 2013 against now-defunct Pune Warriors India.

Flower also kept the mood in the dressing room light, asking Karthik if he is thinking about a spot in the T20 World Cup, lauding his

consistency. "I was really proud of the way you fought with the bat. We lost the game, but I was really proud of the way that you all fought. DK, you are making a push for the World Cup team as well. Well, done mate. You are only getting better," he added. Karthik has been in sensational form, having scored two back-to-back whirlwind fifties. The RCB wicketkeeper was also involved in banter with Rohit Sharma during his 23-ball 53 against MI as the India captain teased him, saying he was pushing for a spot in the T20 World Cup, starting June 1.

KKR vs RR, Head-to-Head, Kolkata Pitch Report and Who will win?

GNS News Agency, April 19

In a battle for the top spot, Kolkata and Rajasthan will be up against each other in Match No.31 of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 on Monday, April 16 at the Eden Gardens. The equation is pretty straightforward. If KKR win, they will equal RR on 10 points, but will retain their top position based on a superior net run rate. RR, in the meantime, would not want to drop their guard after an impressive beginning to their campaign.

Rajasthan, however, looked a tad nervous in their previous two games. After losing a close match against Gujarat, they defeated Punjab by 3 wickets at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Mullanpur, Chandigarh. The game went right down to the wire when RR needed 10 runs off their last 4 balls. It was Shimron Hetmyer, who used the long handle to good effect and took his team past the finish line. Kolkata, on the other hand, struggled in the game against Chennai at the Chepauk. But barring that encounter, they have more or less been clinical. With the best net run rate of -1.185 among the 10 teams, Shreyas Iyer's men have shown that KKR mean serious business. They will go into their next game after beating Lucknow by 8 wickets at the Eden Gardens. Phil Salt was their star performer after he scored an unbeaten 89 off 47 balls with 14 fours and 3 sixes. Mitchell Starc also found his form after he bowled brilliantly at the death to finish with impressive figures of 4-0-28-3. KKR and RR have locked horns in 28 matches since their first meeting in 2008. The Knights are leading the Royals 14-13, while 1 game in 2015 was abandoned due to rain. At the Eden Gardens, KKR are leading RR 6-3. In their previous meeting, Rajasthan beat Kolkata by 9 wickets after Yashasvi Jaiswal hit the fastest fifty in IPL history.

Jos Buttler and Ravi Ashwin missed the previous game due to injuries. In their places, Rovman Powell and Tanush Kotian played. Powell played a cameo in RR's run-chase, but Kotian faltered with the bat while opening



the batting. If Buttler and Ashwin get fit, they are most likely to return to the playing XI. The Knights have not chopped and changed a lot. And why should they? Most of their players are in form and are on top of their games. The fact that Nitish Rana, who led KKR in 2023, is out of the XI shows how dominant the team has been.

The pitch is expected to be an excellent one for the batters. In both games at the Eden Gardens, KKR have scored at a run rate of over 10. SRH nearly chased down 209 last month. Hence, the team batting first should look for a score around 200 to be on the safer side. Bowlers will need to work hard, but Starc showed against Lucknow that batters can be restricted in the death overs with accurate line and lengths.

KKR vs RR: Predicted XI: KKR Predicted XI: Philip Salt (wk), Sunil Narine, Venkatesh Iyer, Shreyas Iyer (c), Andre Russell, Ramandeep Singh, Rinku Singh, Mitchell Starc, Harshit Rana, Vaibhav Arora, Varun Chakaravathy RR Predicted XI: Sanju Samson (c & wk), Riyan Parag, Dhruv Jurel, Shimron Hetmyer, Rovman Powell, Tanush Kotian, Keshav Maharaj, Trent Boult, Avesh Khan, Kuldeep Sen, Yuzvendra Chahal The team batting second will have a great chance of winning. SRH missed out agonisingly while chasing, losing by 4 runs. But KKR chased down 162 in 15.4 overs.

RCB's Glenn Maxwell says he wanted to be dropped, opts for 'mental and physical' break

GNS News Agency, April 19

Glenn Maxwell said that he asked the RCB team management to drop him from the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 clash against SRH on Monday, April 15 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. The hosts made a few changes to their XI and named Will Jacks, Lockie Ferguson and Reece Topley as their overseas contingent along with skipper Faf du Plessis. Maxwell was going through a poor run of form as he scored only 32 runs from 6 matches at an average of 5.33 and a strike-rate of 94.11. The hard-hitting batter got into double digits only once with a top score of 28 and bagged 3 ducks in the ongoing edition of the T20 league. The Victorian admitted that it was high time that RCB looked at a different option in the middle order. Maxwell said that he needed a mental and physical break and did not want to repeat mistakes from the past and get himself more into trouble.

"For me, personally, it was a pretty easy decision. I went to Faf [du Plessis] and the coaches after the last game and said I felt it was probably time we tried someone else. I have been in this situation in the past where you can keep playing and get yourself deeper into a hole," Maxwell said in the post-match press conference.

"I think now is actually a good time for me to give myself a bit of a mental and physical break, get my body right. If I'm required to get in during the tournament, I can hopefully get back into a really solid mental and physical space where I can still have an impact," Maxwell said.

"We have had a pretty big deficiency straight after the powerplay, which has been my area of strength over the last couple of seasons. I felt like I wasn't contributing in a positive way with the bat, and with the results and the position we find ourselves on the table, I think it's a good



IPL 2024, RCB vs SRH: Glenn Maxwell said that he requested the Bengaluru team management to drop him from the game against Hyderabad on Monday at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

time to give someone else an opportunity to show their wares, and hopefully, someone can make that spot their own," Maxwell added. The changes RCB made in the match against SRH did not pay dividends as they lost the match by 25 runs at home. After being asked to chase down a gigantic score of 288, Bengaluru finished at 262 for 7 in 20 overs.

Alia Bhatt gives a shout-out to Janhvi Kapoor, Rajkummar Rao's 'Mr and Mrs Mahi'



Actor Alia Bhatt recently gave a huge shout-out to Rajkummar Rao and Janhvi Kapoor's upcoming film, Mr and Mrs Mahi. She shared the film's poster on Instagram Stories and also hyped its director, Sharan Sharma. Meanwhile, Sharma also shared the poster and expressed his excitement for the same. On April 15, Alia shared the poster and wrote, "Can't wait Sharry." For the unversed, Sharan had also helmed Janhvi Kapoor's Netflix film 'Gunjan Saxena'.

Meanwhile, Sharan wrote, "Excited to share with you

all the story of 2 people who love cricket as much as I do. It's pretty obvious why the jersey number is 71 31st May 2024. See you at the movies (sic)."

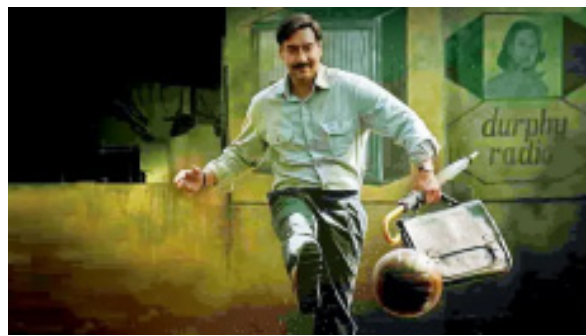
Rajkummar Rao and Janhvi Kapoor's 'Mr And Mrs Mahi' finally got a new release date. The film, earlier slated to hit the theatres on April 19, 2024, will now release on May 31, 2024. The lead star cast, along with producer Karan Johar, announced the same on social media. Producer Karan Johar, while announcing the film's release date, wrote, "Some films are more than just stories they are so much more than celluloid love they talk to the viewer about dreams and how many a time people closest to us can come in the way of our dreams MR AND MRS MAHI is exceptionally close to our hearts.. and we can't wait to share our campaign designs with you on Monday but for now we have a release date!!! 31st MAY 2024!!! At a cinema near you!!! (sic)."

'Mr And Mrs Mahi' is directed by Sharan Sharma, who made his directorial debut with 'Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl', starring Janhvi in the lead. The project is backed by Hiroo Yash Johar, Karan Johar and Apoorva Mehta have backed the film for Dharma Productions.

Ajay Devgn film collects Rs 23 crore in India

Ajay Devgn's biographical film on football legend Syed Abdul Rahim titled 'Maidaan' raked in over Rs 23 crore in India in five days. The film has been having a steady run in the theatres ever since its release last week. However, on Monday (April 15), 'Maidaan' saw a drastic drop in collection at the domestic box office. Going by the trade reports, 'Maidaan' is slowly inching towards Rs 50 crore worldwide. 'Maidaan' clashed with Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff's 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan' on Eid, April 11. The Ajay Devgn-starrer received positive reviews from all quarters.

The biographical film had an eventful opening weekend at the box office. However, on Monday, April 15, the film hardly earned Rs 2 crore. Going by the initial trade estimates, 'Maidaan' is said to have collected Rs 1.50 crore net in India. 'Maidaan' collected Rs 23.50 crore net at the end of five days of release in India. The film recorded an overall occupancy of 9.99 per cent on April 15. Directed by Amit Sharma, 'Maidaan' is a biographical sports drama featuring Ajay Devgn in the role of football coach, Syed Abdul Rahim. He was a football coach in India between 1952 and 1962 and helped India receive



worldwide recognition.

The screenplay is co-written by Salwyn Quadras, Aman Rai, Atul Shahi and Amit Sharma. Apart from Ajay Devgn, the film features Priyamani, Gajaraj Rao, Devyansh Tripathi, Boney Kapoor, Nitanshi Goel and Aayesha Vindhara in pivotal roles. The sports drama is jointly produced by Zee Studios, Bayview Projects and Fresh Lime Films.

The missing legend in Imtiaz Ali's Chamkila



Punjabi singer Chamkila's meteoric rise and unsolved murder have made him an icon. Imtiaz Ali's film Amar Singh Chamkila has won rave reviews but glosses over the legendary music director who made Chamkila the icon he became. Here's what experts and Imtiaz himself have to say about Charanjit Ahuja. Music director Charanjit Ahuja brought out most of the albums of Chamkila and Amarjot, including 'Yaad Aave War War', the one after their death. Music director Charanjit Ahuja brought out most of the albums of Chamkila and Amarjot, including 'Yaad Aave War War', the one after their death.

Amar Singh Chamkila's life has all the drama that a filmmaker can dream of. A poor Dalit labourer skyrocketing to success because of his mass appeal as a singer. And then his life being cut short by a hail of bullets when he was just 27. Filmmaker Imtiaz Ali's film on Chamkila, the best-selling Punjabi singer of his time, has shone the spotlight again on the controversial artist. However, a real-life legend is conspicuously missing from the Imtiaz Ali film Amar Singh Chamkila. The legendary music director Charanjit Ahuja, who took Chamkila to the masses and made him the star he went on to become in his short but eventful career. If Chamkila was a 'pendu' whose voice had an earthy flavour, it was ace music director Charanjit Ahuja who added the finesse to Chamkila's records.

If the story of Chamkila, a Dalit who started his life as a labourer, is one for folklore, the role played by Charanjit Ahuja, now in his 80s, in shaping him and other Punjabi music icons like Gurdas Maan, Hans Raj Hans and Sardool Sikander is phenomenal.

"The role of Charanjit Ahuja in the life of Chamkila was humongous," Imtiaz Ali tells IndiaToday.in. "Charanjit Ahuja added a certain musicality to Chamkila's songs, which were at that point of time very different, modern, that kind of put Chamkila and many others with whom Charanjit Ahuja worked with on a certain pedestal of musicality."

Author and film critic Bobby Sing explains that it was only because of Charanjit Ahuja that Chamkila became a phenomenon of his time. "Chamkila reached the masses through his recorded vinyl records and cassettes. He became the most-demanded stage singer in Punjab because of those records and cassettes, which were selling even in remote areas. A majority of these albums were recorded under the music direction of Charanjit Ahuja," Bobby Sing tells IndiaToday.in. He says that it was Ahuja who made Chamkila and Amarjot Kaur, his wife and duet partner, a commercial success. It is also because of him that we remember Chamkila and Amarjot the way we do. "So, the way you hear the voice of Chamkila and Amarjot Kaur in these recordings, how they sound on the mike, how their songs begin, the music preludes and

interludes in the tracks and their final mastering, everything was conducted by Charanjit Ahuja as the solid pillar behind the couple's commercial success," says Sing.

Therefore, it is surprising that there is just a blink-and-miss appearance of the character playing Charanjit Ahuja in the Imtiaz Ali directorial Amar Singh Chamkila. It is as if a legend has been dismissed in a split-second scene.

"Chamkila is a commercial film and the focus of the biopic is to give a larger-than-life image to the singer, Chamkila. It is kind of unidimensional and Chamkila has been shown as a one-man army fighting against all odds. Indeed, the contribution of Charanjit Ahuja has been given a marginal place in Chamkila's rise as a singer in the film," author and academician Kumool Abbi tells Imtiaz Ali calls Charanjit Ahuja a "master musician", and says it was Ahuja who was his first port of call when he started researching for the movie. Imtiaz Ali's movie, Amar Singh Chamkila, in which Diljit Dosanj plays Chamkila the singer, has won rave reviews from experts and the public alike. "Charanjit Ahuja sahab was the first person I met to start my research on Chamkila, and I got very valuable insight from him. I must say that Charanjit Ahuja was a guide not only for music, but for Chamkila he was a guide to how to be. Because Charanjit Ahuja was a sophisticated man, an educated man, a classy person," Imtiaz Ali says, contrasting the earthy background of Chamkila with Ahuja's sophistication. "Chamkila used to respect Charanjit Ahuja so much that he didn't use to sit when Ahuja was in the room," adds Imtiaz Ali. The filmmaker says he has tried to highlight the "more dramatic and unique struggles of Chamkila" and therefore give a miss to the "calmer influence" of Ahuja on the singer's life.

It was Charanjit Ahuja who shaped the illustrious career of Chamkila, which was cut short by the singer's murder when he was just 27. That murder still remains an unsolved mystery and adds to the legend of Chamkila the singer. "Charanjit Ahuja has had a long illustrious career as a producer with HMV, the record company that had a monopoly in the country," says Kumool Abbi, a professor of sociology at Panjab University.

"When Chamkila began, it was the time of LP records or 'taave' in India. If Charanjit Ahuja had not approved of Chamkila's raw talent, music and singing, and not agreed to bring out the album with Surinder Sonia, Chamkila might have been lost in oblivion," she adds. After the vinyls, came the cassettes and Chamkila's songs were carried across India by Punjabi truck drivers. Bobby Sing says that in the past decades or so, we have actually started using the term 'legend' "too casually for anyone and everyone." Sing says Chamkila was certainly a huge star of his times, the best-selling artist for the record company, but his murder eventually made him a much bigger cult figure with passing time. "But yes, in the process, Imtiaz misses out crediting some, who deservedly had to be there in the biopic of a singing star," says Bobby Sing. It was not just Chamkila, Charanjit Ahuja definitively touched dozens of Punjab's musicians. "Charanjit Ahuja is the real living legend of Punjabi music. He is like the banyan tree that gives energy to others to grow and is a witness to generations changing in front of him along with the change in the eras," says Sing. "He has worked with almost all the artists active in Punjabi music in the three decades from the 1980s to 2010 and has also trained many renowned composers of present times."

Janhvi Kapoor, Rajkummar Rao's 'Mr And Mrs Mahi' gets a new release date



Rajkummar Rao and Janhvi Kapoor's 'Mr And Mrs Mahi', finally got a new release date. The film, earlier slated to hit the theatres on April 19, 2024, will now release on May 31, 2024. The lead star cast, along with producer Karan Johar, announced the same on social media. "Love scores a century on May 31st, 2024! (sic)", was what Janhvi Kapoor wrote while sharing the new release date of her film, 'Mr And Mrs Mahi'. The actor will share the screen with Rajkummar Rao in the project.

Producer Karan Johar, while announcing the film's release date, wrote, "Some films are more than just sto-

ries they are so much more than celluloid love they talk to the viewer about dreams and how many a time people closest to us can come in the way of our dreams MR AND MRS MAHI is exceptionally close to our hearts.. and we can't wait to share our campaign designs with you on Monday but for now we have a release date!!! 31st MAY 2024!!! At a cinema near you!!! (sic)."

In November 2023, Karan Johar announced the release date of Janhvi Kapoor and Rajkummar Rao's 'Mr And Mrs Mahi'. He mentioned that the film would hit the screens on April 19, 2024. KJo wrote, "It's all heart and more, that makes a magical story 'pitch-er perfect'! #MrAndMrsMahi in cinemas on 19th April, 2024 (sic)." In May 2023, Janhvi Kapoor and Rajkummar Rao wrapped 'Mr And Mrs Mahi' shoot. A post from Dharma Productions social media handle read, "And it's a wrap for Mr. & Mrs. Mahi! Ready for the final innings, we'll see you soon in cinemas near you! (sic)." "Mr And Mrs Mahi" is directed by Sharan Sharma, who made his directorial debut with 'Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl', starring Janhvi in the lead. The project is backed by Hiroo Yash Johar, Karan Johar and Apoorva Mehta have backed the film for Dharma Productions.

AR Rahman held Irshad Kamil hostage at 2 am, refused to let him leave until he gave him a song; they came up with Chamkila's most romantic number

Lyricist Irshad Kamil, who is receiving acclaim for writing original songs for Imtiaz Ali's new film Amar Singh Chamkila, spoke about the circumstances that led to the creation of the track "Tu Kya Jaane." In an interview, he said that the song was a replacement for another track, which wasn't ultimately included in the film's soundtrack. Composer AR Rahman refused to allow Irshad to leave their meeting, even though it was well past midnight, until he gave him some lines that could help him in his process.

In an interview with News18, Irshad recalled the story. He said, "We had finalised a different song before 'Tu Kya Jaane'. But after some deliberations, it was felt that the song wasn't appropriate for the scene in question. It was then that Rahman composed 'Tu Kya Jaane'. But there's a funny story behind it. I had gone to meet him for a different reason, and it was well past midnight. He told me to wait. He said, 'I won't let you leave before you give me a line or two for the new song'."

Irshad insisted that since it was already 2 am, he would get down to writing at a better hour. "Dimaag nahi chal raha (My brain isn't working)," he said. But Rahman wouldn't budge. "I'm not listening to you. You sit here and give me just one line," Rahman told Irshad. And so, sitting there, Irshad came up with two or three lines for



Rahman, who later went on to credit the writer for coming up with the song in seven minutes.

Irshad recalled another story about how he received a call from Rahman at 11 pm on New Year's Eve, making a similar request. Irshad left his entire family, who had gathered to watch a special New Year's programme on TV, and wrote the song "Maahi Ve" from Highway in 15 minutes. In the interview, the lyricist said that it is his decades' worth of experience that gives him the tools to pen songs this quickly. Starring Diljit Dosanjh and Parineeti Chopra, Amar Singh Chamkila was released to positive reviews on Netflix on April 12.

K-Pop singer Park Bo Ram's agency issues statement about cause of her death: 'Autopsy showed no signs of homicide or suicide...'

South Korean singer Park Bo Ram, who was popular for her song, "Reply 1988" died on April 11. The sudden death of the 30-year-old artiste sent shockwaves across the music community globally. As her fans continued to mourn her shocking demise, speculations of the singer dying by alleged suicide continued to be discussed online. Now, Bo Ram's agency, XANADU Entertainment, has issued a statement to clear the air, stating that suicide was not the reason for her death. The statement came after the investigation into her death and her autopsy report.

The agency, which released the statement on Monday, urged internet users to refrain from spreading the singer's suicide rumours and warned of legal action against those starting speculations. "An autopsy was performed this morning (April 15) to confirm the cause of death of the late artist Park Bo Ram. The autopsy showed no signs of homicide or suicide, and the exact results will be delivered to the bereaved family at a later date," read the statement, adding, "Refrain from circulating rumours and speculative reports so that the bereaved family can properly send off the deceased on her last journey." The agency further shared information about Bo Ram's funeral which will take place on April 17 at 3 pm (KST) at the Funeral Home located at Asan Medical Center while the burial procession is all set to take place at Seoul Memorial Park on the same day.

"We would appreciate it if you could pray for the late Park Bo Ram, who never let go of her passion for music



and nurtured her dream so that she can rest comfortably in a warm place," read an excerpt from the agency's statement. Bo Ram, who was all set to make her comeback to music, was known for her songs "Beautiful," "Hyehwadong," "Please Say Something," and "Though It Is a Lie for W - Two Worlds." Following her death on the evening of April 11, her agency confirmed the news of her passing. The statement read, "We are here to share sorrowful and heartbreaking news. Park Bo Ram suddenly passed away late at night on April 11. All of the artists and executives at XANADU Entertainment are deeply mourning the deceased with great sadness. The funeral will be held after consulting with the bereaved family. Once again, we send our deepest condolences to the deceased so she may rest in peace... The cause of death is currently being investigated by the police."

Henry Cavill and Natalie Viscuso are expecting their first child together

Man of Steel star Henry Cavill and his girlfriend, television executive Natalie Viscuso are set to welcome their first child. Henry recently spoke to entertainment outlet Access Hollywood at the New York City premiere of his upcoming film Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare where he shared the news.

"I'm very excited about it. Natalie and I are both very excited about it. I'm sure you'll see much more of that," the actor told the publication when she asked him about embracing fatherhood. Cavill, 40, and Natalie, who is in her late 30s, made their relationship Instagram official in April 2021 when they shared a photo of themselves playing chess on their respective profiles. The couple made their red carpet debut in New York City in late 2022 for

the premiere of Cavill's Netflix movie Enola Holmes 2. Natalie is a TV executive at Vertigo Entertainment. She and Cavill are also collaborating on a screen adaptation of the miniature wargame Warhammer 40,000.

Henry Cavill and Natalie attend the world premiere of 'Argylle' at the Odeon Luxe cinema in Leicester Square in London, United Kingdom on January 24, 2024.

Cavill had earlier spoken about becoming a father and his idea of parenthood. "If I ever have kids one day, I want to be the dad who's running round after them. And if I do have kids, even now, it's starting to get quite late. But I want to be a fit and healthy dad, not hobbling round like, 'OK, I'm just going to catch a breather (sic)," the actor told Men's Health UK in 2017.