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## Girl kidnapped in Nagpur, traced in Sec

Hyderabad: A minor girl who was allegedly kidnapped by unidentified persons in Nagpur was rescued by the Government Railway Police (GRP) at Secunderabad railway station on Friday night.

The 17-year-old was kidnapped by a group of two men and a woman from Nagpur in Maharashtra and was being taken in train to an undisclosed place. However, she escaped from their clutches and reached the GRP officials at the Secunderabad railway station and lodged a complaint at around 10pm.

## Maoist militia commander surrenders

Bhadrachalam : A Maoist militia commander and (DAKMS) president of Nemataguda village of Sukma district in Chhattisgarh surrendered before the district police here on Friday. "Nemataguda Revolutionary People's Committee (RPC) militia commander Podium Idumaiyah alias Harish and Nemataguda Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sangthan (DAKMS) president Uike Muthyalakka surrendered after being attracted by the district police's Operation Cheyutha," Bhadrachalam ASP Paritosh Pankaj informed.

## Massive forest fires rage in Uttarakhand's Nainital; IAF called in



Dehradun, GNS News Agency, April 27

An IAF helicopter was pressed into service on Saturday to extinguish massive forest fires raging in Nainital district in Uttarakhand, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said. The situation in the district worsened on Friday with the flames reaching the High Court Colony in the Pines area.

An MI-17 helicopter collected water in a Bambi Bucket from Bhimtal lake and poured it over the burning forests of Pines, Bhumiadhar, Jyolikot, Narayan Nagar, Bhawali, Ramgarh and Mukteshwar areas of the district, officials said. CM Pushkar Singh Dhami said all efforts are being made to bring the fires under control and it will be done soon. "An IAF helicopter has already started dousing the fires," he said. CM Dhami said he will hold a meeting with the forest officials in Haldwani later in the day to review the situation. Three people were arrested in Rudrapur while trying to set fire to the forests. As many as 31 fresh incidents of forest fires were reported from various parts of the state, destroying 33.34 hectares of forest land, according to the officials.

## "Wait for few days..." , Kharge keeps suspense over Congress candidates in Amethi, Rae Bareilly



GNS News Agency, April 27

Guwahati: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge kept suspense over party candidates in Amethi and Rae Bareilly while defending Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest Lok Sabha polls from Wayanad in Kerala. Addressing a Press meet here, Kharge said, "People of Wayanad wanted Rahul Gandhi as their MP. That is why he has chosen to fight from that seat."

He mentioned that the names of the Congress candidates for both Amethi and Rae Bareilly seats will be announced sometime later. "Wait for a few more days. We will announce our candidates in both the seats," the senior Congress leader said, adding that two BJP stalwarts Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani also changed their Lok Sabha seats many times. Meanwhile, Kharge also took a jibe at Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over his remarks that "if Congress President wants, he can also join the BJP". Reacting to this, the Congress President said, "I am the leader of the opposition in Rajya Sabha and my opponent is Modi and not the CM of here. So, I will speak to Modi and let him (Assam CM) face our people here."

## Elephant that killed two in Telangana, tramples woman to death in Maharashtra

GNS News Agency, April 27

Mancherial: One of the three women, who sustained serious injuries after an elephant titled ME3 attacked them when they were returning from a temple at Hindur village in Bamraghad Forest division of Gadchiroli district on Thursday, died while undergoing treatment on Friday.

Sources said that Rajee Kopa Halami (50) from Hindur breathed her last at the district general hospital in Chandrapur town. The condition of Mahari Devu Wadde and Vanje Juru Pungati was learnt to be critical. The tusker trampled a farmer Gonglu Telami to death when he was working in the farm at village Kiyar on Thursday morning. It was wandering in Kosfundi village of Bhamraghad Taluka,

## KTR flays Revanth Reddy, says Congress deceiving people

GNS News Agency, April 27

In a recent chat at Telangana Bhavan, BRS working president KTR made scathing remarks against Revanth Reddy and the Congress party. KTR stated that it would be difficult for Revanth Reddy to win in his own district and criticized the Congress party leaders for being petty and arrogant. KTR also accused Revanth Reddy of deceiving people and planting dangerous plans to win the upcoming parliamentary elections. He questioned under whose leadership Revanth Reddy was working and speculated that he would eventually join the BJP. Furthermore,



KTR challenged Revanth Reddy to respond to the accusations and demanded that he fulfill his promises, including the loan waiver for farmers.

KTR also expressed confidence in BRS winning in Malkajgiri and suggested that regional parties were likely to win in other states as well. The remarks made

by KTR have added fuel to the political fire in Telangana and have brought attention to the ongoing power struggle between various political parties in the region.

## 'Govt's hypocrisy knows no bounds': Congress slams Centre for seeking 'modification' in 2G case verdict



GNS News Agency, April 27

The Congress on April 27 said the BJP's "hypocrisy knows no bounds" and alleged that while it called the administrative allocation of 2G spectrum under the UPA a "scam", the Narendra Modi government was now seeking permission from the Supreme Court to "give away spectrum" without an auction. The opposition party's attack came after the Centre on Monday moved the Supreme Court seeking modification of its verdict in the 2G spectrum case which said the State was duty bound to adopt the auction route while transferring or alienating the country's natural resources. Attacking the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "The hypocrisy of the 'Modi Sarkar' and 'Bhrasht Janata Party' knows no bounds. During Dr Manmohan Singh's tenure, they cried to all who would listen that the administrative allocation of 2G spectrum was a 'scam'. "Now, they are arguing the opposite - they have gone to the Supreme Court for permission to give away spectrum to whoever they want, without an auc-

tion," he alleged. "Of course, this 'Modani Regime' has already been handing over public resources to the PM's crony capitalist friends - airports have been handed over to one company, coal mines have been given away in fraudulent auctions, and even satellite spectrum has been handed over in exchange for Rs 150 crore in electoral bonds. In total, they have already handed over Rs 4 lakh crore worth of public resources to their corporate donors," Mr. Ramesh further alleged. He said that on June 4, India's voters will show this party of "organised loot" the door.

The counting of votes of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections, polling for which began on April 19, will be taken up on June 4. The INDIA bloc government will launch a joint parliamentary committee on the "Adani Mega Scam", and investigate these other corrupt practices, including the 'Pay PM scam' in which the PM amassed Rs 8,200 crore through his well-documented 'chaar raaste' of collecting funds", the Congress leader said. He claimed that the BJP's four methods of collecting funds were "pre-paid bribes: 'Chanda Do, Dhanda Lo'; post-paid bribes: 'Theka Lo, Ghos do'; post-raid bribes: 'Hafta Vasooli'; 'farzi companies'. In its judgement delivered on February 2, 2012, the Supreme Court had quashed 2G spectrum licences given to various firms during the tenure of A Raja as the telecom minister in January 2008. On Monday, Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, mentioned an interim application before a bench of Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice J B Pardiwala. While seeking urgent listing of the application, the top law officer told the bench that the plea seeks modification of the 2012 verdict as the Centre wanted to grant 2G spectrum licences in some cases.

## Question existence of those who questioned existence of Lord Ram: CM Yogi's appeal to people

GNS News Agency, April 27

Firozabad: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday appealed to the public to question the existence of those who had once questioned the existence of Lord Ram. In the public meeting organized at Tilak Inter College in Firozabad on Saturday, he not only enumerated the achievements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government but also attacked Congress and the Samajwadi Party. He said, "272 seats are required to form the government, but whether it is SP or Congress, they are not fighting on that many seats alone. Congress says that Ram did not exist. That means India did not exist before this. People should question the existence of those who question the existence of Ram and Krishna."

Enumerating the works of his party, he said, "Highways, and expressways are being built in the country, and railway and metro facilities have increased. IIMs, IITs, AIIMS were also formed. There was a time when the Firozabad product was on the verge of closure. Central and state officials used to harass local artisans. As soon as we came to power, we dealt with it strictly. Today, One District, One Product of Uttar Pradesh is popular in the entire country." CM Yogi accused the Congress of taking away the ration but, today 80 crore people are getting ration. He said, "SP had tried to withdraw the cases of terrorists who attacked Ayodhya, Sankat Mochan Mandir, judiciary, CRPF Camp Rampur. The court had to intervene." He asked the public whether they would vote for SP which is playing with the people and security system of the country? He further said, "Ayushman Bharat cover is given to 60 crore people, Jan Dhan account of 50 crore people, who do not have treatment facility, they wrote me a letter and I make sure that they get the money in their bank accounts." CM Yogi claimed that the houses



of the poor now had toilets. "10 crore poor people got free cylinders. It has been asked to provide free cylinders during Holi and Diwali. Electricity for 2.5 crore houses, houses for 4 crores. Did we see anyone's caste or religion? That's why the slogan of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas was given. This is the concept of Ramrajya," said Yogi. Referring to the discussion on inheritance tax, he said "Congress divided the country in 1947. Now they are saying that they will get every person's property surveyed and take half. Your forefathers did the hard work and will distribute it to those, Rohingyas and Bangladeshis. People by whom the population is being increased. They are playing with India's security." "The rights of backward and scheduled castes will be robbed and SP will support them. Congress says that it will implement the personal laws of minorities. We have to see their intentions. Before their plans can succeed, they have to be brought to the right place with the power of votes. BJP removed Article 370 and has put the last nail in the coffin of terrorism. Will enforce UCC also when coming back in power," added Yogi.

## 3 Indian women killed in US as overspeeding SUV goes airborne, crashes into trees

New York, GNS News Agency, April 27

Three women, reportedly from India, were killed in a deadly crash in the US state of South Carolina when their overspeeding car veered out of control before jumping at least 20 feet in the air and crashing into trees, media reports said. The accident occurred on Friday at noon on the Staunton Bridge Road along Interstate 85 near Lakeside Road, according to the South Carolina Highway Patrol troopers, Fox Carolina reported.

The women, who were reportedly Indians, were travelling in the SUV speeding in the northbound lanes of Interstate 85, Chief Deputy Coroner Mike Ellis from the Greenville County Coroner's Office said. He said the vehicle left the roadway on the right-hand shoulder, ran up the embankment, went through the cement bridge embankment, and jumped completely over all four lanes of traffic. It then went through some trees on the other side of the roadway and down an embankment, Ellis added. "When the vehicle jumped all four lanes of traffic, it actually struck trees probably at least 20 feet above the ground," he was quoted as saying. "It's obvious that they were travelling above the posted speed limit and for some reason left the roadway," Ellis said, adding, "Unsure exactly why at this time." According to the report, officers confirmed that three passengers died at the scene. Ellis said the victims were from Georgia. They said that the injured driver was hospitalised, but their current condition is unknown.

Ellis said the car was found in pieces and added that no other vehicle was involved in the accident. He said the vehicle had alerted some family members of the victims that it had been involved in a crash, who were headed to the area as of Friday afternoon, local television channel WYFF reported. Investigations are underway to find out how fast the car might have been going, according to the WSPA television station. South Carolina Highway Patrol, Gantt Fire and Rescue and multiple Greenville County EMS units responded to the scene.

## Mamata Banerjee slips and falls while boarding helicopter in Paschim Bardhaman's Durgapur



Kolkata, GNS News Agency, April 27

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lost her balance and fell while boarding a helicopter in Durgapur in Paschim Bardhaman district on Saturday afternoon. She was on the way to Kulti for an election rally when the incident happened. "The CM fell inside the helicopter after losing her balance while she was trying to sit. She is fine," a senior officer, who was accompanying Banerjee,

## HC ask Centre to decide representation to include women in armed forces through CDS exam

GNS News Agency, April 27

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre to decide in eight weeks a representation seeking the entry of women in the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Indian Naval Academy (INA) and Air Force Academy of the Indian Armed Forces through the Combined Defence Services (CDS) examination.

The court passed the order on a petition by Kush Kalra, who challenged a December 2023 notification issued by the UPSC inviting application for recruitment in the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Indian Naval Academy (INA), and Air Force Academy of the Indian Armed Forces and Officers Training Academy (OTA) through the CDS examination.

Noting that the petitioner's representation on the issue was still pending with the authorities, a bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora on Friday said, "the writ petition is disposed of with a direction to the respondent to decide the representation in accordance with law within eight weeks".

# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### Water crisis worsens

The latest data from the Central Water Commission paints a stark picture of India's water crisis, with reservoirs across the country registering an alarming decline in their levels. As of April 25, the water available in major reservoirs has plummeted to a mere 30 per cent of their storage capacity. This represents a significant drop compared to the previous year. Insufficient rainfall, compounded by the El Nino phenomenon, has resulted in drought-like conditions. The prolonged dry spell has depleted water reserves, leaving many regions parched and vulnerable.

The eastern and southern regions are bearing the brunt of this crisis as the rapid fall in water levels is exacerbated by a relentless heatwave. The consequences are dire, particularly for Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, where water shortage has assumed critical proportions. Bengaluru is grappling with severe water scarcity, which is impacting everyday life and agricultural activities. The ramifications extend beyond the immediate concerns. Agriculture, a cornerstone of India's economy, is facing major disruptions, with an adverse effect on various crops. With nearly half of India's arable land dependent on monsoon rain, the upcoming rainy season can play a key role in alleviating the situation.

The forecast of above-normal rainfall offers only cautious optimism. Water conservation efforts must be intensified at all levels, from households to agricultural practices and industrial operations. Investments in water infrastructure and management systems are urgently needed to improve storage and distribution efficiency. Sustainable agricultural practices and crop diversification can help reduce water consumption and enhance resilience to droughts.

### EC to 'more than double' security at Bangalore Rural constituency where DK Suresh takes on CN Manjunath

GNS News Agency, April 27

In the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka on April 26, security will be beefed up at the Bangalore Rural constituency where Congress candidate D K Suresh, the brother of Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar will take on BJP's Dr C N Manjunath, the son-in-law of JD(S) supremo HD Deve Gowda. Bangalore Rural was the only constituency the Congress had won in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Addressing a news conference on Wednesday, Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Meena said that voting in all the 2,829 polling stations in the Bangalore Rural Lok Sabha constituency will be webcast. A total of seven companies of several paramilitary forces, which is "more than double" what was deputed last time, will be posted in the polling booths of the constituency, he added. Increasing security arrangements in the constituency was as per the assessment of the returning officer (RO) and polling officers, Meena said. "We do our own assessment (of the constituency) as there



is a police observer there, a general observer and an RO. Any candidate or agent can give their worry list about sensitive polling booths. We will verify and decide based on the worry list and our assessment," Meena said. Such elaborate security measures "we are not taking in any other Parliamentary constituency", he said.

As many as 2.88 crore voters will be eligible to exercise their franchise in 30,602 polling stations located in 14 Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka on April 26. The Election Commission has deputed 1.4 lakh polling officials, 50,000 civil police personnel and 65 companies of central paramilitary and armed police of other states. Polling in 19,701 booths will be covered by webcasting, while 1,370 polling stations will have CCTVs installed, Meena said. Before polling, the Election Commission has booked a total of 189 major cases of Model Code of Conduct violations, according to Meena. Of these, 23 were related to hate speech - 12 against BJP or its candidates, nine against Congress and two against JD(S); 28 cases of inducement - eight against BJP, nine against Congress, three against JD(S) and eight against Independent candidates; 15 cases of misuse of religious places - eight against BJP, six against Congress and one against an Independent candidate; and 15 cases of use of children for canvassing - seven each against BJP and Congress and one against an Independent.

### Delhi HC orders man accused of outraging woman's modesty to assist Traffic Police at signal for 30 days



GNS News Agency, April 27

The Delhi High Court recently quashed an FIR lodged against a man for allegedly outraging the modesty of a woman on the condition that he assists the Traffic Police at a traffic signal for 30 days. The order comes two years after the two parties had settled the matter at a mediation centre, and the woman conveyed to the HC that she had "no objection" if the FIR is quashed. A single-judge bench of Justice Navin Chawla, in its April 16 order, said, "Accordingly, the (quashing) petition is allowed. FIR registered under Sections 354/506/509 of the IPC and all consequential proceedings emanating therefrom against the petitioner are quashed, subject to the condition that the petitioner shall assist the Traffic Police at a traffic signal where he may be deputed by the DCP Traf-

fic, East District, for a period of 30 days. He shall report to the DCP Traffic for rendering the assistance at a traffic signal assigned to him." "If such a certificate is not filed, the Registry shall place this matter before this Court for further directions," the HC said. The FIR was registered against the man in 2018 for offences under Sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 509 (word, gesture or act intending to insult modesty of a woman) of the Indian Penal Code.

During the hearing on April 16, the man's counsel said that the parties have "amicably settled their inter se disputes and have entered into a settlement" on March 21, 2022 before the Delhi Mediation Centre, Karkardooma Courts. The woman who had joined the HC hearing through video conferencing, and was identified by the Investigating Officer concerned of the Delhi Police, stated that she had settled all the disputes with the petitioner "out of her own free will and without any coercion". She said that she has "no objection" if the FIR is quashed. "Keeping in view the fact that the respondent no.2 (woman) does not wish to pursue her complaint any further, as also the settlement arrived at between the parties, I find that no useful purpose shall be served in continuing with the proceedings of the present FIR as it would create further acrimony between the parties and will be an unnecessary burden on the State exchequer," the HC said.

### Allegation of conspiring against PM cannot be levelled irresponsibly, says Delhi HC

GNS News Agency, April 27

Delhi High Court on Wednesday said allegations of conspiring against the prime minister amount to treason and cannot be levelled irresponsibly without any cogent material. The court was hearing a lawsuit by BJD MP Pinaki Misra against lawyer Jai Anant Dehadrai over his allegedly defamatory tweets and statements, including that the lawmaker - along with expelled TMC MP Mahua Moitra - conspired against the prime minister.

Justice Jasmeet Singh observed that while a politician cannot be "sensitive", Dehadrai should await the outcome of his complaint to the authorities and cannot be "trigger happy".

Moitra was expelled from the Lok Sabha on December 8 following accusations by Dehadrai, her former partner, that she took bribes from businessman and Hiranandani Group CEO Darshan Hiranandani to ask questions in Parliament. "When you say conspiracy against the prime minister, it is troublesome. You can't be trigger happy... Conspiracy against the prime minister is an offence against the state, (it is) treason," the court said during the hearing. "It has serious repercussions on the general public... Wait for the investigation (to conclude) before you say all this," it added. Dehadrai and his counsel assured the court that he would not make further statements in relation to Misra "conspiring" against the prime minister till the next date of hearing.

"Mr (Raghav) Awasthi, who appears for the defen-



dant, assures the court that no allegation of the plaintiff being involved in any conspiracy against the prime minister will be made till the next date of hearing," the court recorded. It added that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is already looking into the allegations and the dispute between Dehadrai and Moitra is also pending before the high court. "Prima facie the allegation of conspiring against the prime minister is a serious allegation. The same tantamount to treason. The allegation of conspiring against the prime minister cannot be made irresponsibly and needs to be based on cogent and substantive reasons," the court said. Taking the statement of the defendant on record, the court issued notices on the lawsuit to Dehadrai and two media houses, and listed it for further hearing in July.

### Why lifestyle choices affect how our bodies age and deteriorate



GNS News Agency, April 27

Prof Deepak Saini, convener of the newly launched 'Longevity India Initiative' likens the human body to a vehicle in some ways. "Just as slamming a car door can weaken its hinges over time, certain lifestyle choices can affect how our bodies age and deteriorate." The focus is to concentrate on the unique aspects of the Indian population to find ways to keep individuals healthy and active as they age. Hence, this clinical study will assess the person's immunity, biological and functional changes as well as identify the organ-specific signatures of aging in the Indian population.

In the first phase, different biological material like blood, stool, etc., will be collected from healthy individuals who will be given a detailed questionnaire about their lifestyle and medical history. At least 2,000 people in the age group 19-100+ will be recruited for the study planned by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru.

The initial data sampling will take at least two years to be processed. There will be five different age groups and initially the project will have tie ups with Bangalore medical college and research institute (BMCRI) and M S Ramaiah Medical College. Persons with chronic disorders, surgical history, and those who have had a recent episode of infection will not be included in the study. In the latter part, there will be comparative data with groups of individuals who have suffered from different kind of disorders.

The main aim of our research is to pinpoint the biological markers that signal healthy ageing, working to counteract the decline that often comes with getting older," Dr Saini said. "We can then predict which organ in the body is the weakest link," Dr Saini adds as he emphasises that the large scale study has been planned to extend healthy life expectancy and promote longevity. "The aim is to study ageing through the lens of science and technology and discovering interventions that can prevent age related diseases," he said.

### Nobody in their right mind would make 'such statements': Mallikarjun Kharge hits out at PM Modi



GNS News Agency, April 27

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday over his remarks such as the party's manifesto had the "stamp of the Muslim League" and that the party would even "snatch women's mangalsutras" if voted to power. "Anyone who is a little correct mentally, (has) a mind balance will not make such statements. What has happened to Modi, I don't know," he said during a Lok Sabha election rally at Atzalpur in Karnataka's Kalaburagi district. "PM Modi says that if the Congress comes to power it will snatch your mangalsutra. What kind of PM is this? He should be ashamed," Kharge told the rally.

"To help the youth and give them more employment opportunities, (the manifesto promises) apprenticeship and filling 30 lakh vacancies. Does it mean we are giving that only to Muslims? Whoever is eligible, irrespective of their religion, will be given. Nari Nyay promises Rs 1 lakh per year for women in the manifesto. Is this only for Muslims?" he said. Kharge said the Congress had ruled the country for 55 years. "Show us one instance where we snatched from one and gave it to another. We did a lot of reforms and helped the poor and did not snatch," he said.

During wars, Congress leaders Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi donated their gold and other belongings, Kharge further said. When Rahul Gandhi was suspended from Parliament, he stayed at his mothers' place, he added. "Yet Modi accuses the Gandhi family of wrongdoing. Since 1989, none from the Gandhi family have been CMs or ministers. Yet, Modi talks about them. If they have looted money, what stops you from recovering it?" Kharge asked. Kharge was speaking at the first of three rallies scheduled in the Gulbarga and Bidar constituencies to seek votes for Congress candidates. Both the constituencies will vote on May 7 in the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

### Saudi court awards five year jail term to Indian doctor for harrasing woman



GNS News Agency, April 27

Jeddah: An Indian doctor was sentenced to five years imprisonment and a penalty amount of 1.5 lakh Riyals equivalent to approximately Rs. 33.4 lakh by a Saudi Arabian court for harassing a woman. The Indian, hailing from Karnataka and working as pathologist in Jizan province, was convicted for harassing a young Saudi woman who was doing internship under him. Following a complaint from the woman, public prosecution referred the case to criminal court which awarded him the sentence, according to sources.

The incident occurred when the doctor was showing a sample on a microscope while the lady's hand was touched. However, according to his family that approached Indian authorities, he had accidentally and unintentionally touched the hand while moving the computer mouse when explaining the method to the woman. The family believes that it was a case of a misunderstanding. The 57-year-old had worked earlier in Saudi Arabia and also in the United Arab Emirates. The family is desperately running for help back home in India and seeking help to seek legal remedial measures. The Saudi authorities are determined to protect the society from any behavior that contradicts public morality.

## 'Calcutta High Court has become BJP's tirtha kendra. Where will 26,000 teachers go?': Mamata Banerjee

GNS News Agency, April 27

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday alleged the Calcutta High Court has become the 'tirtha kendra' (pilgrimage site) of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Addressing a public meeting at Ausgram in the state's Birbhum district, Banerjee said it is due to the court order that her government is not able to provide jobs to the state's youth. The Calcutta High Court cancelled the appointment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff made through the State Level Selection Test (SLST) 2016 in West Bengal government-sponsored and aided schools. The High Court also ordered the teachers to return their salaries with interest.

After the Calcutta High Court cancelled the appointments, the BJP demanded Mamata Banerjee's resignation, and said the order exposed the "brazen corruption" under the Trinamool Congress government. "The BJP has no other work than to move the High Court against the state government. They have taken away the jobs of school teachers. Where will these 26,000 youth go? Will schools

in West Bengal be closed? I have about 10 lakh vacant jobs but it is due to the court orders that I cannot give them to the youths. It is doing whatever the BJP is saying," she said.

"I don't interfere in a department's procedure of recruitment. I don't have a say in everything. But the Court has become a tirtha kendra for the BJP. Bail is being granted to criminals and people accused of murder. Is this even a law? I will not talk about judges but I have the full right to talk about the judgements. If there are faults then they would be subjected to scrutiny but how were the 26,000 jobs cancelled? Does it look like a joke?" she asked.

This is the second time Mamata Banerjee has mentioned the Calcutta High Court order. Soon after the order was passed, she said on Monday the court verdict cancelling the recruitments was "illegal" and that her government would appeal before a higher court. "We stand by those who lost their jobs. We will ensure you get jus-

tice, and challenge the order in a higher court. It is not mandatory to accept all verdicts. This order was passed as per the BJP's instructions amid the elections," she said during an election rally in the Raiganj Lok Sabha seat.

Meanwhile, the TMC supremo praised jailed heavy-weight party leader Anubrata Mondal, who is presently lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail for his alleged involvement in a cattle smuggling case.

"Anubrata Mondal is a kind-hearted person. He is very down to earth. I don't know the details of the case but he was loved by the people. He never returned anyone empty-handed if they sought his help. He knew the district (Birbhum) like the back of his hand. I have noticed in administrative review meetings how he used to work. In every election, he was kept under house arrest and was not allowed to move out. Raids are being carried out in the residences of our leaders. They are threatening them to either vote for the BJP or face the ED," said Banerjee.



After the Calcutta High Court cancelled the teachers' appointments, the BJP demanded Mamata Banerjee's resignation.

## Fodder crisis hits home: BJP MLA starts own fodder camp, blames administration for inaction



GNS News Agency, April 27

Prakash Bamb, BJP MLA from Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar said his decision to start a fodder camp in his constituency arose from the urgency he perceived on ground. "Within two days, more than 400 animals arrived at the camp and the demand is on the rise," said Bamb, who started the camp last week. He has financed this camp out of his own funds and said this was necessitated as small farmers have run out of fodder while some of the bigger land holders have stock. "I would have to admit the administration has not been quick to address the situation. Fodder and water is an issue with many dairy farmers," he said.

Amidst the juggernaut of the general elections, scarcity of fodder and water is an issue that has so far escaped attention. Dairy farmers said the month of May will be crucial as most have already run out of fodder and water for animals is becoming scarce too. So far this local issue has not been raised by most political parties as they go about the political battle for the 48 seats in the

state. This crisis comes even as the animal husbandry department claims that there is enough fodder in the state.

A note shared by the department said the state has spent over Rs 39.88 crore in terms of fodder seeds distribution. During the rabi season, sowing of jowar, maize and other crops which are used for fodder has been normal. Maize and jowar serve as major fodder crops, with farmers preserving the dried stock and vegetation to tide over the dry season. But this, said Rajendra Dhavan, director of The Malegaon Cooperative Sugar Mill in Baramati taluka of Pune district, is now running out. "Arise like Supa in our taluka will start facing a crisis from May 15," he said.

Amarsinh Kadam, a dairy farmer from Indapur taluka of Pune, said that although milk production has gone down, dairies are reluctant to raise the price. "At present the procurement price of milk with 3.5 per cent fat and 8.5 per cent solid not fat (SNF) is between Rs 24-25/litre," he said. Kadam, who has around 10 animals, said he has to travel for more than 10 kms to get fodder for his animals.

The genesis of the fodder crisis lies in the less than normal rainfall the state has received this monsoon. Both Rabi and kharif sowing has been affected which has resulted in dairy farmers talking about an acute shortage of fodder and water. Parts of Solapur, Pune, Dharaashiv and Marathwada are the worst affected and in some places fodder has already run short. Green fodder in the form of the tops of the sugarcane crop had helped, but with the sugar season almost done, many of the small dairy farmers are now looking at a grim summer. Water has also become scarce in many parts, which has put extra stress on dairy farmers.

## As demand for 'VIP licence plates' grows, agents at Pune RTO make a fast buck



GNS News Agency, April 27

The Pune Regional Transport Office (RTO) is grappling with a serious issue related to one of its biggest sources of revenue: VIP number plates. Agents at the RTO are allegedly operating their own parallel system to "sell" the special number plates in the black market, leaving the authorities in a bind. Sanjeev Bhor, the in-charge of the Pune RTO, says the solution is to introduce an alternative online auction. "Maharashtra is considering introducing an online auction procedure for which the Maharashtra Motor Vehicle Schedule needs to be amended," he said.

The development comes at a time when the RTO is witnessing an increased demand for special number plates - Pune earned around Rs 50 crore in FY 2023-24 through the sale of exclusive registration numbers. In Pune, to get a licence plate with a VIP number, one needs to submit an application along with a demand draft (DD) from a bank. The form and the DD are then submitted to

the RTO. If there are multiple applications for a specific registration number, the allotment is done through an auction process. On the scheduled auction day, all applicants have to pay an amount in a closed envelope and the VIP number goes to the person who has paid the most.

According to RTO officials, the agents come into play when people approach them to avoid documentation hassles. The agents allegedly get DDs made based on different number series and illegally sell these to applicants for amounts exceeding the actual DD amount. According to RTO officials, agents also have an idea about the numbers that may receive more than one application. They participate in the auction and if a number in high demand receives more than one application, agents approach the applicants and allegedly demand money in exchange for withdrawing their names from the auction.

Additionally, officials alleged that agents also take advantage of the remaining unsold numbers in the auction. "Those numbers which are not sold to any applicants or have received no applications are ordered to be sold openly the next morning," an RTO official said. "Due to the first-come, first-serve situation, agents spend the night in the RTO office premises and stand in the queue immediately as the office opens... After purchasing the numbers, they sell them for a lump sum amount," an official explained. Though Maharashtra is yet to implement an e-auction system for 'VIP numbers', several states such as Kerala, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh etc. have already done so.

## Discount on burgers, air tickets, free beer and more: Bengaluru restaurants, companies are going all out to increase voter turnout



GNS News Agency, April 27

Discounts on burgers, free beer and free bike rides to polling stations - restaurants, private companies and mobility aggregator apps are back with innovative campaigns and initiatives in Bengaluru to encourage more voters to participate in the festival of democracy. The initiatives, announced just 48 hours before Karnataka and other states go to polls in the phase 2 of the Lok Sabha elections on April 26, are aimed particularly at the urban population, especially Bengaluru, where the voter turnout is usually low.

The 2019 Lok Sabha elections recorded an abysmally low voting percentage in Bengaluru with Bangalore South recording the least at 53.7 per cent in the entire state. This was followed by Bangalore Central with a turnout of 54.3 per cent and Bangalore North with 54.7 per cent. Meanwhile, Bangalore Rural fared at 64.9 per cent. Overall Karnataka saw a voting percentage of 68 per cent in both the phases of the 2019 elections. Despite the Election Commission of India organising novel and innovative voter awareness campaigns to increase the polling percentage, hoteliers, companies and other organisations have taken it upon themselves to woo the voters in an attempt to increase the voting percentage. In fact, on Tuesday, the Karnataka High Court also permitted the Bruhat Bangalore Hotels' Association to provide food either for free or at discounted rates for those who cast their vote in the Lok Sabha elections. However, the association was granted the permission on condition that they are liable for legal action by the authorities if they violate the Model Code of Conduct or any other law in the process of offering complementary food.

Mr. Philly's, a new burger outlet off Marathahalli, Outer Ring Road, is offering a 30 per cent discount on the purchase of their burgers and milkshakes to the first 100 customers who will display their inked finger on April 26. "This is our way of celebrating democracy and the importance of voting. We hope that this initiative sparks enthusiasm among citizens of Bengaluru to exercise their right to vote and make a difference," said Gopi Chand Cherukuri, co-founder, Mr. Philly's.

Popular amusement park Wonderla Holidays has announced 15 per cent off on its tickets for the voters with voting ink on their fingers. The offer will be applicable for three days starting from the election day on April 26. To avail the offer, customers must show their inked finger which will be verified at the park entrance. Deck of Brews, a brewpub in Kadubeesanahalli in Bengaluru, is giving away one free beer to the first 50 guests who show their inked finger on April 27, Saturday, a day after the polling date. Additionally, SOCIAL, an urban hangout space, is offering a 20 per cent discount on their meal upon showing bills after voting, across all their outlets. A spokesperson of SOCIAL said, "A few days before the voting day, we'll issue bills with a special message to vote. If guests bring these bills back to any of our outlets after voting and show their inked finger, they'll receive a 20 per cent discount on their next meal. This offer is valid for one week from the date of voting in their respective city." Air India Express is offering a discount of 19 per cent on their flights to all first time voters between age 18-22 who plan to travel back to their cities for voting. This comes as a part of its #VoteAsYouAre initiative and campaign to empower the youth of India and ease their participation in the elections.

Blu-Smart, an EV ride-hailing service, has launched the #SmartCitizen campaign to encourage Indian citizens to exercise their democratic right to vote on election day. It aims to generate awareness, empower and mobilise the voters in Delhi, Gurgaon and Bengaluru. On polling dates in Bengaluru - April 26 and in Delhi NCR May 25, BluSmart will offer discounted rides to its customers, enabling eligible citizens to cast their vote, including the

youth of India and the first-time voters to exercise their fundamental right to vote conveniently and on time. Passengers traveling anywhere within 30 km of polling stations in Bengaluru and Delhi NCR will be provided a one-time 50 per cent discount. This offer can be availed on BluSmart rides to and from the polling station from 6 am to 7 pm on the respective polling dates in Bengaluru and Delhi. "Every vote counts, and every citizen can make a smart choice to contribute to the democratic process. As a partner in driving India's growth, our #SmartCitizen campaign is a call to action for all citizens to exercise their right to vote and be active participants in shaping a smarter future for our nation," said Anirudh Arun, Co-founder and CEO, BluSmart Fleet.

Bike aggregator app Rapido has partnered with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike and the Election Commission to launch the "SawaariZimmedariKi" initiative to extend free auto and cab rides to differently abled and senior citizen voters in Bengaluru on April 26. On election day, voters can avail free rides on the Rapido app using the code 'VOTENOW' and exercise their democratic right. The initiative aims to facilitate residents' voting rights and ensure a more inclusive electoral process.

This concerted effort aligns with Rapido's nationwide campaign under which it has deployed over 10 lakh captains across more than 100 cities to provide free rides on election days. With the support of the poll panel, Rapido will be offering free bike taxi rides to voters in Karnataka across the cities of Bengaluru, Mysuru and Mangaluru on election day. The hotels and restaurants falling under Bruhat Bangalore Hotels Association (BBHA) have also come up with different incentives to maximise participation. "Different hotels and restaurants will be providing different things to the voters based on their personal call. While some of these places will provide free coffee, dosas and fruit juice to overcome the heat, some of the outlets will give discounts on food or have some offers. This is to encourage voters and ensure maximum participation," BBHA president P C Rao said. The food outlets and bakeries like Kamat Hosaruchi and Iyengar's Oven Fresh are offering a 10 per cent discount to the voters on election day. On the other hand, places like cafe Udipi Ruchi are giving away free mocktails. Adding on to the list, Hotel Nisarga Grand will offer butter dosa, ghee laddoo and fruit juice without any cost.

## India advocates gender-responsive arms control to curb conflict sexual violence

GNS News Agency, April 27

United Nations: To combat sexual violence in conflict situations, India has advocated a multifaceted approach which includes "gender-responsive arms control" that prevents the proliferation of weapons.

"Demilitarisation, intertwined with disarmament, calls for gender-responsive arms control" (and) "this approach recognises the role of weapon proliferation in conflict-related sexual violence", India's Permanent Representative Ruchira Kamboj said on Tuesday during a Security Council open debate on protecting women against sexual violence in conflict.

She advocated "arms control policies that address the specific vulnerabilities of women". Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, emphasised the need to stop the flow of weapons into the hands of perpetrators of sexual violence.

"There could be no more direct and effective way to disarm the weapon of rape, and ultimately, to prevent and eradicate these crimes" than by using sanctions against the arming of those committing the crimes, she said. Malta's Deputy Prime Minister Chris Fearne, who presided over the meeting, said that UN Sanctions Committees should make sexual and gender-based violence a criterion for imposing sanctions. As "conflicts have become more fragmented, and the theatre of conflict much more complex and volatile", Kamboj said that preventing sexual violence "requires a multifaceted approach, involving community engagement - particularly with women - in security and disarmament decisions".

## Patra Chawl redevelopment scam: ED attaches properties worth Rs 73.62 crore of Sanjay Raut's close aide, others



GNS News Agency, April 27

The Mumbai unit of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached immovable properties worth Rs 73.62 crore while probing a money laundering angle in the Patra Chawl redevelopment scam, taking the total attachment of the immovable properties in this case so far to Rs 116.27 crore. The attached properties consist of several land parcels of accused Pravin Raut and his close associates in Maharashtra's Palghar, Dapoli, Raigad and Thane. Pravin Raut is a close associate of Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut.

According to the ED, Pravin Raut was the frontman of Sanjay Raut in the Patra Chawl scam. Pravin and Sanjay were both arrested by the ED in the case in 2022. The two later got bail in November 2022. The ED investigation has revealed that a part of the proceeds of the crime (PoC), amounting to Rs 95 crore, was diverted by Pravin Raut, director of the Guru Ashish Construction Pvt Ltd (GACPL), to his personal bank accounts.

Part of the proceeds were utilised for acquisition of various land parcels directly from farmers or land aggregators in his own name or in the name of his firm Prathmesh Developers. Also, a part of the PoC was

parked by him with people associated with him.

"Further, some properties acquired by Pravin Raut out of the PoC, were later gifted by him to his family members. Such identified proceeds of crime in the form of land parcels acquired from farmers, gifted properties to family members and equivalent properties of siphoned off PoC to Pravin Raut and associates, have been attached amounting to Rs 73.62 crore," the ED stated in a statement on Wednesday. The ED's money laundering probe in the case is based on Mumbai police EOW's FIR pertaining to alleged irregularities in the redevelopment of the Patra Chawl Project in Mumbai's Goregaon. The Redevelopment was carried out by the GACPL and Pravin Raut was the director of the said firm.

The EOW had registered a fraud case against the GACPL, Rakesh Kumar Wadhwan, Sarang Kumar Gadhwani and others on a complaint by Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA). The EOW also filed a chargesheet in the matter in December 2020. During the money laundering investigation, the ED found that the GACPL, which was entrusted with the redevelopment of the Patra Chawl Project for the rehabilitation of 672 tenants, has been involved in significant financial misconduct. A tripartite agreement was signed between the society, MHADA and GACPL wherein the developer (GACPL) was supposed to provide flats to 672 tenants, develop flats for the MHADA and thereafter sell the remaining land. However, the directors of the GACPL misled MHADA and managed to sell the Floor Space Index (FSI) fraudulently to nine developers, collecting an amount of Rs 901.79 crore (approximately) without constructing the rehabilitation portion for the 672 displaced tenants and flats for the MHADA. Earlier in this case, assets worth Rs 11.15 crore belonging to Pravin Raut and Sanjay Raut were attached by the ED. Also, assets amounting to Rs 31.50 crore of Rakesh Kumar Wadhwan and Sarang Wadhwan, in the form of properties situated at Goa were also attached by the agency.

## Umar Khalid's counsel: 'Delhi Police repeating his name like a mantra in chargesheet, does repeating a lie 100 times make it a truth?'

GNS News Agency, April 27

The Delhi Police was repeating Umar Khalid's name like a mantra in the chargesheet, and there was a vicious media trial against him, argued advocate Trideep Pais, representing Khalid during his bail arguments in the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots 'larger conspiracy' case. "...does repeating a lie a hundred times make it a truth?" asked Pais, adding that recurrent mention of Khalid's name in the chargesheet alleged that he had pre-planned protests in 2020 at 23 sites, eventually leading to riots.

Former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student Khalid, who was booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for his alleged involvement in the case, had earlier told the Delhi court that other accused facing graver allegations than him were out on bail as well as people allegedly involved in similar activities were not even made an accused by the Delhi Police. In February, Khalid withdrew his bail plea from the Supreme Court and moved the Delhi court of Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai, citing a "change in circumstances". Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad had earlier said Khalid was amplifying his narrative as part of a conspiracy by sharing certain links with people with a social media following. "Is sharing messages a criminal or terror act?" Pais asked on Wednesday, responding to the SPP. "Is the court able to see the ridiculousness of the prosecution's attempt to keep someone in jail?" The advocate also asked the court if Khalid was restricted by the number of people to whom he could send messages. "Why can't an accused forward news to someone else...he was sharing the 'correct narrative'," he added.

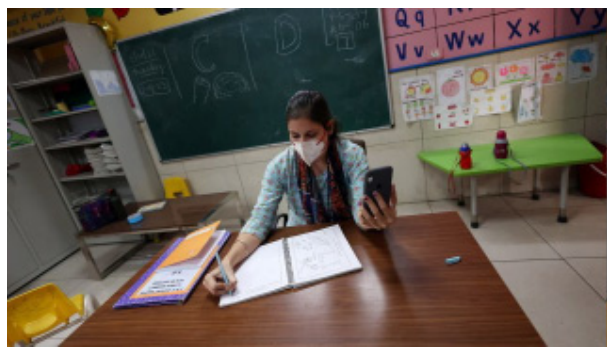
After reading statements from various anchors from news channels such as Aaj Tak, India TV, and Zee News, Pais also said a vicious media trial was taking place against the accused. "The anchors were reading from the chargesheet 24/7," said Pais, asking if this didn't



An accused in the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots 'larger conspiracy' case, Umar Khalid withdrew his bail plea from the Supreme Court in February and moved a Delhi court.

amount to a 'vicious' media trial. Pais argued that the court must examine each witness and analyse each document while hearing his bail plea to determine whether a terror case is made against him. "Surface analysis was not done. This is just naming and shaming...they have no material against me," argued Pais, repeatedly relying on the judgments of Vernon Gonsalves vs the State of Maharashtra and Shoma Sen. "There's one witness who forgets, one who says contradictory things...this is complete pamphleteering," added Pais. The advocate also said that people who speak up are silenced by anti-terror laws these days. Stating that this hearing was not a "gossip" session, Pais said that merely because some witnesses named Khalid, it doesn't mean that a case is made out against him. "The court must opine whether the witness statements prima facie make a case of terror against Khalid." He added that the case has yet to move an inch forward three years after the trials began.

# In a first, teachers of Pune private schools allotted Lok Sabha election duty



GNS News Agency, April 27

While teachers of government-run schools have always been called for election duty, this time teachers from private institutions in Pune have also been tasked with polling assignments. Earlier this month, the Bombay High Court directed associations of unaided and private schools in Maharashtra to ask teachers of its member schools to cooperate with the requests by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to be available for Lok Sabha elections duty. The High Court also told the school bodies to immediately inform its member schools, who got requisition notices, to provide information on staff sought by the poll body.

Suhas Diwase, District Collector, Pune, private teachers can be pressed for election duty after the decision of the Bombay High Court. "In Pune, we never had felt the need for such conscription but this time we will appoint teachers for election duty," he said. Diwase said these teachers would be asked to undergo training and paid an allowance as well. The teachers are supposed to attend three-day training — one-day training a fortnight before the election day, a day just before the voting day, and on the day of voting. Usually, the ECI needs around 50,000 people for poll duty. Teachers and, in several cases, non-teaching staff have been summoned for poll duty this time. As many as 1,628 government officers, bank employees, and Central and State employees will be on polling duty from the Pune Lok Sabha constituency.

Hrishikesh Soman, Principal, Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, said they have submitted a list of teaching and non-teaching staff to the election office and some of them have been allotted poll duty. Soman said, "I do not have information about exactly how many staff members have got the duty but some non-teaching staff and peons have definitely been called. They will be attending the upcoming training. As for teachers, their names have been submitted as required". Can't force them to

take up election duty. However, the effort of the ECI to rope in private school teachers has met with mixed reactions. Jagruti Dharmadhikari, Vice-President, Maharashtra Rajya Shikshan Sanstha Mahamandal, said, "Election duty and such extra work is fine for teachers of government schools and aided schools because they are legally supposed to go for election duty and they are also paid much better." The principal of an ISC board school in Pune said they were asked for a list of teaching and administrative staff members in October last year. "We had instead responded citing a court order through our legal advisor," said the principal.

The principal said officials visited the school earlier in the week to again request them to send some staff as they are still short of 300 people. The principal said, "Most of our 60-member staff is teaching staff and I cannot force them to take up election duty. They have young children and other family responsibilities to take care of". The principal of another Pune-based unaided state board school said it was approached by the district collector's office asking them to send some staff for election duty. While some of their teachers have already been named for election duty now, as per the recent court orders, the principal and teachers are still irked over the matter.

"We even have a teacher whose child is physically disabled and she has no one else to take care of the child. She somehow manages to come to work but a full-day election duty that too for three days is not going to be possible for someone like her," the principal said. Many teachers have made plans or booked tickets for holidays in May and will have to cancel those due to this, she said. Application for relief from election duty

Anjali Kulkarni, Tehsildar, Sanjay Gandhi Yojana Branch, said, there are 19 reasons under which relief from polling duty can be granted. "These include a person being out of the country for official duty, pregnant or lactating lady, severe illness, people retiring within six months, three days and before and after a family wedding, etc," said Kulkarni. Based on such reasons, Kulkarni said she has accepted nearly 150 applications for relief from election duty in the Kothrud Assembly constituency. "There are also cases where people couldn't make it for training earlier due to some reasons. But they are available now. I will be conducting training sessions for 79-80 such people now. For example, Abhinav Kala Mahavidyalay had their exams during training sessions and they had a limited staff. But they are available now, so they will be participating in training sessions," said Kulkarni. For the polling duty, these employees will be given lunch and training remunerations, but only on the polling day, once they have completed their duty.

# Bombay High Court rejects PIL for 'sheer abuse of court process', asks petitioner to pay Rs. 50,000 cost to KEM Hospital



GNS News Agency, April 27

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) by a contractor challenging conditions of a tender issued by a government body and termed it to be a 'sheer abuse' of the court process. The High Court also imposed a cost of Rs 50,000 on the petitioner to be paid within four months to the civic-run KEM Hospital in Mumbai. A division bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Arif S Doctor passed an order in PIL by one Nilesh Chandrakant Kamble. Kamble claimed to be a social worker and engaged in a similar business mentioned in the tender issued by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), said he was therefore aggrieved by the eligibility conditions in the bid. The bench said it was 'unfortunate' to adjudicate in the petition with 'oblique

motives' which is 'purportedly filed in public interest'.

Appearing for the petitioner, Advocate Indira Labde claimed that due to impugned tender conditions, some of the contractors were not able to participate in the bidding process. "In our jurisprudence, there has been a phenomenal rise of the PIL petitions being filed before the superior courts," the bench noted. The bench added rules related to who can file PILs had been relaxed by permitting any member of society or an organisation to espouse the cause of those in disadvantageous situations, poor or illiterate.

"However, permitting a contractor to file a PIL petition challenging the conditions of a tender, in our opinion, is nothing but a sheer abuse of process of Court and an effort to pollute the purity of the stream of Public Interest Litigation," the bench said. The bench referred to the Supreme Court judgement in the State of Uttarakhand vs Balwant Singh Chauhan case, in which the top court ruled "frivolous PILs which intend to plead personal or any other extraneous cause should be discouraged and such PIL petitions should be nipped in the bud". The bench noted that while the petitioner intended to espouse public cause, he stated to be engaged in similar business. He claimed the PIL was filed as a "last resort" and he did not have any personal interest in the matter, the bench pointed out. "Such statement if seen juxtaposed with the particulars of the petitioner, as disclosed by him in this PIL petition itself, is absolutely strange and simply dis-entitles the petitioner to seek any relief in this PIL petition," the bench observed and dismissed the PIL with exemplary costs.

# Delhi High Court closes suo motu case on safety of students during college festivals after police SOP

GNS News Agency, April 27

The Delhi High Court recently took note of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) framed by the city police to be followed by universities and colleges while organising events or festivals to ensure the safety and security of students in general and women students in particular. A division bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora on April 22 took note of the SOP and closed the proceedings in a suo motu matter initiated by it last year after taking cognizance of an Indian Express report on the alleged secret filming of students of Delhi University's Bharti College at IIT Delhi's annual 'Rendezvous' fest.

The report, Harassment at college fests leaves students anguished, shaken, highlighted lapses in security measures employed for annual college festivals organised across Delhi, resulting in injuries, violations, and trauma for students attending such festivals. During the hearing on April 22, the counsel appearing for Delhi University, IIT Delhi, and Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha (IP) University undertook that they shall follow the SOP along with the "various directives/advisories issued by them". They clarified that their directives or advisories are not in conflict with the SOP in any way.

While closing the matter, the bench said in the event the SOP "needs to be revised in the future", the parties shall be at liberty to do so with the "consent of all".

Among other points, the SOP says no student would be allowed on the campus without a valid student Photo Identity Card (ID) of the university or the college concerned and in its absence, the student's identity shall be verified from admission/fee receipt along with one more



recognised identity document. It states the student's relatives will not be given entry to the event or festival. Concerning security at girls' washrooms, the SOP states that only women workers or staff will be allowed to access and clean girls' common rooms, toilet areas, and changing rooms. It adds women private security guards must be deployed in and around these areas and other areas frequented by women students. "

The Girls/Ladies toilet area must have all its windows/ventilation spaces sealed or covered with opaque glass from one side to ensure adequate privacy," the SOP adds. On police protocol, the SOP states local police shall keep an adequate number of reserve forces in the vicinity of the venue to promptly respond to any untoward incident arising from the event venue. In case any untoward incident, "particularly pertaining to a female student", is reported during the event/festival, strict legal action under the relevant provisions of the law will be "immediately initiated", it adds.

# In Punjab, AAP on the back foot as posters on Old Pension Scheme spring up



GNS News Agency, April 27

In bad news for the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) issue is set to rear its head yet again in the state. With Punjab gearing up to vote in the Lok Sabha elections on June 1, over 2 lakh government employees covered under the New Pension Scheme (NPS) have started pasting posters or flex boards outside their houses asking candidates to declare their stand on OPS.

"Employees will ask candidates what their stand on the implementation of OPS is. We will ask AAP candidates why OPS has not been implemented in Punjab two years after the government was formed and it was notified," Jasvir Singh Talwara, convener of the Purani Pension Bahali Sangharsh Committee, an employees' union, told The Indian Express. "Our votes will go to the candidate whose party can implement OPS in true letter and spirit," Jarnail Singh Patti, general secretary of the committee, said.

The posters that have sprung up across districts in Punjab read: "I am a government employee recruited after 2004 who is affected by the new pension scheme. My OPS has been snatched away. Only those candidates should come to seek votes from us who can help in implementation of OPS." Festive offer Parminder Pal Singh, a government teacher and his wife have pasted a poster outside their house in Phagwara. Parminder Pal Singh, a government teacher and his wife have pasted a poster outside their house in Phagwara. "As most employees will be busy with poll duties, we have not planned any protests or public demonstrations. But we will be placing

our questions before the candidates in a peaceful manner," Talwara said. "AAP has kept the issue in cold storage and the BJP will also be questioned," he added. "We will lodge our protest in a silent manner. Voters also have the right to question their candidates...not only employees, but their families will also decide to vote based on the response from the candidates," union leader Karamjit Singh Tamkot said. Sukhjit Singh, convener of the Punjab unit of the Contributory Pension Federation Employees Union (CPFUEU) said they were planning a hunger strike on May 1, from 10 am to 4 pm at Khatkar Kalan — the native place of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. "As AAP leaders claim to be his followers, we are going to remind them of their unfulfilled promise of OPS implementation," he said.

CPFUEU, Punjab for not keeping its poll promise in Shimla on October 26 as Himachal Pradesh was going for polls in November. However, on October 22, 2022, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced that OPS would be implemented and declared a 6 per cent hike in dearness allowance. Both these announcements came two days before Diwali were termed "Diwali gifts". Subsequently, the central CPFUEU withdrew its decision to protest. Later, employees announced a "pol khol" rally in Gujarat in November 2022 as the OPS announcement was not notified. Subsequently, the OPS was notified on November 18, 2022, and the rally was cancelled. The Punjab government then formed a committee to study the implementation of OPS in states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan (it reverted to NPS after a change in government last year). On October 2, 2023, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the AAP national convener, said in a post on X that the party strongly supported the demand to bring OPS, which is why it was implemented in AAP-ruled Punjab. "NPS is an injustice against employees. We have implemented OPS in Punjab and have written to the Centre for implementing it for Delhi govt employees. Some other non-BJP govt have also implemented OPS," the post read. Since then, government employees have been protesting the government's 'betrayal'. The NPS was made mandatory for all new government recruits from January 1, 2004. Under the NPS, 10 per cent of a government employee's basic salary is deducted as the employee's Provident Fund while 14 per cent is added by the government. The money remains with the Pension Fund Regulatory and Developmental Authority (PFRDA), which is a central government organisation. Under it, money is invested in stocks as per the guidelines of the Centre.

# In setback for Congress, former Delhi minister Rajkumar Chauhan resigns, says 'no plans to join any other party'

GNS News Agency, April 27

In mounting trouble for the Congress in Delhi, former Cabinet minister Rajkumar Chauhan on Wednesday resigned from the party, accusing those appointed to oversee the Lok Sabha elections in the city of disrespecting him publicly. Speaking to The Indian Express, Chauhan, a former four-time MLA who served on the Delhi Cabinet three times, confirmed that he had resigned. Saying he had no plans of switching to "any other side", Chauhan demanded action against the "outsiders" fielded by the party for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Party sources said more resignations — mostly of senior Delhi leaders — could be in the offing in the coming 24 to 48 hours. A senior Congress leader clarified that those who had made up their mind to leave the party fold "won't necessarily join any other party" but could get together to create "a new political front against corruption" in Delhi.

Chauhan is under fire for allegedly mobilising a section of Congress workers against its North West Delhi candidate, Udit Raj. On Monday, when its Delhi unit was officially introducing its three Lok Sabha candidates to the media, the protesters raised slogans of "Bahari ummedwar nahi chalega (an outsider candidate will not be allowed)", criticising Raj for his affiliation with the BJP till 2019. "I have resigned because a meeting was called...to discuss the election candidates...some 20 to



25 main leaders from North East Delhi, including Arvinder Singh Lovely, were a part of that meeting. During the meeting, we were trying to put our side forward but we were not allowed to," Chauhan alleged. "We were shouted at and asked to get out of the room. If we cannot express our opinion even in a closed room, where can we?" he demanded.

Asked if he plans to join any other party, he said, "I have no plans to join any other party as of now...currently my motive is to ensure that the candidate answers...they can take any candidate but at least give it (a Lok Sabha ticket) to someone who is deserving and is a local candidate. If all outsider candidates will get tickets, where will the genuine candidates go?" he asked.

# '5G scam is going to be the biggest scam': AAP's Sanjay Singh on Centre's request on spectrum case



GNS News Agency, April 27

Senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh on Wednesday called the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) the "biggest" corrupt party and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of committing a "5G scam" to benefit his "rich friends". Singh's comments came after the Centre moved the Supreme Court on Monday seeking modification of its February 2012 judgment in the 2G case, which directed that allocation of the 2G spectrum should be done through auction. In its petition, the Centre sought allowing the allocation of spectrum through an administrative process per the law. "Desh ko nahi, dost ko fayeda pahunchana chahtein hain Modi ji (Modiji wants his friends to benefit not the country)...," said Singh, a Rajya Sabha MP.

"When the 2G spectrum case was exposed, from the local BJP leader to Prime Minister Narendra Modi everyone held protests in every corner against the first-come-first basis... But now, the same party approved the policy in Parliament when about 150 MPs (Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha combined) were suspended and not present in the House..." alleged Sanjay Singh. Now, Singh added, the BJP has approached the Supreme Court

to implement the 5G spectrum license on a first-come-first-serve basis. "This 5G scam is going to prove to be the biggest scam in the country ever... All of you will see... Modi ji has given airport, railway, electricity...to his friends... Now he wants to benefit them by giving 5G spectrum license too," he said.

# Vishwajeet Kadam shuns campaigning as Shiv Sena (UBT) gets its way in Sangli, Congress to hold urgent meet

GNS News Agency, April 27

The Maharashtra Congress is set to hold an urgent meeting in Sangli to pacify MLA Vishwajeet Kadam and other party workers. Kadam has been staying away from campaigning for the Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Chandraraj Patil in Sangli, which goes to poll in the third phase of Lok Sabha elections on May 7.

"Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole, senior party leader Balasaheb Thorat and other leaders will meet with party workers tomorrow (Thursday) in Sangli. After that, I will decide on campaigning," Kadam .

Kadam has been at loggerheads with the party because it did not field his nominee, Vishal Patil of the Congress, and let Chandraraj Patil contest from the seat as part of the seat-sharing agreement within the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance.

## Israel pounds Gaza as Iran's retaliation threat puts region on edge



GNS News Agency, April 27

Residents reported heavy Israeli fire in central Gaza on April 12, with regional tensions soaring after Iran threatened reprisals over a strike in Syria this month that killed two Iranian generals. As talks for a truce and hostage release dragged on, fears that Iran could soon launch an attack on Israel prompted the United States to announce it was sending reinforcements to the Middle East as a deterrent. U.S. President Joe Biden said he expected Iran to attempt to strike Israel soon but warned it against attacking the U.S. ally in retaliation for the April 1 strike on its Damascus consulate. Authorities in Hamas-ruled Gaza reported dozens of new air strikes in the central region where most Israeli troops have regrouped in recent days. Israel's military said its aircraft had struck more than 60 militant targets in Gaza over the previous day.

The Hamas media office said 25 people were taken to hospital in Deir al-Balah "as a result of an air strike on a house". Mohammed al-Rayes, 61, told AFP that he fled Israeli "air strikes and artillery shelling" in Nuseirat overnight. "It was all fire and destruction, with so many martyrs lying in the street," he said. Another resident, Laila Nasser, 40, reported "shells and missiles" throughout the night. "They will do to Nuseirat what they did to Khan Yunis," said Ms. Nasser, vowing to flee to the southern-most city of Rafah, like most of Gaza's population.

The war began with Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack against Israel which resulted in the deaths of 1,170 people, mostly civilians, according to Israeli figures. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 33,634 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. The latest bombardments in Gaza came after Israel said it had strengthened air defences and paused leave for combat units, following a deadly April 1 air strike that destroyed Iran's consulate building in Damascus. Iran blamed its arch foe Israel, which has stepped up strikes against Iran-linked targets in Syria since the Gaza war began. A vehicle drives near rubble during Eid al-Fitr, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Gaza City on April 11, 2024. A vehicle drives near rubble during Eid al-Fitr, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Gaza City on April 11, 2024. | Photo Credit: Reuters The White House said on Friday that the threat from Iran remained "real".

Asked what his message was to Iran on striking Israel, Mr. Biden said: "Don't." "We are devoted to the defence of Israel, we will support Israel, we will help defend Israel and Iran will not succeed," he said. A defence official said the Pentagon was "moving additional assets to the region to bolster regional deterrence efforts and in-

crease force protection for U.S. forces." Mr. Biden sent the head of U.S. Central Command, General Michael Kurilla, to Israel for urgent talks on the threat from Iran. After meeting Kurilla on Friday, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel and the United States stood "shoulder to shoulder", despite recent differences over the conduct of the war in Gaza. "Our enemies think that they can pull apart Israel and the United States, but the opposite is true — they are bringing us together and strengthening our ties," Mr. Gallant said.

Washington, which has had no diplomatic relations with Tehran since the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution, also asked its allies to use their influence with Iran to urge restraint, the State Department said. After calls with his Australian, British and German counterparts Thursday, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said: "Iran does not seek to expand the scope of the war." But he added that it felt it had no choice but to respond to the deadly attack on its diplomatic mission after the UN Security Council failed to take action. Lebanon's Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah said it fired "dozens of Katyusha rockets" at Israeli artillery positions Friday, a bombardment it said was in response to Israeli strikes in the south. The Israeli army said approximately 40 launches were identified, some of which were intercepted. "No injuries were reported," it added. French travel warning France warned its nationals against travelling to Iran, Israel, Lebanon or the Palestinian territories, after the U.S. embassy in Israel announced it was restricting the movements of its diplomats over security fears. German airline Lufthansa said its planes would no longer use Iranian airspace as it extended a suspension of flights to and from Tehran.

Palestinian children look on from a window during Eid al-Fitr, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Gaza City on April 11, 2024. Palestinian children look on from a window during Eid al-Fitr, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Gaza City

In their October attack, Hamas militants seized about 250 hostages, 129 of whom remain in Gaza, including 34 of the Israeli army says are dead. The European Union on Friday imposed sanctions on the armed wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad for "widespread" sexual violence during the October 7 attack. The bloc said fighters from the two militant groups — already on the EU's terrorism blacklist — "committed widespread sexual and gender-based violence in a systematic manner, using it as a weapon of war". New crossing for aid Washington has ramped up pressure on Netanyahu to increase aid flows to Gaza in the face of UN warnings of imminent famine. The Israeli army said that an undisclosed number of aid trucks had been allowed to enter Gaza Thursday through a newly opened border crossing into the north of the territory. "The first food aid trucks entered through the new northern crossing from Israel into Gaza yesterday," the Israeli defence ministry body that oversees Palestinian civil affairs, COGAT, said. Despite repeated AFP requests for comment, Israeli authorities did not disclose the exact location of the new crossing, which Israeli media reported to be close to the Zikim kibbutz. Mr. Gallant had trumpeted the new crossing on Wednesday, promising to "flood Gaza with aid", but on Thursday the U.N. Security Council said "more should be done".

## Who is Riddhi Patel? Indian-American protestor threatened to 'murder' Bakersfield City council



GNS News Agency, April 27

Riddhi Patel, 28, a pro-Palestine protestor, is accused of 16 felony counts and booked into jail on suspicion of eight counts of intending to terrorize with the threats, and the rest of eight counts of threatening city officials during her speech. During a segment of the council meeting designated for public commentary, Patel vocalized her opposition to the proposed security measures, specifically the installation of metal detectors, which she perceived as a criminalization of the public.

Patel's contentious remarks directly threatened the council, stating, "You guys want to criminalize us with metal detectors," followed by, "We'll see you at your house. We'll murder you." She further escalated her rhetoric speech: "I hope one day somebody brings the guillotine and kills all of you motherf\*\*\*\*\*." She called out "Navratri a festival of oppressors" during her speech and invoked

Mahatma Gandhi and Jesu Christ just before she threatened the city council members. From Collin Rugg to the Hindu American Foundation shared the video on X, which attracted more than 3 million views. "We are outraged that this person invokes Gandhi & Chaitra Navaratri while threatening to murder Bakersfield leaders," the Hindu American Foundation posted. "A known Hinduphobe, she has also been ranting against Hindus .... It's the same antisemitic," an Indian-American woman posted condemning Riddhi's action. KGET TV, an NBC affiliate in Bakersfield, stated the council "has been filled with tension" as "pro-Palestinian protesters urged council members to pass a cease-fire resolution for the Israel-Hamas War."

In response to the turmoil, Councilman and Vice Mayor Andrae Gonzales who was there at the time of Patel's speech, stated that the council would not yield to intimidation. He condemned the threats, labelling them as "completely inappropriate, unproductive and is deeply concerning." Gonzales explained, "Sit at the table like adults and exchange ideas, go back and forth really trying to figure out how we can find a path together. Making real threats to elected officials and decision-makers is not the way to influence others. Nobody on the city council will be intimidated to action." The United Liberation Front, a pro-Palestinian organization, distanced itself from Patel's actions. The group issued a statement denouncing any form of threats against public officials, clarifying that Patel's aggressive language does not align with their principles and fails to represent the United Liberation Front's stance.

## Why US companies are weighing options of a 4-day workweek

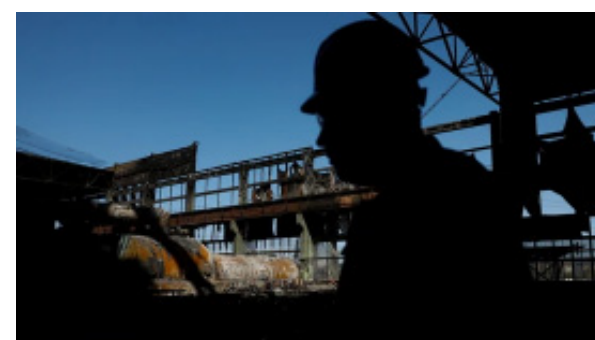
GNS News Agency, April 27

An absent motivation is the main sign of burnout in the workers. As a result of that, some companies are discussing the possibility of shortening the workweeks. Albeit a few businesses willing to undertake a four-day workweek, the onset of AI technology such as ChatGpt and Google Gemini could, perhaps, speed the shift.

The latest survey conducted by Tech.co involving 1,000 U.S.-based business CEOs provided insight showing that companies with more AI history would be almost 2 times more open to opting for a four-day workweek than those that were not. Many employees today grapple with feelings of being overburdened and burnout in their roles. Addressing this issue, Paul Knopp, the chair and CEO of KPMG US, expressed to CNN, "We are all working to figure out what is optimal, and we will continue to experiment and pivot."

A majority of the workforce echoes the sentiment for a reduced workweek. According to a Gallup poll, a whopping 77% of American workers believe that a four-day workweek, even if it still encompasses 40 hours, would positively influence their well-being. Within this group, nearly half anticipate an "extremely positive" impact. Encouragingly, empirical studies from both the United States and Europe have demonstrated that a four-day workweek can indeed enhance employee's work-life balance.

However, Knopp cautions that "It's way too early to declare the four-day work week part of the future. It's still in the experimentation phase." The challenge for CEOs lies in understanding the nuances of how a shortened workweek would function, its effects on the mental and physical health of employees, and its potential to reduce operational costs by fostering healthier work environments. Some organizations that have trialled



shorter workweeks have found the sweet spot and are continuing with the practice. In the UK, the majority of companies that participated in the largest global experiment of a four-day workweek have maintained the shorter schedule a year later, with over half making it a permanent change. The feasibility of a shorter workweek is not universal. Knopp pointed out that while it might be suitable for sectors like finance and marketing, it may not be practical in industries such as healthcare, media, and police, which are already facing labour shortages. "My guess is a widespread four-day workweek could be years away — if ever. You'll see companies quietly experimenting with it, but I don't personally foresee widespread adoption in the next couple of years," he speculates. Echoing a similar sentiment, billionaire investor Steve Cohen told CNBC his conviction that a four-day workweek is on the horizon, particularly with the advancements in AI technology. Cohen's investment in a startup golf league is partly based on the belief that people will soon have more leisure time, particularly on Fridays. "I think I would have done the golf investment anyway, because I think there's a longer-term thought, but my belief is a four-day work week is coming," he stated.

## Gordon Ramsay's Hells Kitchen goes real: Squatters Occupy £13m pub threatening legal action

GNS News Agency, April 27

Absolute Nightmare for Gordon! The star TV chef, known for his intolerance of "out-of-control" eateries, is facing a chaotic situation of his own. Squatters have occupied his lavish £13 million pub, and the situation is turning into a legal showdown. These brazen occupants aren't just refusing to leave — they're reportedly threatening legal action against Ramsay himself! Reports claim the squatters have even barricaded themselves inside using the pub's kitchen utensils.

As reported by The Sun, brazen squatters have served the celebrity chef with a legal notice outside the Grade-II listed building. The outlet's photos show them hiding inside York & Albany pub, the same eatery Gordon was set to sell to new partners for a multi-million dollar deal. The photos capture the "professional squatters" lying on the couch inside the pub, with things scattered, leaving the whole place look thrashy. "The pub was temporarily closed while he was finalizing a new lease, and during this handover period, a gang of professional squatters somehow bypassed all the security and CCTV, and got themselves in." A source told The Sun

Gordon Ramsay's 19th-century-inspired gastropub, located near Regent's Park in the heart of London, has been hit by a squatter's strike. According to the UK-based publications, Gordon was also involved in a legal dispute over the venue in 2015. The incident, which occurred on Wednesday, reportedly remains the same as



people inside refused to vacate despite the star chef reaching out to police for help. "They've now boarded themselves in the building and are slowly taking over the place, leaving their crap everywhere and brazenly telling locals this is now their home." The source added. "They've glued tight all the locks and are cooking up a storm in the kitchen, which is especially galling for Gordon." The squatters have posted a notice on the pub's front door stating that the building is a 'non-residential building' and that they have a legal right to live there. They argue that since the building "was NOT designed or adapted, before the time of our entry, for use as a place to live", anti-squatters rules do not apply. They have also issued a warning of potential legal action, meaning that anyone attempting to evict them without their consent could face up to six months imprisonment.

## Roku says this after the cyberattack that compromised 576,000 streaming accounts

GNS News Agency, April 27

Roku addresses security breach affecting 576,000 accounts, implements password resets and two-factor authentication for all users. Second such breach this year., US-based streaming service giant, Roku revealed that approximately 576,000 user accounts were compromised in a security breach, marking the second such breach this year. The first breach had impacted 15,000 accounts. Roku's blog post detailed that unauthorized access was obtained through stolen login credentials. The attackers' method used in this case is known as "credential stuffing" where hackers gain entrance to numerous accounts, using login details which they obtained during a previous data breach. Such individuals typically use the same password for various online platforms, which is, in turn, exploited by hackers. More investigations from the Roku side show that the stolen credentials came from a separate data breach of another service. The company assured users, "There is no indication that Roku was the source of the account credentials used in these attacks

or that Roku's systems were compromised in either incident." Despite the large number of accounts affected, the actual financial impact was limited to fewer than 400 cases where the intruders made unauthorized purchases.

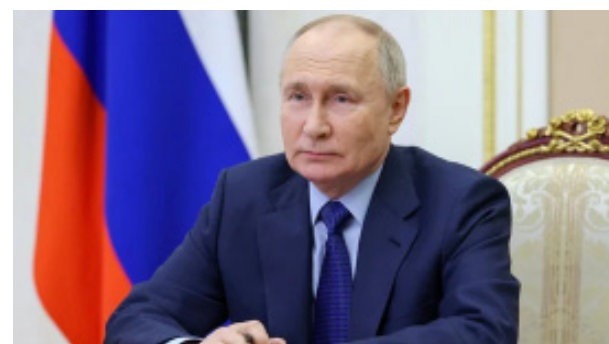
The streaming service giant has taken steps to reverse these charges and is issuing refunds to all impacted parties. "These malicious actors were not able to access sensitive user information or full credit card information," they wrote in the revealed statement. In response to the breach, Roku has automatically reset the passwords of affected accounts. The company will also reach out to those users directly. As an additional security measure, Roku is rolling out two-factor authentication for all accounts, which involves a verification step on a secondary device whenever a login attempt is made. Currently, Roku hosts a user base of over 80 million and is taking these incidents seriously. The company expressed its regret over the breaches and the inconvenience caused to its customers, claiming that account security remains a paramount concern.

## China helping Russia in large scale military manufacturing amid Ukraine war

GNS News Agency, April 27

Amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, China is helping Russia ramp up its defence industrial base at such a large scale that Moscow is now undertaking its most ambitious expansion in military manufacturing since the Soviet era, CNN reported, citing senior Biden administration officials. One of the official claimed that the Chinese and Russian entities have also been working jointly to produce drones inside of Russia. The support from China is having a significant impact on Russia's ability to continue its assault on Ukraine, while Ukraine's military has been plagued with equipment and weapon shortages. The challenge for Ukraine is exacerbated by Republicans in the US Congress continuing to block a vote on a new American military aid package to Kyiv. "One of the most game changing moves available to us at this time to support Ukraine is to persuade the PRC (People's Republic of China) to stop helping Russia reconstitute its military industrial base. Russia would struggle to sustain its war effort without PRC inputs," said a senior administration official, adding that Chinese "materials are filling critical gaps in Russia's defense production cycle," CNN reported.

According to the report, this week Gen. Chris Cavoli, the commander of US European Command, told lawmakers that Russia has been "quite successful" at reconstituting its military since it invaded Ukraine more than 2 years ago, and its capacity has largely "grown back" to what it was before the invasion. US officials are now making clear that China is largely responsible for that rapid build-up. As a demonstration of this deepening China-Russia partnership: in 2023, 90 per cent of Russia's micro-electronics imports came from China, which Russia has used to produce missiles, tanks, and aircraft, a second official said. Russia's rapidly expanding production of artillery rounds is due, in large part, to the nitrocellulose coming from China, officials said. This comes as Russia appears on track to produce nearly three times more artillery munitions than the US and Europe, CNN reported earlier this year. Beyond the defence hardware, China is helping Russia to improve its satellite and other space based capabilities for use in Ukraine, and providing imagery to Russia for its war on Ukraine, the officials said. Some of this information comes from downgraded US intelligence, officials said. The support from China is compensating for the significant setbacks that Russia's defense industry experienced early in the Ukraine war due to US sanctions and export controls. President Joe



As a demonstration of this deepening China-Russia partnership: in 2023, 90 per cent of Russia's micro-electronics imports came from China, which Russia has used to produce missiles, tanks, and aircraft, a second official said.

Biden raised concerns about China's support for Russia's defense industrial base in a phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping earlier this month, following other officials repeatedly raising the concerns with their Chinese counterparts, officials said. Secretary of State Antony Blinken also raised the matter with US allies during his recent Europe trip, the officials said. The US has not seen any interruption to the ongoing Chinese support since that Biden-Xi phone call, though sometimes it takes time to see changes come to fruition. China continues to steer clear of providing Russia with lethal weaponry, which the US has warned against since the beginning of the Ukraine war, but in many cases, the inputs can be just as impactful as lethal weaponry. CNN reported. US officials said it is imperative for the US and its allies to persuade China to stop this practice, though success will be hard to measure. Earlier this year Xi heralded a new year of growing coordination with Russia during a call with President Vladimir Putin. Earlier this month, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen delivered China a warning of 'significant consequences' if Chinese companies provide support to Russia for the Ukraine war during her trip to the country. CNN said in its report that the Biden administration also issued an executive order targeting third country banks that facilitate support to the Russian defense industrial base and following that action, the US has been touch with banks around the world to build up compliance systems to avoid inadvertently being caught up in this trade, which would result in US sanctions

## Government approves extension of subsidy scheme on sugar supplied to AAY families by 2 years till March 2026



The government on February 1 approved the extension of subsidy scheme for sugar supplied to 1.89 crore Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) families through ration shops for two years till March 31, 2026. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved extension of scheme of sugar subsidy for AAY families distributed through Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) for two more years till March 31, 2026.

With this approval, the government will continue giving subsidy of ₹18.50 per kg to participating states for

distribution of sugar to AAY families through PDS at the rate of one kg per family per month. States have the responsibility to procure and distribute sugar.

"Under the scheme, the central government gives subsidy of ₹18.50 per kg per month of sugar to AAY families of participating states. The approval is expected to extend benefits of more than Rs 1,850 crore during period of 15th Finance Commission (2020-21 to 2025-26). The scheme is expected to benefit about 1.89 crores AAY families of the country," an official statement said. The scheme facilitates access of sugar to the poorest of the poor and adds energy to their diet so that their health improves. The Centre is already giving free ration under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna (PM-GKAY). Sale of 'Bharat Atta', 'Bharat Dal', tomatoes and onions at affordable and fair prices are the measures to ensure sufficient food in plate of citizens beyond PM-GKAY also. So far, about 3 lakh tonnes of Bharat Dal (chana dal) and about 2.4 lakh tonnes of Bharat Atta have already been sold, benefitting ordinary consumers. "Thus, availability of subsidized dal, atta and sugar have completed the food for a common citizen of India fulfilling Modi ki Guarantee of 'Food for All, Nutrition for All'," the statement said.

## fertilisers subsidy set to decrease, food subsidy sees increase

The Centre has decreased fertiliser subsidies, apparently hoping that the improving situation in Ukraine and increased domestic production will help in managing the situation. The Fertilisers and Chemicals Ministry has been claiming that the increase in domestic production of essential fertilisers such as urea will result in decreasing fertiliser subsidies. Allocation for the Fertilisers Department in this Budget is ₹1,64,150.81 crore. It was ₹1,75,148.48 crore in the last Budget. In the Revised Estimates of the last financial year, it was ₹1,88,947.29 crore. The amount actually used in 2022-23 was ₹2,51,369.18 crore, with payments for indigenous and imported urea estimated to have accounted for the bulk of the expenditure.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the Budget that after the successful adoption of Nano Urea, application of Nano Di Ammonium Phosphate (Nano DAP) on various crops will be expanded to all agro-climatic zones. She said the pandemic had led to a crisis of food, fertiliser, fuel and finances for the world, while India successfully navigated its way. "The country showed the way forward and built consensus on solutions for those global problems," she said.

Welcoming the budgetary allocation, Union Fertilisers Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the Narendra Modi government is revolutionising the face of Indian agriculture. "The expansion of the application of Nano DAP on various crops, announced in the Budget will encourage sustainable farming. It will also help in making India Aatmanirbhar [self-reliant] in fertilisers," he said thanking the Finance Minister for the expansion of



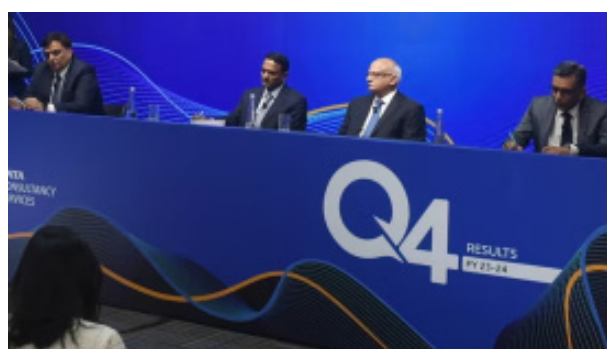
the application of Nano DAP on various crops. Food subsidy sees increase

Food subsidy has seen an increase in the allocation compared to the last year. The total food subsidy includes ₹2,05,250 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY) and ₹1 lakh crore for the Sugar Subsidy payable under Public Distribution System. In the last Budget, the amount was 1,97,350 crore, while in 2022-23, the actual expenditure was ₹2,72,802.38 crore. Ms. Sitharaman said the worries about food have been eliminated through free ration for 80 crore people. "Minimum support prices for the produce of 'Annadata' [food providers or farmers] are periodically increased appropriately. These and the provision of basic necessities have enhanced real income in the rural areas. Their economic needs could be addressed, thus spurring growth and generating jobs," she said.

## Artificial intelligence and cloud contracts power TCS profits

TCS 4th quarterly results have been announced and it has beaten analysts' expectations. So, where were the TCS wins coming from? The world has been talking up artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing during the last two years and it has been revealed that the company topped analysts' forecasts and doing the heavy lifting were its customer projects spanning cloud, machine learning and other AI-driven projects. Clients were looking at TCS to help them to help them keep costs in check, Bloomberg reported. The TCS statement today revealed the entire laundry list, saying "Win themes across key deals involved Cloud Migration and Modernization, GenAI, Enterprise application services, Identity & Access Management, Connected Devices, Digital Workplace Services, Network Services and Vendor Consolidation."

The statement also added, "AI, Cloud, Enterprise Solutions, IOT&DE and Cyber Security led the growth this quarter." At a news conference, TCS Chief Executive Officer K. Rithivasan indicated what he felt about the numbers revealed today. He said, "It'll be very difficult to say when the growth would return but this is probably the best guidance we've given." TCS execs also indicated what they are banking on - its robust deal pipeline to drive growth in 2025. TCS reported a 9 per cent growth in net profit at ₹12,434 crore. This was for the January-March quarter of



FY24. TCS net profit was up 9 per cent to 45,908 crore in FY2024. TCS revenue was 2,40,893 crore (2,25,458 crore in FY23). TCS operating margin up 1.50 per cent to 26 per cent in Q4. TCS revenue up 3.5 per cent to 61,237 crore in Q4 (from ₹60,583 crore in quarter a year ago). TCS registered new orders worth \$13.2 billion in 4th quarter. TCS India business revenue grew 38 per cent. TCS North America revenue, declined 2.3 per cent in Q4. TCS employee strength fell by close to 2,000 in qtr. TCS IT services attrition fell to 12.5 per cent (from 13.3 per cent).

## Boeing posts \$355 million loss as plane maker tries to dig out from under its latest crisis

Boeing said Wednesday that it lost USD 355 million on falling revenue in the first quarter, another sign of the crisis gripping the aircraft manufacturer as it faces increasing scrutiny over the safety of its planes and accusations of shoddy work from a growing number of whistleblowers. Boeing's CEO said the company is in "a tough moment," and its focus is on fixing its manufacturing issues, not the financial results. Company executives have been forced to talk more about safety and less about finances since a door plug blew out of a Boeing 737 Max during an Alaska Airlines flight in January, leaving a gaping hole in the plane. The accident halted progress that Boeing seemed to be making while recovering from two deadly crashes of Max jets in 2018 and 2019. Now those crashes are back in the spotlight, too. Later Wednesday, families of some of the 346 people killed in the crashes are scheduled to meet with US Justice Department officials. Family members have tried unsuccessfully to undo a 2021 settlement between the department and Boeing that let the company avoid criminal prosecution. "Although we report first-quarter financial results today, our focus

remains on the sweeping actions we are taking following the Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 accident," Boeing CEO David Calhoun told employees in a memo Wednesday. Calhoun ticked off a series of actions the company is taking and reported "significant progress" in improving manufacturing quality, much of it by slowing down production, which means fewer planes for its airline customers. "Near term, yes, we are in a tough moment," he wrote. "Lower deliveries can be difficult for our customers and for our financials. But safety and quality must and will come above all else." Calhoun, who will step down at the end of the year, said again he is fully confident the company will recover.

Boeing said the first-quarter loss, excluding special items came to USD 1.13 per share, which was better than the loss of USD 1.63 per share that analysts had forecast, according to a FactSet survey. Revenue fell 7.5 per cent, to USD 16.57 billion. Company shares gained more than 3 per cent in premarket trading. Boeing stock has plunged by about one-third since the Alaska Airlines door-plug blowout.

## You need to learn the South Korean practice of meong for a healthier life



In a world constantly buzzing with screens and notifications, finding moments of quiet contemplation can feel like a luxury. That's where meong, a simple yet profound Korean wellness practice, comes in. Pronounced "muh-uhng," meong translates to "to stare blankly" or "to gaze vacantly," but it's far from mindless. It's about intentionally entering a state of present-moment awareness through focused staring, often at nature. Imagine yourself perched on a rocky cliff overlooking the vastness of the ocean. You close your eyes, but instead of darkness, you're met with a kaleidoscope of colours dancing behind your eyelids. You open your eyes and fix your gaze on the rhythmic dance of the waves, the salty breeze whisking away your worries. This state of tranquil observation, free from thoughts and judgments, is the essence of meong.

Dr Rituparna Ghosh, consultant senior clinical psychologist, Apollo Hospitals, Navi Mumbai, explained that meong is used as a suffix in the Korean language to describe the act of "staring into stillness".

"Meong refers to activities such as 'bull meong' or staring into the fire, or staring at nature (trees or water) as a restorative practice. This is explained as a form of zoning out mindfully and shares parallels with Indian meditation and yoga, which also help to achieve calm and awareness of the present moment. You may be aware of a yogic meditation technique where one focuses on a single object like a candle flame. Known as 'trataka', this is a Sanskrit word that means "to look" or "to gaze," she

tells indianexpress.com in an interaction.

Why can it be hard to practice meong for some?

We live in a world where there is intense stimulation of our minds and our senses. This is what makes it difficult to sit quietly in a room alone for some people. Festive offer cyber fraud, cyber fraud emerging trends, cyber crime incidents, cybercriminals in India, Kolkata Police, Pronam project, sextortion, indian express news We are conditioned to seek constant engagement and this makes it challenging for us to face stillness, work on mind calmness and solitude without discomfort (Image source: Gettyimages) "A constant need for stimulation, discomfort with introspection, or an underlying feeling of anxiety is the result of our fast-paced, technology-driven lifestyle," said Dr Ghosh.

What is its benefits?

The practices of meong, meditation and yoga train our minds to be comfortable alone in silence, allowing for introspection and fostering self-awareness. Stress is also reduced and one also feels fresh and rejuvenated with enhanced focus, said Dr Ghosh, adding that the practice can also improve mental resilience and over time can help in achieving better emotional balance and a deeper sense of peace.

How can you practice meong?

Find a calm environment: Choose a quiet place with minimal distractions, such as a park, your backyard, or even your living room. Focus on your senses: Observe the sights, sounds, smells, and textures around you without judgment. Pay attention to your breath and the sensations in your body. Let go of expectations: Don't force yourself to see anything specific or achieve a certain state of mind. Simply allow yourself to be present in the moment. Start small: Begin with short periods of meong, such as 5-10 minutes, and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable. While meong may seem passive, it can be a surprisingly transformative experience. You might find yourself lost in the intricate patterns of a spiderweb, captivated by the dance of sunlight on leaves, or overcome with a sense of awe at the vastness of the universe.

## A 93-year-old athlete is as healthy as a 40-year-old, according to science. These are his secrets

During the study, conducted when he was 92, Morgan, a four-time world champion in indoor rowing, demonstrated heart health, muscle mass, and overall fitness measures more comparable to a healthy 30- or 40-year-old than to another nonagenarian. During the study, conducted when he was 92, Morgan, a four-time world champion in indoor rowing, demonstrated heart health, muscle mass, and overall fitness measures more comparable to a healthy 30- or 40-year-old than to another nonagenarian.

At 93, Richard Morgan is as fit as someone half his age. The Irishman became the subject of a recent analysis, published last month in the Journal of Applied Physiology, focusing on his training regimen, diet, and overall health. The retired baker informed the Irish Examiner that he had "never really played sports" until he commenced regular exercise at the age of 73.

During the study, conducted when he was 92, Morgan, a four-time world champion in indoor rowing, demonstrated heart health, muscle mass, and overall fitness measures more comparable to a healthy 30- or 40-year-old than to another nonagenarian. "I started from nowhere," Morgan told the Washington Post regarding his exercise routine. One day he "suddenly realized there was a lot of pleasure in doing this." While Morgan may possess certain genetic advantages, the researchers stated that at least some of his good health is connected to the routine he initiated two decades ago at the age of 73. The study identified key factors contributing to his fitness in his 90s: the importance of consistency for long-term results, the notion that it is never too late to start exercising, and adhering to a high-protein diet like Morgan's.

Festive offer Anti-aging skincare tips Exercising in middle age can also contribute to mental well-being and help maintain independence. Dr Sunil G Kini, consultant - orthopaedic & robotic joint replacement surgery, Manipal Hospitals, said there's no age limit to beginning an exercise regimen, and the benefits are evident regardless of when you start. However, he added that it's often advised that the earlier you commence, the greater the advantages. According to Dr Ratnakar Rao, HOD - sr. consultant joint replacements and arthroscopic surgeon, CARE Hospitals, potential benefits of exercising at an older age include improved cardiovascular health, enhanced mobility, better muscle strength, and reduced risk of chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes. It can also contribute to mental well-being and help maintain independence. Here is a list of dos and don'ts if you've started exercising late in life.

Dos: a. Consult with your healthcare provider before starting any exercise program.

b. Start with low-impact exercises and gradually progress to higher intensity activities.

c. Include a mix of aerobic exercises (e.g., walking, swimming) and strength training.

d. Listen to your body and pay attention to any signs of pain or discomfort.

e. Stay hydrated and maintain a balanced diet to support your fitness goals.

f. Include flexibility exercises to improve joint mobility and reduce the risk of injury.

g. Choose activities you enjoy to make it more sustainable in the long term.

Don'ts:

a. Don't push yourself too hard, especially in the beginning. Progress at a pace that feels comfortable.

b. Avoid high-impact activities if you have joint issues. Opt for low-impact alternatives.

c. Don't neglect warm-up and cool-down exercises to prepare your body and prevent injuries.

d. Avoid exercising through pain. If you experience persistent discomfort, consult your healthcare provider.

e. Don't skip rest days. Your body needs time to recover and adapt to the new routine.

f. Avoid extreme diets or excessive calorie restrictions. Focus on a well-balanced, nutritious diet.



g. Don't hesitate to modify exercises to suit your abilities and any health conditions you may have.

It is never too late to start taking care of your health, but it's crucial to do so with a thoughtful and gradual approach, considering your individual circumstances and seeking guidance from healthcare professionals.

## Some diabetes drugs may lower risk of kidney stones: Study



Researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital in the US found that there was an association between the use of sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors and a lower risk of developing kidney stones.

New York: While Type 2 diabetes is associated with increased risk of kidney stones, some forms of treatment for this condition may also have the benefit of lowering risk of kidney stones, according to a study.

Researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital in the US found that there was an association between the use of sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors and a lower risk of developing kidney stones. The study, reported in JAMA Internal Medicine, included data from three nationwide databases in the US of patients with Type 2 diabetes who were seen in routine clinical practice.

The team analysed information from 716,406 adults with Type 2 diabetes who had started taking an SGLT2 inhibitor or two other classes of diabetes medications known as GLP1 receptor agonists or dipeptidyl peptidase 4 (DPP4) inhibitors. Patients who began taking SGLT2 inhibitors had a 30 per cent lower risk of developing kidney stones than those taking GLP1 agonists and about a 25 per cent lower risk than those taking DPP4 inhibitors. The findings were consistent across sex, race/ethnicity, history of chronic kidney disease and obesity. Our findings could help inform clinical decision making for patients with diabetes who are at risk for developing kidney stones," said corresponding author Julie Paik, of the Division of Pharmacoepidemiology and Pharmacoeconomics at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

## Orry says he watched a movie called 'Bramarama' four times just for 'Mohini Roy', internet deciphers what he meant: 'Mouni Roy, Brahmastra'



Internet sensation Orry said that he 'manifested' somebody named 'Mohini Roy' to enter his life after being awestruck by her in the film 'Bramarama'. He was talking about Mouni Roy and Brahmastra, but nobody on the web show Dumb Biryani corrected him about this, as he launched into a story about FaceTiming with 'Mohini Roy' with Guru Randhawa. Orry appeared on the show, hosted by Arhaan Khan and Dev Raiyani, and spoke about his life, and his mysterious past. He said, "I manifested Mohini Roy once, and it worked. Mohini Roy, you know Mohini Roy? I'm not too well-versed in Bollywood

movies, because I don't speak Hindi well, so I usually watch if it's a really good movie or if my friends are in it. But when I watched Bramarama, and I saw Mohini Roy's character, I was f\*\*\*king impressed. I've gone to see the movie four times just to watch her scenes. When her scenes ended, I would be like, 'S\*\*t, Mohini's scenes ended.' Orry continued, "Eventually, one day, my friend Guru Randhawa called me on FaceTime because he was with her, and she FaceTimed me, and eventually she added me on Instagram. I basically manifested Mohini, and now we're really good friends." While Arhaan claimed to know who 'Mohini Roy' is, others in the comments section were puzzled by Orry's story. "Mohini?? Brahma... what?" one person wrote. Another commented, "Mohini Roy Brahmastra?? Yaaaaa I actually searched who is Mohini Roy... Then I came to know he is talking about Mouni Roy and it's Brahmastra." A third person commented, "And I thought she was someone from Punjab industry plus and old lady." Previously, actor Sonam Kapoor goofed up similarly on Karan Johar's Koffee with Karan, where she called Brahmastra, 'Shiva Number One'. She first described it as 'Ayan's film', and prodded by Karan, who co-produced the movie, she called it, "Shiva number 1." Arjun was embarrassed, and he said, "You're a mess, yaar Sonam."

## Mrunal Thakur says she is considering freezing her eggs, accepts she has low moments: 'There were days where I didn't want to wake up'

Actor Mrunal Thakur acknowledges that despite the seemingly perfect lives portrayed on social media, stars also face moments of vulnerability. She recently shared a candid photo of herself in tears on Instagram Stories. The actor has now opened up about how on certain days, she didn't want to get out of her bed. Mrunal also revealed that she is often a subject of body shaming and vows she is going to change beauty standards. In an interview with Humans of Bombay, Mrunal talked about how people on the internet often pretend everything is perfect. "There were days where I didn't want to wake up, I didn't want to get out of my bed, but I did. Not for others, but for myself. I'm feeling low one day, two days, three days, weeks, months, but nobody's going to care except your family. So I feel like it's so important to remind ourselves that if there are bad days, there will be good days. So that was just like a proof, there are days, and it's absolutely normal for you to feel not okay," she said.

Mrunal observed that many people on social media seem to be on holiday, sharing their best pictures, but she wondered if it's just to show that they're truly enjoying the moment. She admitted that she doesn't look great when eating or at the beach, often ending up covered in sand and mud. Opening up about body positivity, Mrunal said that people trolled her for having a "pear-shaped body." She said, "I'm going to change that beauty standard by flaunting my curves. Earlier I was so afraid of



wearing anything body-hugging. But now, I'm like, 'Body-hugging? Bring it on. And crop tops? Bring it on. Why do we need Kardashians to set the beauty standards? Every Indian woman walking on the streets, they're so curvaceous, they're so beautiful.'

The actor also discussed relationships and finding the right balance. She also reflected on actor Mona Singh's statement about freezing her eggs and said, "Relationships, I know it's tough, but that's why you need the right partner who would understand what the nature of your job is. Freezing the eggs, yes, I'm also considering that." On the work front, Mrunal was recently seen in the film The Family Star opposite Vijay Devarakonda.

## Orry worked as a shoe salesman at a mall, promised himself he won't do anything illegal after becoming famous: 'I measured people's feet'



Internet sensation Orry claimed to have had a rather regular life before becoming famous. While he now has five phones (one of which exists only to be ignored), he said that there was a time when he worked as a shoe salesman at a high-end fashion boutique. He also said that as a child, he was trained in multiple disciplines, including music and self-defence. Orry appeared on the latest episode of Arhaan Khan and Dev Raiyani's internet show Dumb Biryani, where he chatted about his life, and revealed nuggets of information about his mysterious past. The episode was framed like a Carpool Karaoke video, but without the music. Arhaan, Dev and car builder Mehreen Gandhi 'picked' Orry up from the side of the street, and engaged him in conversation. As he stepped in, Arhaan remarked about the five phones in his hand, and Orry said, "I am an important person. I have five managers. Each phone has a different purpose. One phone is just for avoiding people. I have one phone that I'll give people the number when I'm out. When they call, I'll say, 'Yeah, see it rings'. But I'll never answer it. That phone's meant for ignoring dude."

They also ordered coffee on the way, and Arhaan urged everybody to try 'shroom coffee'. Orry cut him short. He said, "Arhaan, when I agreed to being famous, I made a promise that I will never do anything illegal." The others

burst out into laughter, and assured him that 'shroom coffee' doesn't contain drugs. Orry then spoke about the 'weird jobs' that he's done in his life. He said, "I've been a graphic designer, I've done accounts before. I worked at the Steve Madden store at the Palladium. There are probably pictures of me showing people shoes and measuring their feet." Orry said that he started working at a 'very young' age, and that growing up, he was sent to 'every class possible'. He acknowledged that he was, and said that he trained in the piano and in karate. He also stressed on the importance of staying out of one's comfort zone, and said, "Being comfortable is the worst thing that you can be. It's the worst feeling that you can ever have, because being comfortable means being lazy, and you'll never, ever push yourself. Get uncomfortable, jump off your balcony. Don't kill yourself, but take the leap." Previously, Orry has been rather secretive about his family background, and how he became close to the who's who in the world of entertainment, business, and politics. He rose to fame after regularly appearing on the Instagram feeds of the rich and famous, before going on to become rich and famous himself. He claimed on Bigg Boss that he makes several lakh rupees from his appearances at celebrity parties, and on Koffee with Karan, he said that he has an entire team of 'minions' who manage his life for him.

## Mrunal Thakur recalls getting overwhelmed while working with Shahid Kapoor in Jersey: 'He asked me to slap him'



It wouldn't be incorrect to say that Mrunal Thakur was fangirling when she met Shahid Kapoor during the production of their 2022, film, Jersey. The actor who doesn't shy away from calling herself a fan of Shahid and his movie, Jab We Met, recently opened up about her experience of working with the 43-year-old, revealing that she often forgot her lines on the sets. "The day when I was supposed to meet him and do a script reading, I reached the wrong address, so I got late. When I finally met Shahid, I told him, 'Your smile in real life is exactly I how it is on-screen'. During the shoot of Jersey, there were days when I would forget my lines because I was so overwhelmed being on the sets with Shahid Kapoor," Mrunal told Humans of Bombay in a recent interview.

The actor, who featured in films like Love Sonia, Super 30, Sita Ramam and The Family Star, among others, shared that she is often intimidated by stars she admires on-screen. "While doing our scenes in Jersey, I kept thinking in my head, 'This is Aditya (Shahid's character in Jab We Met),' shared Mrunal, adding, "He is such a great co-actor. Initially, it was awkward. The first week was tough but when we got the hang of Vidya and Arjun, our on-screen characters, things got very smooth." Recalling one of the toughest moments from filming Jersey, she said slapping Shahid was an uphill task. "Slapping Shahid was really, really tough. It was the first proper scene that we were shooting. I suggested we take it slow and do a few montages but that particular scene was my first encounter with Shahid's character, Arjun. The director was quite understanding and told me to take my time. Shahid was extremely supportive and told me, 'Tu thappad maar mujhe (slap me)'. When you have the comfort zone with a co-actor, scenes flow smoothly," reminisced Mrunal. She shared that the scene was only shot with two camera set-ups and was done in two-three hours.

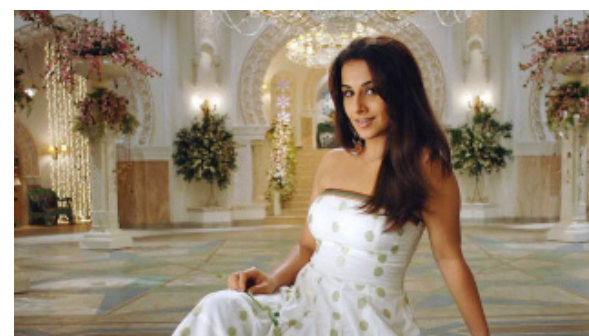
In 2022, during a conversation with Bollywood Hungama, answering a rapid-fire question, Mrunal revealed that the scene required many retakes. "I actually couldn't slap him. It was so difficult for me. I thought how I could slap Shahid Kapoor? Shahid was extremely supportive of me slapping him. He asked me to think of my ex-boyfriends and slap him," she added.

## Vidya Balan was forbidden from naming Sajid Khan, Manish Malhotra when her costumes were ridiculed: 'It was bullying'

Actor Vidya Balan recalled being "bullied" at an award function for her costumes in a film, while the director and the costume designer refused to take any responsibility for it. The conversation started after Vidya was asked about the one film of hers that she hates, and she brought up her 2007 film Heyy Babyy, which was directed by Sajid Khan.

Vidya said in an interview on the Unfiltered by Samdish YouTube channel, "Actually, I have not watched Heyy Babyy more than once, but I do think... I didn't have the guts to watch it, so I don't know how I have done in that." Vidya acknowledged that the reception for her in the film was "terrible." Vidya recalled the slump that her career went through after her acclaimed debut, and said that it was "honestly a witch hunt." When asked if the industry was unfair to her because she was "simply too good," Vidya said that "a few people were threatened. I don't know if that was because I was too good or they just felt they weren't good enough." Vidya said that since she has been around for almost two decades, and now knows what transpired in those days, she is quite grateful for her experiences. "You get to know that how the rumours were spread, and what happened," she said, and added, "If not for that phase, I wouldn't have come into my own. I wouldn't have said f\*\*k you but I am here to stay and no one can take that away from me."

Vidya then recalled how, during a "fun segment" at an awards show, she was given the 'Na-Real award' for her costumes in Heyy Babyy. Vidya said that when she was told about it, she asked "Why me? My clothes are not just my choice and at that point more than ever, I was too new to have an opinion on anything." The Dirty Picture actor said that she was a sport about it anyway, and said that she would accept the award but she will go up on the



stage and share it with the director and the costume designer. "I was actually told, 'No, you must not do that'. And that I think is not nice," she recalled. Manish Malhotra did Vidya's costumes for the film.

Vidya said that she mentioned the director and the costume designer's name anyway, and this "got (her) into trouble." "Later, there were reactions within the fraternity or whatever, their supporters, their friends," she said, and recalled how she felt "shattered" that night. "That night... I have to tell you, I was shattered. I was shattered because I just felt very alone. I had realised that, yes, it makes a difference when you don't come from a film family because no one outside you is looking out for you," she said. When asked if this felt like "bullying," she said "undoubtedly, it was." Reflecting on how she was pitched the idea of the "fun segment," she said, "I thought it was a joke, so it was okay, but then when I realised that I was the only one who was being made fun of, I thought that was no longer funny." Shah Rukh Khan and Saif Ali Khan, who were the hosts that night, presented Vidya with this award.

## Inside Heeramandi premiere: Alia Bhatt poses with Neetu Kapoor, Salman Khan arrives with armed guards, Sanjay Leela Bhansali reluctant to pose.



Netflix hosted a premiere for filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali's debut streaming series, the period drama Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar, on Wednesday in Mumbai. The star-studded event saw the who's who of the film and television industries come out in support of Bhansali and his crew. Apart from team Heeramandi — Bhansali, Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Aditi Rao Hydari, Richa Chadha, Sharmin Sehgal, Sanjeeda Shaikh, Shekhar Suman, Adhyayan Suman, Taha Shah and Fardeen Khan — a host of stars dazzled at the red carpet. From Salman Khan making a dashing entry, to Alia Bhatt channelling her inner Gangubai, Karan Johar and Ananya Panday arriving together, Rekha looking elegant in a golden saree, Vidhu Vinod Chopra cheering on Bhansali, and Vicky Kaushal making a style statement, the photographs and paparazzi videos from the Heeramandi premiere have been garnering attention on social media. The series will premiere on May 1.

Days after the firing incident outside his Bandra apartment, Salman attended the premiere surrounded by tight security. His presence at the event put speculations about his feud with Bhansali to rest. The Bajrangji Bhaijaan actor also grabbed eyeballs for his outfit, as he walked the red carpet dressed in a pair of quirky pants with Goku-inspired print on them. He paired the pants with a casual black shirt.

Alia, who played Gangu in Bhansali's Gangubai Kathiawadi, looked elegant in an ivory sharara. She smiled for the photographs and also posed alongside her mother Soni Razdan and mother-in-law Neetu Singh.



However, Ranbir Kapoor was nowhere to be found at the event. Vicky, who was dressed in a black ethnic outfit looked regal as he posed for the shutterbug. Vicky and Ranbir will join Alia in Bhansali's upcoming film, Love and War. Newlyweds Kriti Kharbanda and Pulkit Samrat also made an appearance on the red carpet. Ananya Panday arrived at the screening with Karan Johar, who told the photographers that she signed a new film. Ananya, in response to Karan's comment, said, "Thank you, Karan!" Dressed in bright ethnic wear, the Student of the Year 2 actor flashed a bright smile for the photographers. Her rumoured boyfriend, Aditya Roy Kapoor, also made an appearance at the event and posed with Fatima Sana Shaikh for photographs.

The cast of Heeramandi, keeping with the theme of the series, was dressed in traditional attire and exuded royalty. When Bhansali shied away from getting clicked, Manisha, Sonakshi, Richa and other cast members pulled him onto the red carpet and ensured that they got a group photo together. Aditi, who recently got engaged to actor Siddharth also, posed with him. Ananya Panday, Rashmika Mandanna and Vicky Kaushal at Heeramandi screening. (Photo: Varinder Chawla) Ananya Panday, Rashmika Mandanna and Vicky Kaushal at Heeramandi screening. (Photo: Varinder Chawla)

Among other attendees were Rashmika Mandanna, Mrunal Thakur, Shruti Haasan, Rakul Preet Singh, Radhika Madan, Esha Deol, Rekha, Bhumi Pednekar, Randeep Hooda and Ali Fazal among others.

## How Gukesh was welcomed at 3 am after Candidates: 80 school kids, posse of cameramen, officials and an emotional mother



GNS News Agency, April 27

Almost each passenger exiting the international terminus at the Chennai International Airport had a quizzical expression as scores of cameramen waited. Those sleepy, tired eyes opened wide at the sight of 80 school students, who formed a guard of honour to welcome one of their own, D Gukesh, who returned to Chennai after winning the Candidates chess tournament in Canada. As the clock struck 3 am on Thursday, Gukesh — with his father Dr Rajnikanth by his side — came out in his blue blazer with a yellow turban sitting perfectly on top of his head. Within moments, he would be swallowed by all the chaos and commotion. For a 17-year-old who took rapid strides on the chess board, it took him more than five minutes to cover a five metre distance, where All India Chess Federation (AICF) officials and Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDAT) officials welcomed him home. And moments after Gukesh positioned himself to address the media, he would step away from the cameras in a flash at the first sight of his mother, Padma. She would embrace him tightly and kiss him on his cheeks and Gukesh would return the gift straightaway. "I couldn't have asked for a better homecoming," the 17-year-old Gukesh would say before taking a pause. "It is a special achievement for me. I was in good shape throughout the tournament. Though the seventh round loss was a blow, I was able to get out of it as I was in a good frame of mind. From the beginning I was fully confident that I could win the Candidates and it went accordingly with luck on my side," he added.

As the camera shutter sounds hung in the air, his coach Vishnu Prasanna stood at one corner with a proud look on his face. Five months ago with Gukesh still not confirmed of the Candidates berth, Prasanna had combined with Polish GM Grzegorz Gajewski to prepare Gukesh for the Chennai Grand Masters. A last round victory at his hometown booked his spot for the Candidates, which he won last Sunday, to set up a World Championship contest with China's Ding Liren. Festive offer Schoolkids wearing facemasks of Gukesh at Chennai airport waiting to welcome the 17-year-old Schoolkids wearing facemasks of Gukesh at Chennai airport waiting to welcome the 17-year-old. (PHOTO: Venkata Krishna B) "The pressure was getting to him so much that he would lock himself in the room," Gukesh's mother Padma told The Indian Express. "As parents, our primary focus was

to get his confidence back and not to worry about titles. It was not just a new phase for him, but also for us. We kept reminding him that even if he didn't make it to Candidates, nothing around us would change," she said. Gukesh at a FIDE ceremony after his win at the Candidates chess tournament Gukesh at a FIDE ceremony after his win at the Candidates chess tournament. (PHOTO: Michal Walusza/FIDE) And once Gukesh found the much-needed confidence back, he rediscovered himself in the lead-up to the Candidates. If Prasanna made Gukesh watch the story of American ultra-marathon runner Courtney Dauwalter, his parents had other reasons to worry. Not many friends to hang out with meant that Gukesh was often locking himself up in his room and just sticking to his routines, which includes meditation and yoga. So to take his mind off chess, Rajnikanth and Padma would enroll him in a tennis academy close to their neighbourhood. "Even though we were not bothering him with chess, it was getting too serious. So we thought tennis would help him to relax and find a new world. Until he was here, he would play tennis everyday in the evening. And he managed to find friends at the club, with whom he started hanging out a lot. It gave him time to socialise, which really took all the pressure out of him," Padma said.

Interestingly, this phase also happened to be one where Gukesh focussed less on chess. Apart from tennis and hanging out with friends, he would fix his circadian rhythm. "Gukesh has his own routines, which even we don't know. He prefers doing certain things at a particular time and he didn't want to miss those for any reason. So he stuck to a routine and by the time he went to Candidates, it became normal for him. And even with his coaches, he was picking new places to train every day so that everything seemed natural, rather than a planned training program," she said. The one lingering question on everyone's lips in Chennai is whether the city will play host to Gukesh's World Championship showdown with Ding Liren. AICF treasurer Dharmendra Kumar, who was at the airport to welcome Gukesh said that they are in discussions with FIDE to host the event. "We are definitely interested and there is no question about it. The process will begin soon and once we get the go ahead, then we will decide about the venue. One also has to keep in mind the geopolitics of it," Kumar told The Indian Express.

The Tamil Nadu government, which hosted the World Championship contest between Viswanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen in 2013, has expressed its interest to host the event this time as well. "It is a bit early to say. I would be happy to have the World Championship anywhere. Liren is a strong player, but I have full belief that I can beat him. I will prepare well for him. Waiting eagerly for the World Championship," Gukesh said. For the next few days Gukesh's plans are rather simple. Before boarding the flight from Canada, he asked his mother to prepare chapati and tomato thokku. "Since he mostly eats meat while travelling, when he is at home, he prefers only vegetarian food. He wants lemon rice and puliyodharai for lunch," Padma said.

## Umran Malik not groomed, Mayank Yadav not considered, will selectors consider Arshdeep Singh or Khaleel Ahmed for T20 World Cup?



GNS News Agency, April 27

Only six months ago, at the World Cup on home soil, India's new-ball bowlers were the talk of the town. Now with the T20 World Cup little over a month away, India are fretting over their new-ball bowlers with Mohammed Shami out injured and Mohammed Siraj struggling for form in the Indian Premier League. As things stand, India's only hope in the pace department remains Jasprit Bumrah, the lone one who has an X-factor attached to his name. In the next few days, India's selection committee headed by Ajit Agarkar has to name the provisional 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup to be held in the USA and Caribbean in June. While they definitely have a few hard decisions to make in terms of whom to leave out in batting and wicketkeeping, it is in the bowling front that India have key calls to take, especially on how to construct an attack. The choices seem to be straightforward for spinners with Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Ravi Bishnoi being obvious choices.

However, when it comes to the pace battery, India are in a spot of bother. For instance, for the Powerplay overs, after Bhuvneshwar Kumar fell out of the pack, India have been dependent on Shami and Siraj for wickets. With Shami out injured and T20s not being Siraj's forte, India have now turned their eyes on left-arm seamers Arshdeep Singh and Khaleel Ahmed for the role. Ever since Bhuvneshwar fell out of contention, India were looking at Deepak Chahar as an ideal option to bowl in the Powerplay as it would have enabled them to use Bumrah predominantly in the second half of the innings. But with Chahar missing matches and struggling with a niggle during the IPL, India have been forced to look at options

from the fringe. Although Arshdeep, who has been part of the T20 set-up since the last World Cup, had struggled of late in the international arena, he is showing signs of returning to form in the IPL. Apart from having the ability to swing the new ball, especially into the right-hander, Arshdeep can also be counted to bowl at the death.

Similarly, Khaleel, who had an impressive domestic season, is being seen as a genuine option. Between 2018 and 2019, he was part of the Indian white-ball sides and seen as a good prospect. But with his limitations showing up, he was sent back to the domestic grind. It is understood that apart from increasing a few yards of pace, Ahmed has come back to the IPL with more variations in his arsenal, including slower balls, which have been hard to pick. Given these struggles, it is perplexing why Umran Malik, whose pace could be handy in the format, wasn't groomed keeping the T20 World Cup in mind. The 24-year-old, who was seen as an exciting prospect, hasn't played a T20I since February 2023 and ODI since July 2023. Apart from spinners, it is out-and-out pacers like Umran that other teams generally fall back upon in the middle overs as they can take conditions out of the equation. In Anrich Nortje, Mark Wood, Lockie Ferguson, Haris Rauf, the likes of South Africa, England, New Zealand and Pakistan have an edge on that front. And given their pace bowling resources have only been dwindling, it remains a big puzzle why India haven't made full use of Umran. Lucknow Super Giants' Mayank Yadav, who has impressed everyone with his pace, has to wait for his chance as the selectors want him to go through the domestic grind.

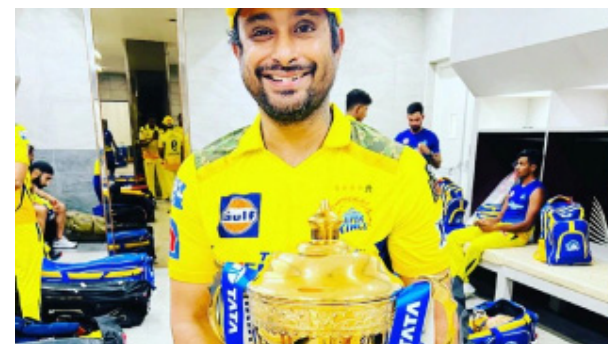
This means, in the middle overs, India will have to be largely dependent on Kuldeep, who will be their attacking force. Given these limitations, it also means India's nucleus will revolve around their batting unit. In the past, even for T20 World Cups, India have largely built their squad around their bowling. And given their bowling, India's plan is to go defensive with the ball and be aggressive with their batting unit. It is something India have been doing in T20Is of late, but with different batting personnel. With senior, experienced players in their ranks, whose strike rates aren't going to give sleepless nights to opposition teams, the lingering question is whether this formula would work as one has to always go for extra runs to make up for the composition of the attack.

## Ambati Rayudu clarifies 'brain phat jayega' comments about Mumbai Indians, says 'taken out of context'

GNS News Agency, April 27

Former India batter Ambati Rayudu was recently in the news for his opinion about playing for Indian Premier League franchise Mumbai Indians and the difference in team culture between MI and Chennai Super Kings. Rayudu had said that a player's 'brain will explode' if they play long for Mumbai Indians, adding that winning is non-negotiable in the Hardik Pandya-led franchise. His opinion had gone viral, which led to the analyst to clarify his comments on social media, adding that he loved playing for Mumbai, who are five-time IPL champions just like CSK.

Rayudu said his controversial comments about MI were taken out of context. Rayudu had spoken about the difference in the working style of MI and CSK after having played for both the franchises. "My comments were taken out of context about Mumbai Indians. All I meant was MI's processes are different and there is positive pressure in which a player is forged, excels and becomes a complete player, track record shows the kind of talent that MI has produced for India. I have loved my 8 years at MI... am ever grateful," Rayudu said in a post on X before ending the tweet with "Mumbai, please win some games fast." My comments were taken out of context about Mumbai Indians. All I meant was mi's processes are different and there is positive pressure in which a player is forged, excels and becomes into a complete player, track record shows the kind of talent that MI has produced for india. I... "I feel CSK has a much better environment. MI mey jydada khelne se brain phat jayega (Your brain will



explode if you play long for MI)," Rayudu said during a chat with ESPNCricinfo. "When I used to play for MI, my game improved a lot. If you had not won the match, they do not see an excuse. At the end of the day, you have to perform. MI has an environment where you keep getting better and CSK has an environment where you will get better without any hassle," he had claimed.

"CSK focuses more on the process. They do not analyse results much. Their mood and mood swings are not because of the results. MI is bit different. MI mostly want to win and their culture is like everything depends on winning. They have a culture of, jeetna hi hai (Win is a must). Winning is non-negotiable. Both CSK and MI have two different cultures but at the end of the day, both work hard," he added.

## Paris Olympics selection trials: Shooter Sift Kaur Samra, riding high from Asian Games, aces first step

GNS News Agency, April 27

After winning India's first-ever individual shooting Asiad gold medal in Hangzhou last year, breaking the world record in the process, Sift kicked off the Olympic shooting trials with a dominant performance, taking top spot with a score of 466.3, edging out fellow quota-winner Ashi Chouksey (462.6) and Olympian Anjum Moudgil (449.2) in the women's 50m rifle 3-position category in New Delhi.

Recovering from a poor qualification round, as well as a 1.1 point deficit after the first 15 shots in the kneeling position in the final, Sift looked at ease from the moment she took the lead after a near-perfect second stage in the prone position, and cruised to a comfortable win. "The mood is normal, not very different," she said after the match on Wednesday. "Yesterday (qualification) was not a good day for me, but I knew the mistake I was making, so just focused on that and glad it went well today." Falling prey to heady expectations after breakthrough performances and world record scores has plagued Indian shooting in the past two Olympics. Pressure, especially of an Olympics, has fallen on young shoulders that are not used to it, and consistency has evaded even the elite crop at times. While conclusions should not yet be drawn, Sift has certainly not stepped off after Hangzhou, returning from the Asian championships with a silver medal earlier this year, and showing composure even under heavy domestic competition at the trials this week.

Remaining keen to play down how much the Asian Games run helped her in the long run — the World University Games, also held in China, was a superior experience according to her — it is hard not to see it as a big



confidence-booster. "I can say I enjoyed that glory. The love I got from everyone was special. Winning a medal was big, of course, but when I came back to India and the celebrations that took place, that was the great thing for me. The celebrations at home were better," she said. "It was my first Games, of course it taught me a lot... These things teach you how to be calm under pressure." Paris, although within her sights, is still a little far away. Sift won the first of four trials — another will take place on Friday, and two more in Bhopal next month. The average of the three best scores of the five participating shooters will be taken into consideration, with bonuses for podium finishes and winning the quota for India. The shooters with the top two averages will be on the flight to the French capital. Niraj shot a winning score of 462.2, with quota-winner and qualification topper Swapnil Kusale (460.9) coming in second, and Asian Games medalist Aishwary Tomar (450.5) coming in third. Chain Singh finished fourth while second quota winner Akhil Sheoran had a disappointing outing, slumping to fifth.



## The 43-ball 88 not out not only set DC a lofty total but put him favorite to keep the wickets for his country in the global tournament.

every right to feel they were the favorites. 72 runs were required with just four overs. David Miller, despite his reputation, hadn't fired this season. He'd break the shackles next over, plundering 24 off Anrich Nortje.

Clearing his front leg off the first ball — a 146.5KPH good length delivery on the stumps — Miller rammed it down mid-wicket for four. The Proteas speedster amped up the pace off the next one and his national teammate looked as if he'd anticipated the move. 150 clicks, a tad fuller, and the southpaw creamed it through the line over extra cover for six. For the quintessential short ball, Miller stood his ground to fashion a pull shot. But it was the one he hit down the ground that took the cake. Just a gentle push with the bat's trajectory as straight as it gets. A 21-ball fifty and the equation was now down to 48 off the last three. But he holed one to deep square leg in the next over.

In came the newly-appointed Tamil Nadu skipper Sai Kishore, who had stepped up with the ball a few nights back. The 27-year-old dealt back-to-back sixes off Rasikh Dar Salam before bowling out on the final ball of the penultimate over. With 19 required off the final over, there was a reason to worry for the home side. Rashid Khan held the strike. The Afghan spinner had starred with the bat before for the two-time finalists. And when he stabbed back-to-back fours off Mukesh Kumar's first two deliveries, it seemed as if Gujarat were closing down another game right down the wire. Even after a couple of dot balls, he kept the game alive with a six. A four would have stretched the game to the Super Over. It wasn't to be, as Mukesh nailed a yorker and Rashid couldn't get the bat underneath it.

Brief Scores: Delhi Capitals 224 for 4 (Pant 88\*, Axar 66, Warrior 3-15) beat Gujarat Titans 220 for 8 (Sai Sudharsan 65, Miller 55, Salam 3-44) by four runs.

## How Rishabh Pant almost nailed his T20 World Cup spot with a blinder

GNS News Agency, April 27

A different strip was used at Kotla for this game. There was no sign of grass, it was nothing like the better that had hosted Sunrisers Hyderabad's bashing of the hosts. Rishabh Pant, who calls the venue a virtual home, had hinted towards it at the toss. "It's more on the slower side than the last game." Axar Patel had put it in his own words after a 43-ball outing. "Thoda fass raha tha." There were runs in the offering, but they called for more application from the batters. In the end, it was Pant and Axar, who read it best and stabilised the innings after Delhi's top-order — minus David Warner — mistimed their way back to the dressing room.

It was against the Afghan spin duo of Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad, that the two started ticking on their way to a hundred-plus stand. It was a stern test with the two wrist-spinners being the mirror images of each other. But the two DC left-handers had done their homework and looked flawless as they kept the flow of boundaries strong through the middle overs phase. It was a partnership in every sense of the word, with the two feeding off of each other's success.

If Axar picked the wrong 'un from Rashid with a slog sweep over mid wicket, Pant was equally comfortable as he made room on the off-side to meet Noor's googly with a paddle shot down fine leg for four. Off Rashid's next, both the southpaws split the field on the leg side for a boundary each as the leggie dragged back his length. The pull in particular was the go-to shot for the two as the ball took its time to come onto the bat. With the introduction of Mohit Sharma in the second half of the innings, the off-pace deliveries became regular. If Pant scythed an angled-away delivery down deep backward point off the pacer in one over, Axar matched it by rocking back in his crease off the spinner and manufacturing a cut shot of his own. Picking up the pace in the death overs, Pant smeared a couple of sixes off Mohit before Axar hammered back-to-back maximums off Noor. His attempt at a third led to a breakthrough for Gujarat but brought no respite as the Delhi skipper taped into his finisher self.

It's a role India's cricket loyalists have envisioned Pant take on since he announced his arrival on the big stage. His use of the crease coupled with a range of unorthodox shots lends him an apt arsenal to do so. But for one reason or another, it hasn't happened. With a wicketkeeper-batter spot left ripe for the taking at this summer's T20 World Cup though, Pant's shift of gears on Wednesday couldn't have been better timed. Against Mohit Sharma, he unfurled the shot of the night—a hoick in front of square, hanging back in his crease, off a length ball. In the final over though, Pant would rip into Gujarat's designated death bowler with disdain — brandishing four sixes and a four. "The plan was to take the game deep," Axar would concede at the halfway-stage. It's an act their opposition have carved their reputation from. It's an act they almost pulled off When Pant held onto Rahul Tewatia's outside edge off Kuldeep Yadav, Delhi had