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## Rajiv Gandhi International Airport clinches Best Airport Staff award in India & South Asia

Hyderabad: Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA), Shamshabad has been awarded the prestigious title of Best Airport Staff in India & South Asia at the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2024. The Skytrax World Airport Awards are highly regarded in the aviation industry, known for their rigorous evaluation process based on passenger surveys and feedback. In addition, Delhi International Airport emerged triumphant as the Best Airport in India & South Asia while Bangalore International Airport also garnered recognition.

## BJP's Aruna, Rajender file nomination papers in Telangana



GNS News Agency, April 18

Hyderabad: BJP National Vice President D. K. Aruna and former state minister Eatala Rajender filed their nominations for Mahabubnagar and Malkajgiri Lok Sabha seats respectively, on Thursday. Soon after the process for receiving nominations began at 11 a.m. following the poll notification issued by Election Commission of India, Aruna filed her papers before the Returning Officer at Mahabubnagar Collectorate. BJP MP K. Laxman and other leaders were also present. Aruna performed puja at a temple and signed the nomination papers before leaving for the Collector's office to file her papers.

In 2019, Aruna lost the election from the same seat to Manne Srinivas Reddy of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) by a margin of over 77,000 votes. BRS has renominated Srinivas Reddy while Challa Vamshi Chand Reddy is once again contesting on a Congress ticket. BJP's Eatala Rajender filed his nomination for Malkajgiri Lok Sabha seat at Medchal Collectorate, after performing puja at his residence, together with his family members. He also visited a temple in Shameerpet and placed his nomination papers at the feet of the deity.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri visited Rajender's house before the latter left for a rally to file his nomination papers. Rajender had suffered defeat in Huzurabad Assembly constituency in the recent elections. In 2021, he was re-elected from Huzurabad in a byelection as BJP candidate. He had resigned as MLA and quit BRS after then Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao dropped him from the Cabinet following allegations of land grabbing. He joined BJP and emerged as a key figure after winning the byelection. In Malkajgiri, Rajender is pitted against Sunitha Mahender Reddy of Congress and Ragidi Laxma Reddy of BRS. In 2019, the Malkajgiri seat was won by A. Revanth Reddy, who later became the President of state Congress, and recently became the Chief Minister following Congress' victory in Assembly elections.

## Arvind Kejriwal's lawyer rejects ED's 'mangoes, sweets in jail' claim: 'Eating only...'



GNS News Agency, April 18

Jailed Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's counsel rejected the Enforcement Directorate's claim over the AAP leader's diet saying the agency is creating an issue to stop the home-cooked food for him. Advocate Vivek Jain, representing the Delhi CM, said that Kejriwal was eating only what had been prescribed by the doctors. "The matter is sub-judice before the court. He (Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal) is eating only what has been prescribed by the doctors. This is an issue made by ED so that the home-cooked food is also stopped," said Jain as quoted by news agency The ED has questioned Kejriwal's diet, accusing him of deliberately eating mangoes, sweets, and sugar with tea in an apparent bid to spike his blood sugar levels and create the basis for seeking bail. "The person who is claiming to have high diabetes.. is having mangoes, having sweets regularly, and having tea with sugar.. this is all the basis for seeking bail," said special public prosecutor (SPP) Zoheb Hossain. A Delhi court on Thursday heard Kejriwal's application seeking to monitor his sugar levels continuously and to allow him to consult his doctor. In his application, the Delhi CM claimed that his blood sugar levels had been fluctuating and he needed to consult his regular doctor. The court has asked jail authorities to provide a medical report on Kejriwal's diet and posted the matter for tomorrow. Kejriwal is under judicial custody in Tihar jail in connection with a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped excise policy. BJP has been demanding Kejriwal's resignation from the post of Delhi CM but Kejriwal has continued to hold the post. Meanwhile, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Delhi high court, seeking direction to the Director General of Prisons to make arrangements for efficient governance of Delhi by allowing Kejriwal to hold meetings with assembly members and cabinet ministers via video conferencing.

## S C reserves verdict on pleas seeking cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with VVPAT

New Delhi, GNS News Agency, April 18

The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta reserved its verdict after hearing the response of Election Commission on the pleas. The petitioners have also sought reversal of the poll



panel's 2017 decision to replace the transparent glass on VVPAT machines with an opaque glass through which a voter can see the slip only when the

light is on for seven seconds. Senior advocate Maninder Singh, appearing for the Election Commission, explained the pro-

cess of how an EVM functions.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan and senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan appeared for the petitioners. Other lawyers represented the intervenors. On April 16, the top court had deprecated criticism of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and calls for reverting to ballot papers, saying the electoral process in India is a "humongous task" and attempts should not be made to "bring down the system".

## KTR slams Congress Govt's petty politics over Medigadda

GNS News Agency, April 18

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao slammed the Congress government for giving priority to its political interests rather than benefits for farmers by delaying construction of the cofferdam at the Medigadda barrage of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project. The Congress was resorting to cheap politics for political mileage in the Lok Sabha elections, he said. Sharing various news reports on X on Thursday, Rama Rao said Leader of Opposition and BRS president K Chandrashekar Rao had also demanded the State government to construct a cofferdam near Medigadda and carry out repair works to lift water for the benefit of farmers.

"Despite the Irrigation department engineers submitting a report to take up repair works and L&T company coming forward to take up these works, the Congress government is resorting to petty politics and playing with the lives of farmers without taking up repair works. The



Congress party wants to defame Chandrashekar Rao at the cost of the lives of farmers," he said.

## Kerala woman cadet, who was among 17 Indians on board ship seized by Iran, returns home



GNS News Agency, April 18

The lone woman crew member from Kerala, who was among 17 Indians on board Israeli-affiliated container ship seized by Iran's military near the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf of Oman, returned to Kerala on Thursday. In an official statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "With the concerted efforts of the Indian Mission in Tehran and the Iranian government, Indian deck cadet Ann Tessa Joseph from Kerala's Thrissur, who was among the Indian crew members of container vessel MSC Aries, has landed safely at the Cochin International Airport today afternoon." Joseph was received by the Regional Passport Officer at the airport.

Indian deck cadet Ms. Ann Tessa Joseph from Thrissur, Kerala, a member of the crew on vessel MSC Aries returned home today. "Indian Mission in Tehran re-

mains seized of the matter and is in touch with the remaining 16 Indian crew members of the container vessel," the ministry said, adding that the crew members were in good health and in contact with their family members in India. "The Indian Mission is also in touch with the Iranian authorities in ensuring the well being of the remaining crew members of MSC Aries," it said. Iranian commandos on April 13 seized an Israeli-affiliated container ship carrying 17 Indian crew members, the latest escalation in West Asia's spiralling tensions which New Delhi has now found itself caught up in.

Following the development, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had spoken to his Iranian counterpart Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian on the matter. Earlier, the family of the woman had said in a video shown on TV channels that she was also among the crew of the ship, but there was no mention of her in the Kerala CM's letter to the External Affairs Ministry. Subsequently, an official in the Chief Minister's Office said that initially there was no information about the presence of the woman. When they came to know about it, the matter was taken up with the Central government, the official said. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had on Sunday sought the intervention of the external affairs ministry seeking the safe return of Indian nationals including three from the state who are onboard a seized Israel-linked cargo ship in the gulf region. As per reports, three among the crew, namely Sumesh, P V Dhanesh and Syamath were confirmed to be natives of Kerala.

## PM Modi took decisive steps to bring peace in Northeast: BJP chief Nadda

GNS News Agency, April 18

Guwahati: BJP President J. P. Nadda has asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi took decisive steps to bring peace in the Bodoland area of Assam by signing the Bodo peace accord. He said, "Today, the entire Bodoland area is peaceful because the Prime Minister has taken the initiative to sign the Bodo peace accord. More than 1,500 cadres of proscribed groups surrendered their arms after the peace accord making it one of the most important peace accords in the country."

The senior BJP leader also mentioned that PM Modi has given government projects worth at least Rs 1,500 crore in the Bodoland area. "The Prime Minister has given utmost importance to the development of the Northeast. He has taken many initiatives like building new national highways, and airports to bring the northeastern region

to the mainstream of the country," he added. Nadda further said that the Prime Minister has implemented the 'Act East' policy which has catered to fast-paced development in this region. He has outlined a slew of government initiatives to bring prosperity to the Northeast. Meanwhile, the senior BJP leader also alleged that Congress was involved in divisive politics in Assam and that the grand old party failed to bring peace to the region. "We have lifted the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from 70 per cent of areas in the region. This is a major step towards bringing peace in the Northeast," he added. Nadda also claimed that India will become the third largest economy in the world if PM Narendra Modi is voted to power for the third consecutive term. He said, "Our country has seen substantial economic progress under PM Modi's tenure. In the coming days, India can lead the whole world."

## Two criminals held for killing a man in Delhi

New Delhi: Two criminals, who wanted to become famous as a gang, were arrested for killing a man in the national capital after he refused to pay an extortion amount, an official said on Thursday. The accused have been identified as Salman alias Faizan alias Nata, 20, and Shoab alias Mastan, 20.

Their arrest came after one 35-year-old Shahnawaz was shot from point blank range on April 12 in Kabari market E-block in northeast Delhi. "Shahnawaz, a resident of New Seelampur, had sustained a gunshot injury to his head. He was rushed to JPC Hospital and then referred to LNJP Hospital. The entry wound was from the back of head, occipital region, and exit wound was on the left side temporal region," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) Joy Tirkey. The injured was taken to JPC hospital from where he was shifted to LNJP hospital for the treatment, however, on April 13, Shahnawaz succumbed to his injuries.

## ECI issues notification for fourth phase of General Elections, nominations begin on Thursday

GNS News Agency, April 18

Hyderabad: The Election Commission of India (ECI) issued the notification for the fourth phase of General Elections. Accordingly, nominations for the Lok Sabha constituencies will commence from today. The ECI gazette notification is for elections to 96 Lok Sabha seats in 10 States, including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar,



Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir. The notification issued also covers for by-election for Secunderabad Cantonment Assembly constituency in the State. The by-poll for Secunderabad Cantonment constituency was being con-

ducted following the death of BRS MLA Lasya Nanditha in a road accident in February early this year.

Following the ECI notification, the Returning Officers are making all arrangement for receipt for nominations from today in the State. The nominations are being accepted from 11 a.m onwards and candidates have been issued staggered timings to avoid any inconvenience.

Last date for filing nominations is April 25 and the scrutiny will be conducted on April 26. The list of candidates in the fray will be announced on April 29 and the polls will be held on May 13. Among the 17 Lok Sabha seats in the State, two are for Scheduled Tribes and three for Scheduled Castes.

## IMD forecast bodes well for agri sector

GNS News Agency, April 18

Chennai: The India Meteorological Department's (IMD) above-normal rainfall forecast for 2024 southwest monsoon (June-September) bodes well for the agriculture sector and will also keep a check on food prices, an economist with Bank of Baroda said. On Monday, the IMD said the 2024 southwest monsoon seasonal (June to September) rainfall over the country, as a whole, is most likely to be above normal (greater than 104 per cent of the Long Period Average - LPA).

"Quantitatively, the seasonal rainfall over the country, as a whole, is likely to be 106 per cent of LPA with a model error of (plus/minus) 5 per cent. The LPA of the season rainfall over the country as a whole for the period 1971-2020 is 87 cm," the IMD said. According to IMD, moderate El Nino conditions are currently prevailing over the equatorial Pacific region. The latest Monsoon Mission Climate Forecast System (MMCFS) as well as other climate model forecasts indicate that the El Nino condition is likely to weaken further to neutral El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions during the early part of the monsoon season and La Nina conditions are likely to develop during second half of monsoon season.

Reacting to the southwest monsoon forecast, BoB Economist Jahnvi Prabhakar said the prediction comes in the wake of the extreme heatwave conditions ongoing in the country. "The water reservoir level has also been lower at 33 per cent of their total capacity compared with 39 per cent reservoir levels noted last year (as of April 12, 2024). However, the expectations of normal monsoon bodes well for the agriculture sector and will also keep a check on food prices," she said.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), while retaining its inflation and growth projections, in its recent monetary policy statement had assumed a normal monsoon which will also be positive for the kharif crops, Prabhakar added. Out of the last 8 years, this is the first time in 2024 that the IMD has forecast above-normal rainfall (104-110 per cent of LPA) in its first forecast. In 2022, India had above-normal rainfall, against the expectation of normal rainfall. Last year in 2023, in line with expectations, the country actually witnessed normal rainfall at 94 per cent of LPA, Prabhakar added.

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SHAIK VAJID ALI S/O SHAIK ALI (Old name)** born on 17-07-1988 at Allampally, kaddam Earlier was holding Passport No. H4740529 DT: 27-07-2009 hereby changing my name and henceforth in future I would be known as **SHAIK WAJEED ALI S/O SHAIK ALI (New Name)** R/o H.No. 7-202 Mominpura, Utloor-504311 Telangana.

**DECLARANT.**  
**SHAIK WAJEED ALI**  
**S/O SHAIK ALI**

Place : Utloor

Date : 19-04-2024



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Bastar encounter

THE encounter in Chhattisgarh's Bastar division on Tuesday, resulting in the killing of 29 Maoists, underscores the government's efforts to contain the Naxal menace. While the operation marks a significant victory in the fight against Naxalism, it also serves as a reminder of the persistent threat posed by left-wing extremism. Continuous vigilance, especially in the light of the upcoming elections, is the need of the hour. The operation, conducted by a team of the District Reserve Guard and the Border Security Force, has shown the effectiveness of intelligence-driven strategies in neutralising Naxal threats. The recovery of a substantial cache of arms and ammunition is a big blow to the Naxal network. With Naxalism posing a significant threat to development, peace and the future of the youth in the affected areas, a concerted government campaign to tackle the problem is underway. It is evidenced by the steady decline in Naxal violence over the past few years. A multi-pronged approach, encompassing security measures, development initiatives and community outreach, reflects a comprehensive strategy aimed at addressing the root causes of left-wing extremism. Initiatives such as the Aspirational Districts Programme demonstrate a commitment to holistic growth in Naxal-affected regions. However, the prevalence of improvised explosive devices remains a weighty threat, highlighting the need for relentless demining operations. Also, allegations of fake encounters conducted by security forces need to be probed. Proactive steps and sustained vigilance are needed to pave the way for long-term peace in the disturbed areas. As the nation braces for the elections, heightened security measures are imperative to ensure the safety of voters and the smooth conduct of the electoral process, particularly in regions vulnerable to Naxal violence.

## In Kolhapur, Shahu Maharaj steps out of royal palace to 'save democracy from dictatorship, protect Constitution'

GNS News Agency, April 18

As Shahu Maharaj Chhatrapati, the 76-year-old Congress and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) candidate from Kolhapur constituency, steps out of the magnificent Shahu Palace located in the heart of Kolhapur city, he sets aside his royal status. He joins the crowd eagerly waiting for him, greets them with folded hands, shakes hands with them, and poses for several cell phones capturing his photos. Sporting a 'tilak' on his forehead and attired in a white kurta pyjama, Maharaj on Saturday, as he has done for the past 20 days, sets off on his campaign trail around 9.30 am in a convoy of vehicles. While the Congress fields him as an MVA candidate, the Shiv Sena (Shinde), part of the Mahayuti alliance, has nominated sitting MP Mandalik. Shahu Maharaj's son, Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati, who has also gone all out to campaign for his father, has given no importance to Mandalik's remarks.

More than an hour later, Maharaj's convoy arrives in the Madilge village of the Budhargad taluka. Surrounded by greenfields, the road to the venue of his rally is so narrow that only one vehicle can pass through it at one time. As Maharaj steps out of his car, the crowd, including party workers and villagers, surges ahead to welcome him. Many of them are surprised that the "Maharaj" is visiting him.

The women in the village give him a traditional welcome. "This is my first time seeing him so closely," says an elderly villager with excitement writ large on her face. Maharaj then ascends the dias packed with party leaders. One after another, they aggressively speak against the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. When his turn comes at last, Maharaj speaks in a soft tone, haltingly with measured words. He doesn't name the BJP or Modi but clarifies that attempts are being made to divide the country's people. "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj took everyone along. He supported people from different backgrounds and united them. Today's rulers are on a different path. They seem to have one motto — to bring dictatorship to the country. Our democracy is being threatened," says the Congress candidate. As the campaign moves out of the village, a party worker pleads with Maharaj to visit his home. He doesn't mind. The party worker's family is delighted to welcome him. Maharaj makes himself comfortable with the family. After 'chai pani' and munching some 'kaju', the convoy sets off again. Asked about the craze among the people for him, he says, "They are delighted by my presence, and so am I."

As his convoy speeds off and arrives in Pushpanagar around 1 pm, the villagers, despite the temperature hovering around 39 degrees Celsius, are excited to find him amongst them and raise the decibel levels with slogans. The candidate visits the temple in the vicinity of the rally venue. Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) leaders go all out attack against the BJP and Modi. When his turn comes, Maharaj laments how civic elections are not even being held. "They (Modi government) are not holding even civic elections. In future, they will not even hold Assembly elections. And then they will see there is no need for general elections. Our democracy is being thwarted. It seems we are heading towards dictatorship," he says. "They want more than 400 seats.. for what? Do they want to replace the Constitution? Their intentions are not good," he adds.

In his speech, he also mentions Sonam Maskar, a rifle shooter who has made the village proud with her achievements. He then felicitates her and extends his best wishes for her future. As his speech ends and he heads towards his vehicle, Maharaj pauses to respond to a question: Why does his campaigning revolve around words like 'democracy' and 'Constitution'? Maharaj responds, "Of course, I have stepped out to save our democracy and our Constitution. We can't allow our democracy to be done away with and can't allow our Constitution drafted with painstaking effort by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar to be changed at the whims and fancies of some people." Nitin Jadhav, a close associate, says Maharaj had no plan to contest elections. However, three months before the elections, he constantly raised the issue of democracy and the Constitution being threatened by the current rulers.

# BJP Yet to Hit their Stride



GNS News Agency, April 18

As the battleground for the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections intensifies, political leaders are leaving no stone unturned in their quest to defeat their rival party candidates. This is the situation across the country. At the national level, the opposition parties under the banner of I.N.D.I.A have so far failed to create an atmosphere of challenge to the BJP-led NDA. It still faces a humongous task in achieving its dream of stopping the BJP juggernaut. With the first and the second phase of polling to begin soon, it raises the question whether the bloc INDI can topple Modi government at all?

While the answer certainly would be a big 'no,' it is also not a cakewalk for BJP to achieve 'Ab Ki Bar 400 Paar'. As we had discussed this issue in the past as well, the BJP has reached a point of saturation in North and needs to put in a lot of hard work if that loss has to be covered at least to some extent in the Southern belt. There is a general feeling that despite the lack of unity among the bloc INDI partners, BJP along with its NDA partners may not win more than 345 seats. It is felt that the Congress strategy of creating a counter narrative to BJP has failed despite the yatras of Rahul Gandhi but then there are issues like unemployment and rising prices and falling household incomes which could have some negative impact on the BJP, making it difficult for the party to secure 350 seats on its own.

The real battle ground for the BJP and Congress would be Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Bihar, which together account for about 210 seats. In UP and Bihar, the I.N.D.I.A hopes that caste card would help them. In Punjab, AAP is going solo. With speculations gaining ground that Delhi state may be put under President's rule soon, the opposition camp hopes it would be able to make it a major issue, highlighting that the country is facing an undeclared emergency. However, it may not cut much ice with the voters in the Hindi belt and it is not an issue in the regional battle zones either. Fight in Maharashtra is going to be a keen one as there are many splinter parties in the fray. In West Bengal, thanks to the adamant attitude of TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, the battle is going to be a stiff one. In the 2019 elections, the gap between Didi's party and Modi's BJP was just about three per cent. In South India, the INDI bloc may have advantage in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The BJP is aware of it and leaving no stone unturned in Tamil Nadu to increase its vote share. It wants to touch a double figure in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections.

In other battle zones down south, in Telangana, the loss of BRS could be the gain of BJP but then it appears that the saffron party because of its flip flops such as the sudden change of its state president and lack of proper

coordination and failure to convert Modi's guarantees into party's advantage gives an impression that the gusto that was seen in BJP rank and file before the change of guard in the state unit somehow petered out and there is a perceptible lack of coordination at various levels.

Just as the pink party BRS, the BJP, too, has been claiming that the newly elected Congress government would collapse soon and continues to criticise the government of the day, more so because traditional rivalry at the national level. In a similar vein, the party is silent on the omissions and commissions of the previous government, including the Delhi liquor scam and the Kaleshwaram scandal. The BJP leaders' attack is limited to raising heat on Congress, questioning why it has not implemented its five guarantees yet. Well, it appears that the Telangana BJP is confusing the narrative of Karnataka with Telangana. It is only over 120 days and the Congress came to power in the last quarter of the financial year with allegedly empty coffers. The new financial year has just begun and the election code is in vogue. When it comes to Andhra Pradesh, the saffron party took a lot of time, dithering on joining the TDP-Jana Sena alliance. There were some in the state unit who had strongly opposed the alliance, which gave to suspicions that some important leaders were working like "coverts" for the YSRCP. Even after the BJP finally decided to join the alliance, some leaders reportedly insisted that the saffron party should ask for some Assembly seats where it had no presence at all just to damage the TDP where it has a strong base.

One such seat was Anaparti in East Godavari district. This seat is a keenly contested one between YSRCP and TDP. It is now embroiled in controversy as the TDP rank and file and the aspirant candidate Mula Reddy are refusing to cooperate with the alliance candidate. It has become a contentious seat and efforts are on to resolve the issue. The local people claim that the unsavoury incident cropped up as some senior BJP leaders had mis-guided the party central leadership. Some even allege that there were some monetary considerations involved in it. The BJP so far has not been aggressive in its campaign in the state. Hopefully, the scenario is likely to change from the next week as the top leadership of TDP, JSP and BJP has started working on a joint manifesto which would consist of about 10 guarantees. The expectation is that when top BJP leaders like Modi and Amit Shah would soon focus their attention on the state, the campaign would become shriller and more intense.

In the meantime, there is lot of work to be done regarding administrative measures that the ECI needs to take to ensure free and fair elections in the state. On one hand, there are allegations of phone tapping of opposition leaders using Pegasus software and fake news and surveys are flooding the social media, and, on the other, there are apprehensions among the voters that unless the BJP-led government at Centre focuses its attention on strict enforcement of law and order, it would be a violent polling day. This may require a lot of reshuffle of officials at various levels including the top police bosses. The BJP in Andhra Pradesh is facing credibility issue among the voters as there is a strong undercurrent that it has helped the YSRCP government in last five years. If the Centre still loses time in taking tough administrative measures to instill confidence among the people that it means business and enforce all measures necessary to ensure free and fair polls, it could prove to be a loss for the alliance in terms of over 15 Assembly seats.

## Pune CA duped of Rs 3.4 crore in 'share trading' cyber fraud that used British firm's name

GNS News Agency, April 18

A WhatsApp group named after a British financial major and lure of high returns on 'block trade' and 'upper circuit trading' were used to cheat a Pune-based chartered accountant of a whopping Rs 3.4 crore — of which he had taken over Rs 2 crore as loans from various banks — in an elaborate share trading cyber fraud. The cyber crime police station of Pune City has launched a probe in the case in which the complaint was lodged by the 49-year-old victim who works for a private company in the city. According to investigators, in February this year, when the complainant was surfing Facebook, he came across the link of an app-based stock trading platform. After clicking the link, he was added to a WhatsApp group named after a London-headquartered multinational asset management company. In the group, he started receiving messages about members receiving huge profits on investments. He was made to download a link to fill up all his financial and bank details and was asked to install an app on his phone.

Over the next few days, he started receiving 'tips' for various stock investments and investment opportunities titled 'block trade' and 'upper circuit trade.' Over the next one month, the complainant was lured and manipulated into making around two dozen large payments in the range of Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 crore, totalling Rs 3.4 crore. Of these, over Rs 2 crore was obtained by the complainant by taking three loans, two from a cooperative bank and another from a private sector bank. All this while, the complainant's account on the phone-based application



reflected huge returns on his investments.

When the complainant tried to withdraw some of the money, he was told that he would have to donate a part of the total amount to a charity. It was at this point that he started checking various details of the so-called share trading platform and realised that he had been cheated. He later approached the cyber crime cell and after a preliminary probe, an FIR was registered. In what cyber investigators are calling an epidemic in online share trading fraud cases registered with Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad police, online criminals are using baits such as trading tips, online lectures, phone-based apps and promises of very high returns. In an advisory issued in this regard on February 26, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) highlighted the tactics of fraudsters, including posing as SEBI-registered entities and exploiting social media to promote fraud trading schemes.

## Guarantee schemes have led women astray, says JD(S) leader Kumaraswamy; draws flak

GNS News Agency, April 18

JD(S) leader and former Karnataka chief minister H D Kumaraswamy came under fire from the Congress after he claimed that the guarantee schemes led rural women astray. Five guarantee schemes — two of which were aimed at women — were launched in Karnataka in 2023 after the Congress assumed power in the state. Gruha Lakshmi — which promises Rs 2,000 per month to women heads of the family — and Shakti — which provides free travel for women in state-run buses — are the two. Kumaraswamy was campaigning Saturday for BJP Tumkur Lok Sabha candidate V Somanna at Turuvekere when he made the statement. "People should listen to these few words carefully. This government announced five guarantees for elections last year, (after which) my mothers in villages have gone a little astray. We should think about what their lives will become. You should think about the lives of your families," he told the gathering. He also accused the Siddaramaiah government of spending Rs 300 crore in advertisements regarding the guar-

antee schemes over the last year. Responding to the same, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said Sunday that Kumaraswamy's remarks "reflected his mentality". "What does he mean when he says women have gone astray? This shows his feelings about women," he further said. Kumaraswamy has been CM for two terms, Siddaramaiah said, adding that people would not tolerate such remarks from the JD(S) leader. The Karnataka Congress, in a tweet, said that Kumaraswamy has insulted women. "Does empowerment of women seem wrong for the BJP and JD(S)?" it said, asking whether such behaviour of Kumaraswamy was due to his association with the Sangh Parivar. "It is not the women who have gone astray, it's you," the party said, referring to the JD(S) alliance with the BJP. The JD(S), however, accused the Congress of spreading lies, claiming that Kumaraswamy had blamed the Congress for misleading women with guarantees. "To hide its failures, the Congress is masquerading lies as the truth," it said, adding that it was the Congress's old habit to distort and twist the truth.

## Former Shiromani Akali Dal MLA Pawan Kumar Tinu joins AAP



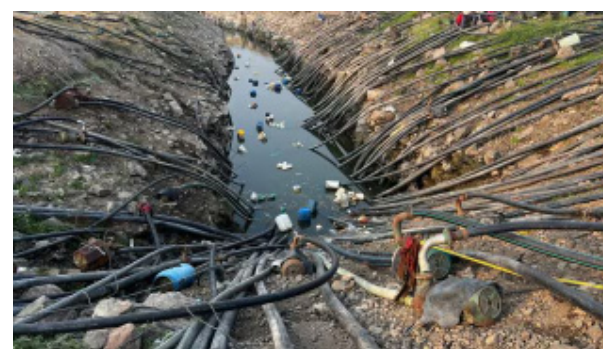
GNS News Agency, April 18

Pawan Kumar Tinu, a former two-time MLA for Punjab's Adampur constituency, left the Shiromani Akali Dal and joined the ruling Aam Aadmi Party on Sunday. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann inducted Tinu into the party. The AAP has been looking for a candidate for the Jalandhar Lok Sabha constituency after its pick, sitting MP Sushil Kumar Rinku, joined the BJP.

Tinu is likely to be nominated by the AAP from Jalandhar. The party has already fielded nine candidates for the Lok Sabha polls scheduled for June 1. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann stated two days ago that he would announce on April 16 the remaining four candidates.

Tinu is considered a tall Scheduled Caste leader. He was known to be an aggressive BSP leader before joining the SAD before the 2012 Assembly elections. Tinu is known to have influence among Dalit voters as well as in the Doaba region. He is learnt to be miffed with the SAD leadership after he was told that he would not be the party's choice in Jalandhar.

## As water levels drop at Ujani, farmers in Pune's Indapur tehsil stare at bleak future



The Ujani dam, built in the 1970s, is an important source of livelihood for farmers and fishing communities in Pune and Solapur districts.

GNS News Agency, April 18

Farmers from various villages of Indapur taluka are staring an acute water crisis with the drop in water levels at Ujani dam — the biggest reservoir built on the Bhima river. The Ujani dam, built in the 1970s, is an important source of livelihood for farmers and fishing communities in Pune and Solapur districts. With a storage capacity of 117 thousand million cubic feet (TMC), the dam has a live storage of 54 TMC and 63 TMC is dead storage.

However, with the drop in water levels, around 38 per cent of dead storage (additional storage water for emergency usage) has been used. "Such a critical condition of drought was in 2012 and then in 2019. The dead storage went negative to around 38 per cent, which means the dead storage has also lost 38 per cent," said Dheeraj Dole, Superintendent Engineer of Ujani Dam, Solapur district. For farmers, who are already under loan debt — they have borrowed money from banks to install motor pumps to draw water from the canals — the current crisis has worsened their situation. Currently, majority of the farmers in villages in the area are drawing water to their fields through self built channels from the river. Each canal contains an average of 300 farmers' pipes. Lala Saheb Markad, a 47-year-old farmer from Nhavi village, takes water from Palasdev's canal, which has the highest number of motors installed.

Markadis a marginal farmer (5-25 acres), and he has around 5 km of long pipes connected to his field, which cost him more than his earnings. "We took a loan from two banks to install the motor that total costs us up to Rs 21 lakh. We paid one, but nine lakhs remained to be paid to the other bank," he said.

Amol Gawde, another sugarcane farmer whose parents were displaced while construction of the dam, said that his family may face financial distress ghus year due to low yield. "Almost every year, I produce around 70 to 80 tonnes of sugarcane in one acre, but this year it has fallen to just 30 tonnes," he said. Farmers have no other option than to pump water as they are facing dwindling cultivation. Markad asked why more water is released to Solapur. "Officials release water through river flow which gives more water to Solapur, more than what they require," said Markad. In response, engineer Dheeraj Dole said that they have officially asked the senior officers to release water from the pipe instead of releasing it into the river. Other affected communities

Besides farmers, livelihoods of many fishermen and shepherd communities depend on the dam's water. Baliram Babu Boi (47), who has been catching fish and selling in the market for over 25 years, said that this year they are barely getting fishes in water bodies. "In fact, after we agitated, the government planned to drop fish seeds of other fishes like Rohu and Katla after 28 years," he said. "Our daily catch is half of what it used to be. My wife and I travel in one boat, and now due to water shortage, we only get the fish worth Rs 800, which was Rs 2000 previously," added Boi. The Bhigwan basin of the Bhima river is very compatible for the grazing of cattle, but due to the delay in monsoon, the migrating communities have to travel earlier than their regular time. Appa Hari Pundkuli, around 70 years of age, is from a nomadic tribe from Shedgaon village, over 50 km away from the dam. He comes every year one month before the monsoon for grazing the cattle, but this year he and his community arrived in January. "Our village is now in total drought, and we hardly get any rain. These cattle are our life, and to keep them alive, we have to travel till here," said Pundkuli. Not far from there, Nitin Dole runs a Kranti Flamingo Point in Bhigwan region as he lost his home because of displacement. Dole, while showing the birds in the wetland region, said that birds are being impacted due to the increasing drought conditions.



## Neighbour's stilt floor construction caused damage worth Rs 30L to Panchkula house: PEC study



GNS News Agency, April 18

A study by a team from Punjab Engineering College (PEC) to assess the alleged damage caused to a house in Panchkula due to construction of a stilt plus four-floor in the adjacent (neighbour) house, has found damage to the tune of Rs 30 lakh in the house of the aggrieved party. The PEC report has found that the major damage in the house had occurred mainly due to settlement of soil below foundation in the neighbour's house. Parmod Hans, a resident of House No. 706 in Sector 11, Panchkula, had with his and his father's money constructed a two-and-a-half floor house in 1992 (ground floor). The other two floors were built in 2002. Parmod, who has a pharmaceutical job, said that he began noticing serious cracks and damage in his house in 2021 after his neighbour started converting his house into a "stilt plus four-floor" building. Both the damaged house (Parmod's) and the neighbour's house were inspected and studied by the team from PEC, Chandigarh.

The request for assessing the alleged damage in Parmod's house due to construction (stilt plus four-floor) in adjoining House No. 705, Sector 11, Panchkula, was made to the PEC by Administrator, Haryana Shahari Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP), Panchkula, on January 24, 2023, after Parmod approached him (Administrator) in this regard. Finding delay in the matter, Parmod then filed a suit in a local district court (Panchkula) which directed that technical experts from PEC be appointed to assess and inspect the alleged damage. After a year, from January 2023 to March 2024, the inspection was carried out and the report was submitted to the court on April 5 this year. Parmod also got a copy of it. A team comprising – Dr Sarita Singla, Professor, and Dr Arshdeep Singh, Assistant Professor, from the Civil Engineering Department, PEC, was constituted to carry out the investigation.

The PEC report, a copy of which is with said, "It was found that the major damage in the house occurred mainly due to settlement of soil below its foundation during the excavation of soil in House No. 705 (neighbour's) without having followed adequate protective measures for stability of the adjoining soil strata. The crack mapping showed that at ground floor level, about 50% to 60% walls had undergone cracks. At first floor level about 30% of the walls were found to be having cracks and at the second floor about 20% of the walls were found to have cracks in it. Further, with regard to crack widths, about

10% of the cracks were wide cracks having crack width exceeding 1 mm, about 15% to 20% of the cracks were medium cracks having crack width of 0.5 mm – 1 mm and about 70% to 75% of the cracks were thin cracks having crack width up to 0.5 mm." The PEC also hired services of a private agency to conduct five Dynamic Cone Penetrometer Tests (DCPT) during which the latter specified that for stabilisation, floor re-leveling and soil consolidation – it would cost Rs 22.57 lakh to the house owner. The rough estimate for repair works would be Rs 4 to Rs 5 lakh, besides the tax. Other than remedial measures to the alleged damaged house, the PEC team also recommended retrofitting measures to be taken by the neighbour's house for its "structural deficiency". Parmod and the neighbour were asked to pay Rs 2.95 lakh each for the PEC study of the damage assessment and structural stability. Causes of damage in Parmod's house

According to the report, "The distress in House No. 706 (aggrieved owner) was of diagonal and horizontal cracks in the brick walls accompanied by floor settlement. The severity of distress was maximum in the area along the common wall of two houses. The floor settlement and wall cracks decreased in the farther regions. Also, the distress was maximum at ground floor level as compared to upper floors. The floor settlement and crack pattern indicated settlement of foundations below the brick walls. As reported, no protection measures for stability of the adjoining soil strain were adopted during the excavation in House No. 705. This led to loosening of the soil strata below the foundation of House No. 706 causing the settlement of the structure above. This settlement was found to be maximum at the common wall region and it decreased towards the farther region causing differential settlement in the structure. It resulted in enhanced compressive forces in the settled region. This caused over stressing resulting in bending of window grills and breaking of some windowpanes and jamming of some doors and windows in House No. 706. "To know the present situation of the soil underneath the floor and the wall foundations for its voids and strength, DCPTs were planned with subsequent assessment of type of strengthening required and its cost estimate. Since this facility was not available at PEC institute, the work was done by agency URETEK India firm.

Severe cracks at some locations on the ground floor were seen in the area adjoining the common wall and on the floors of other areas too. Horizontal and diagonal cracks were seen in the common brick wall. So much so even some doors and windows were found jammed and were difficult to open/close. Some of the window grills were found bent, while a few windowpanes were found broken. On the first and second floors, cracks at some places on the floor tiles were seen. Water was reported to be percolating through some of these cracks during the rains. Here too, a few doors and windows were found jammed and were difficult to open/close. The skirting tiles on the terrace portion were found to be detached from the wall. Stilt plus four floors refer to a building that has a stilt floor, which is raised above the ground level, and an additional four floors above it, making a total of five floors.

## 40 years of Operation Meghdoot: The unsung foot soldier who marched to top but has no gallantry award

GNS News Agency, April 18

On the 40th anniversary of Operation Meghdoot, the occupation of the heights around the Siachen Glacier by the Indian Army in 1984, it is pertinent to recall the super-human efforts of the band of soldiers who were the first to march on foot from the Base Camp to Sia La and raise the Indian Tricolour. However, not much is known about these brave soldiers, and the officer who led them on foot was not decorated with any medal for his accomplishment.

Lt Col NS Salaria, then a senior Major with 14 years of service, led the column of soldiers from the snout of the Siachen Glacier at 12,000 feet to Sia La Pass at 22,000 feet and linked up with the troops dropped by helicopters in the first wave of operations by the Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF) to occupy the Siachen Glacier.

These troops, marching on foot, had the longest march on the glacier, starting from Sasoma on March 21. After establishing staging camps at Henachi, Warshi, and Base Camp, they were launched on Siachen Glacier, finally unfurling the Tricolour on Sia La on April 29. Now settled in Pathankot after retiring in 2003, Lt Col Salaria remembers each detail of Op Meghdoot, launched 40 years ago. Originally commissioned in 6 Dogra, he later joined 12 Dogra, a newly raised battalion. "I was the Adjutant at the regimental centre when the then GOC 15 Corps, Lt Gen Hoon, who was from our regiment, visited the centre in September 1983 and asked for volunteers to serve in the Siachen operations. I volunteered and was posted with the Ladakh Scouts in Ladakh," he says.

Eventually, for the actual operations, Lt Col Salaria was made the Commander of a company with seven officers, 13 JCOs, and 175 jawans. While the troops dropped by helicopters were the first ones to occupy the Bila Fond La and Sia La passes, this company, led by Salaria, was to link up with these forces and provide a crucial backup against potential Pakistani attacks. "The first problem we faced was that we did not have snow equipment. On April 12, the equipment purchased by the Army from Western suppliers arrived at the base camp by helicopter. Priority was given to heliborne troops for this equipment. Therefore when we marched the next day we went with normal winter clothing that is issued by the Army," says Lt Col Salaria. Lt Col NS Salaria, then a senior Major with 14 years of service, led the column of soldiers from the snout of the Siachen Glacier at 12,000 feet to Sia La Pass at 22,000 feet. (Express Photo) Lt Col NS Salaria, then a senior Major with 14 years of service, led the column of soldiers from the snout of the Siachen Glacier at 12,000 feet to Sia La Pass at 22,000 feet. (Express Photo) This company, led by Salaria, also opened the route to Tershah Glacier, established camps on the way in, and linked up with heliborne forces.

"There was a Tactical HQ at Tershah Glacier. We stopped there for three days, and then the equipment arrived by helicopter which we donned for our further march up," he says. These foot soldiers used to walk for 10-12 km per day in deep snow. There were crevices to negotiate as they established six camps and then turned left towards PoK and Sia La. At the same time, another team comprising trained personnel from High Altitude Warfare School (HAWS) turned right towards Indira Col, which they had to occupy.



Lt Col NS Salaria led the column of soldiers from the snout of the Siachen Glacier at 12,000 feet to Sia La Pass at 22,000 feet and linked up with the troops dropped by helicopters.

"On April 28, I established Camp 6, and we put ourselves down for some well-deserved rest as we were all dead tired carrying 40 kgs of load on our backs. At that time, I had 55 boys with me, having dropped troops at each camp we established. At 7 pm, I got a message on the radio set from the Sector Commander, Brig V Channa, who told me that he knew we were tired but that this was a do-or-die mission now," he recalls. A surprised Salaria inquired what had happened and was told that the Pakistani forces were expected to contact Sia La early morning. "Brig Channa told me that we just have one platoon on Sia La, and they cannot resist, and you have to occupy by first light. I told him my troops were exhausted but he said the task had to be done at all costs. I gathered my boys and told them the mission, but many said they were too tired to go on. Then I gave them a lecture and 35 boys got ready. We dropped all extra equipment like sleeping bags, kerosene, etc and only carried out weapons, ammunition and grenades. We marched through the night, and at 4 am, we linked up with Sia La post," he says. Lt Col Salaria's troops reached just in time, as at 8 am, three Pakistan Army helicopters arrived to carry out reconnaissance for the attack. "They saw us deployed there and went back. Had we not gone and occupied Sia La in aid of the platoon there, they would have been overwhelmed," he says. Sadly, Lt Col Salaria was not awarded a gallantry award for leading this stupendous effort. He is the only undecorated officer whose name is displayed in the hall of fame at Officers Training Academy (OTA), Chennai, where he graduated in March 1970.

## Villages, housing societies with high voter turnout in Maharashtra's Jalgaon to get 'boards of honour'



GNS News Agency, April 18

In an effort to encourage voters to celebrate and uphold democracy, the Jalgaon district administration in Maharashtra has decided to install boards on prominent public roads showing the voter turnout during the polling. These boards will remind voters of each area the extent to which they have participated in the democratic process and instill a sense of pride in themselves, officials said. "Boards designating the names, altitude and even population of places are common, but installing boards on prominent public roads designating the voter turnout in the election is one of the novel methods that aim to increase the polling percentage in Jalgaon district in northern Maharashtra," said Jalgaon District collector and district election officer Ayush Prasad.

Inspired by YouTube's Creators' awards, the Jalgaon district administration has declared that colonies, housing societies and villages where the polling stations record 76-85 per cent voting would get a bronze colour board, while polling stations with 86-95 per cent would get silver colour boards and those with 96-100 per cent voter turnout will fetch a gold colour board. Once polling and counting is over, the boards will be put up in different areas. "The boards will be erected on a permanent basis so that they are visible to each and every citizen passing through the area. The colony, housing society or village where a gold colour board is put up will

obviously feel proud about how they honoured and upheld democracy," said Prasad.

The district administration has roped in social groups such as Rotary Clubs, Resident Welfare Associations and local social organisations to spread the word. "The aim is to ensure not just that people vote, they also ensure that people in their neighbourhood vote and those in their friend circles," said Amit Ahuja, member of the Gold City Rotary Club. "The boards will become an identity of democratic participation of the place and tell elected representatives in future that people vote in this area and hence their needs ought to be prioritised."

Community building activities such as walkathons are being organised in each such area, said social welfare officer Yogesh Patil, "to encourage people to come together to celebrate the festival of democracy and create a sense of peer pressure for voting, under the campaign 'I voted, we all voted'." In addition to the nine Rotary Clubs in the district, the Jalgaon administration has also roped in Lions Club, industrial associations, medical associations, engineering associations, etc. "In our voluntary activities, we often serve under-privileged sections of the society. Our focus on previous attempts at voter awareness have been towards them. But we have come to realise that in the households of our members, all people do not vote. Hence, in this election, our focus is on ensuring all people in our households and our offices vote," said Gani Memon, vice president of the Red Cross Society in Jalgaon. Urban apathy or the low voter turnout among affluent residents of urban areas was flagged by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar during his interaction with municipal commissioners, officials said. Yuvraj Patil, Jalgaon's public information officer, hoped that this initiative of public recognition would be a success. "This is a gamification of voter turnout that is designed as a competition between localities and between institutions. The popularity of various sports leagues with teams representing different cities has shown that people have strong identity-based loyalties. This will encourage more people to come out to vote," he said.

## 'BJP keeps shifting goalposts, now talking of Olympics': Congress, AAP decry BJP's manifesto

GNS News Agency, April 18

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leaders Pawan Khera, Supriya Shrinete and Amitabh Dubey said that "they lie so much now that no one believes them". Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leaders Pawan Khera, Supriya Shrinete and Amitabh Dubey said that "they lie so much now that no one believes them". As the BJP unveiled their manifesto, titled the 'Sankalp Patra', for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, a war of words broke out with Opposition parties, including the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), hitting out against it.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leaders Pawan Khera, Supriya Shrinete and Amitabh Dubey said that "they lie so much now that no one believes them". Kharge said, "They have done nothing in the last few years which benefits the youths and farmers of the country. Youths are yearning for jobs, and there is a rise in inflation. They don't care about all this. It won't be right to trust their manifesto again."

"None of the past governments have suffered the 'disease' of shifting goalposts as the BJP. Whatever you said in 2014, you gave no account of that in 2019, and in 2024 you're talking about 2047. They (BJP) have written in the manifesto that they'll host the 2036 Olympics. Where will you be then, will you even be in the government? You should give account of the past 5 years and talk about the coming five years," Pawan Khera said. Labelling the manifesto a "Maafinama" and a "Jhumla Patra", Khera added: "We have strong objection to the



name of BJP's 'Sankalp Patra', it should be named 'Maafinama'. Modi ji should have apologized to the Dalits, farmers, youth and tribals of the country." Speaking on recent tensions between Iran and Israel, Khera hit out against the Modi government's foreign policy and said that it only "based on the false glorification of one man". "10-12 days ago, the Modi government sent Indian workers to Israel.. now will the government stop a war to bring them back?" he asked. Aam Aadmi Party, too, decried the manifesto, with senior leader Atishi saying, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the BJP's Jhumla Patra for the upcoming polls. This manifesto shows the promises they made and never fulfilled... Modi ji promised jobs for youths and was one of the poll promises in 2019 but in the last nine years, Modi ji has not provided any jobs. Graduates, post graduates and youths are unemployed."

## India 'seriously concerned' at escalation of Israel-Iran hostilities, calls for 'exercise of restraint'

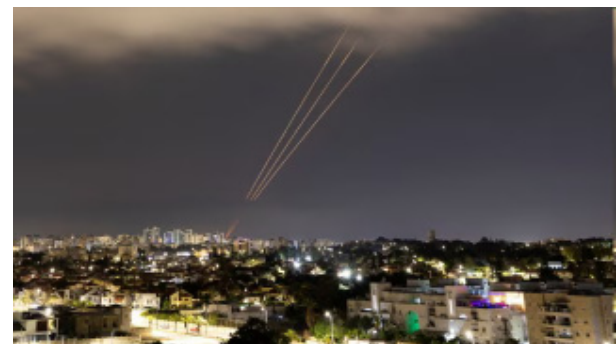
GNS News Agency, April 18

India on Sunday expressed "serious concern" at the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran and called for "immediate de-escalation". New Delhi's statement came within hours of Iran launching drones, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles on Israel. This followed a suspected Israeli strike on April 1 on an Iranian consular building in Syria's Damascus that killed 12 people, including a senior general. Iran had vowed to avenge the strike. The Ministry of External Affairs said on Sunday, "We are seriously concerned at the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran which threatens the peace and security in the region." "We call for immediate de-escalation, exercise of restraint, stepping back from violence and return to the path of diplomacy," it said. The MEA said, "We are closely monitoring the evolving situation. Our Embassies in the region are in close touch with Indian community."

"It is vital that security and stability are maintained in the region," it said. New Delhi on Friday issued a travel advisory in which it has asked Indians not to travel to Iran and Israel "in view of the prevailing situation in the region". About 18,000 Indians live and work in Israel. About 60 Indian workers went there earlier this month.

India found itself caught in the middle of the tension between Israel and Iran on Saturday. Iranian commandos Saturday had seized an Israeli-affiliated container ship carrying 17 Indian crew members, the latest escalation in West Asia's spiralling tensions which New Delhi has now found itself caught up in. Members of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard rappelled down from a helicopter onto the Portuguese-flagged MSC Aries near the Strait of Hormuz and, according to the state-run IRNA news agency, were taking the ship into Iranian territorial waters.

The seizure followed a suspected Israeli strike this month on an Iranian consular building in Syria's Damascus that killed 12 people, including a senior Guard general. Iran had vowed to avenge the strike. The ship is associated with London-based Zodiac Maritime, which is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac Group. Geneva-based MSC later acknowledged the seizure and said 25 crew members were aboard the vessel. IRNA



said a special forces unit of the Guard's navy attacked the ship. Sources in New Delhi said there are 17 Indian nationals on board, and that officials were in touch with Tehran for the security, welfare and early release of the Indians. A source in New Delhi said: "We are aware that Iran has taken control of a cargo ship, 'MSC Aries'. We have learnt that 17 Indian nationals are onboard. We are in touch with the Iranian authorities through diplomatic channels, both in Tehran and in Delhi, to ensure the security, welfare, and early release of Indian nationals."

## DRDO successfully conducts field trials of MPATGM system

GNS News Agency, April 18

Hyderabad: Man Portable Anti-tank Guided Missile (MPATGM) Weapon System, indigenously designed and developed by Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), has been field evaluated in different flight configurations several times with the objective of proving the technology with high superiority. The system consisted of the MPATGM, Launcher, Target Acquisition System, and the Fire Control Unit. Adequate number of missile firing trials have been successfully conducted towards achieving compliance of complete operational envelop as stipulated in the General Staff Qualitative Requirements (Infantry, Indian Army), a release said.



## CUET attendance up from 61% in '23 to 75%, but varsities drop to 190: NTA

GNS News Agency, April 18

CUET-PG, CUET-PG 2024, CUET attendance up, National Testing Agency, Indian express news, current affairs While there was an improvement in attendance, the total number of participating universities this year dropped to 190 from last year's 197. The CUET-PG 2024 saw a significant improvement in the attendance with 75% of the registered students taking the exam, compared to 61.5% last year.

According to the result announced by National Testing Agency (NTA) Friday, a total of 5.7 lakh students of the 7.6 lakh who had registered took the test. Female participation among those who appeared was higher with 3.15 lakh compared to men at 2.6 lakh. Last year, 8.7 lakh students registered for the exam and of them 5.3 lakh students wrote it. According to NTA, the jump in attendance is due to allotment of centres close to the applicant's permanent or present address. "...it is evident the attendance percentage has considerably increased this year because candidates were allotted exam city near their present or permanent address, and the examination calendar mentioning the dates for CUET (PG) - 2024 were announced in advance," an official statement said. In 2022, when CUET-PG was conducted for the first time, 3.3 lakh students took the national-level entrance test while 6 lakh had registered, which translated to an atten-



dance of 55%. A total of 4.6 lakh unique students registered for the test in 2024 this year. The test was held in 572 centres across 262 cities, including in nine cities outside India (Manama, Dubai, Kathmandu, Muscat, Riyadh, Ottawa, Abu Dhabi, Vienna, and Qatar) While there was an improvement in attendance, the total number of participating universities this year dropped to 190 from last year's 197. Last year, 45 state public universities took admissions based on CUET-PG scores, however, in 2024, only 39 such universities will do so. Also, 15 government institutions and 97 private and deemed universities will admit students for PG programmes based on CUET PG scores.

## 11 of school's 12 vehicles have no fitness certificate, insurance: Cops on Mahendergarh mishap that killed 6 students

GNS News Agency, April 18

Officials check school bus fitness certificates after the Kanina school bus accident, in Gurugram on Saturday. PTIOfficials check school bus fitness certificates after the Kanina school bus accident, in Gurugram

Two days after six students were killed in an accident involving a school bus in Mahendergarh's Kanina, police have said that 11 of the GL Public School's 12 vehicles didn't have fitness certificates or active insurance. According to the data on the Parivahan website, the school owns 11 buses and one Maruti Omni van. The fitness certificate of seven buses had expired in 2018, two others were being run without the document since 2011, one since 2012 and another one since 2022. The oldest vehicle was registered in 2000 in the name of the school principal. Police said one of the vehicles was bought recently and they could not find its fitness certificate either. "The driver claimed that the vehicle had requisite documents, but we have yet to find them. There have been 38 instances of challaning against the vehicles owned by the school," said Mahendergarh SP Arsh Verma. According to the data on the website, the challans were issued for different violations, including failure to furnish fitness certificate, insurance; absence of fire ex-



tinguisher, high-security number plate, first-aid boxes, among others. A challan of Rs 12,500 against one of the buses is still pending, the data shows. The Pollution Under Control Certificate (PUCC) of a few vehicles, including the one involved in the accident, had expired too. In March 2023, the vehicle that met with the accident on Thursday was fined Rs 15,500. "However, despite these violations, the school authorities did not take any remedial measures," the SP said. Police said the injured children are stable now. "Three children are undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Gurgaon," the SP said.

## Eye on eastern Ladakh, new Army division likely to be raised this year

GNS News Agency, April 18

A long-pending plan to raise a new Army division for possible deployment in eastern Ladakh is likely to be implemented this year as part of a series of changes for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the Ladakh region, The has learnt. According to sources, the Army is considering raising the 72 Division — which was to originally function under the 17 Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) based in Panagarh (West Bengal) — for possible deployment in eastern Ladakh under the Northern Command.

A division has approximately 14,000 to 15,000 troops. However, instead of recruiting additional manpower, the Army is likely to reorganise existing personnel for deployment in the new division from other formations. A strike corps is responsible for offensive trans-border action. Currently, the Army has four strike corps — the Mathura-based 1 Corps, Ambala-based 2 Corps, Bhopal-based 21 Corps, and 17 MSC in Panagarh. However, till 2021, only the 17 MSC — which was partially raised then — was focused on China. The other three were focussed on Pakistan.

But in the backdrop of the military standoff with China which began in 2020, a restructuring was carried out in 2021 to keep two of the strike corps for the mountains facing China. The 1 Corps and 17 Corps were restructured to focus on the northern and eastern borders to tackle Chinese threats. The role of the 1 Corps was reoriented to focus on the northern borders with China with two infantry divisions. The 17 Corps was given an additional division from an existing corps to focus on the eastern theatre. Some elements of the 17 Corps were deployed in eastern Ladakh in the backdrop of the military standoff with China. When the 17 MSC was sanctioned in 2013, it was to have two divisions. However, only the Panagarh-based 59 Division was raised; the 72 Division was among the raisings shelved due to financial constraints. The plan to raise this division was discussed by the Army top brass recently. However, instead of functioning as a strike corps division under the 17 MSC, it was decided to bring it under the Northern Command for possible deployment in eastern Ladakh. Sources said the new division may or may not be renamed. According to sources, once the new division is effectively deployed in eastern Ladakh, the long-term deployment of troops in the entire Northern Command will be re-assessed. While the security situation in the Valley is relatively stable, the 16 Corps, which looks after the areas south of the Pir Panjal range, has seen a series of high impact terror attacks in the last three years.

THE DECISION is part of overall redeployment changes being planned in the Northern Command, with a two-pronged strategy focused on eastern Ladakh amid the standoff along the LAC with China, and on ensuring no gap in training of strike corps elements. According to officials, the shifting of a Rashtriya Rifles force from the area to eastern Ladakh created a void, and this was subsequently addressed by moving in troops from reserve formations and strike corps, thus affecting the training of troops as well as their peacetime profile. "If implemented, the exercise will aim at keeping a stable and balanced



deployment in the entire command theatre and also keep the strike corps ready as per their roles," an official said, adding that the reserve formations will continue to train and be available in situ for any emergent deployment within a short timeframe. India and China pushed in nearly 50,000-60,000 troops each along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) following the deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley in June 2020. Friction points such as Galwan Valley, north and south banks of Pangong Tso and the Gogra-Hot Springs area have seen some resolution in the last three years with the creation of buffer zones. Legacy friction points such as Depsang Plains and Demchok are yet to see any disengagement.

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

GNS News Agency, April 18

New Delhi: India on Sunday expressed serious concern over the escalating tension between Israel and Iran, and called for exercising restraint, stepping back from violence and returning to the path of diplomacy. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "We are seriously concerned at the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran which threatens the peace and security in the region."



Calling for immediate de-escalation, the MEA said, "We call for immediate de-escalation, exercise of restraint, stepping back from violence and return to the path of diplomacy." "We are closely monitoring the evolving situation. Our Embassies in the region are in close touch with Indian community. It is vital that security and stability are maintained in the region," MEA said in an X post of its official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

## Opposition jabs BJP manifesto: 'No mention of inflation, unemployment'

GNS News Agency, April 18

Opposition parties on Sunday took on the BJP over its manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections and alleged that the promises made in the poll document were "full of lies" and "not trustworthy". They also accused the saffron party of ignoring unemployment and inflation in the manifesto. The BJP's manifesto has a special focus on the poor, young people, farmers and women. Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the poll document and said his government has promised to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and hold simultaneous polls.

In response, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said inflation and unemployment were "missing" from BJP's manifesto. "The BJP does not even want to discuss the most important issues related to people's lives. INDIA's plan is very clear - recruitment for 30 lakh posts and a permanent job of Rs 1 lakh to every educated youth," he tweeted in Hindi. "This time, the youth is not going to fall into the trap of PM Modi. He will now strengthen the hands of Congress and bring 'employment revolution' in the country," he said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the BJP's manifesto was a "sham" and alleged that their real manifesto was 'Samvidhaan Badlo Patra' (change Constitution manifesto). "Remember, BJP starts all these conspiracies against the country, society and democracy from the bottom. In the beginning, the top leaders will take oath on the Constitution in front of the people, but at night they write a script to destroy the Constitution. Later, after gaining complete power, they will attack the Constitution," she alleged. She said that Babasaheb Ambedkar's Constitution was "the soul of India" and said all Opposition parties should unite to defeat the BJP. "Today, we all have to unite and reject BJP's 'Constitution Change Mission' and say loudly that the country will be run by the Constitution and together we will defeat those who intend to change the Constitution," she wrote in Hindi on X.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge hit out at PM Modi and accused him of not doing anything that would benefit all sections of society. He also said that one could not trust the BJP's manifesto. "He (PM Narendra Modi) had said he will double farmers' income. He had said that he would increase MSP and give a legal guarantee - this is the guarantee. He didn't do any such big work in his tenure that would benefit all the people of the country," he said. Congress leader Pawan Khera said the party had strong objection to the name of BJP's manifesto, 'Sankalp Patra', adding that it should be named 'maafinama' (apology document). "Modi ji should have apologized to the Dalits, farmers, youth and tribals of the country," he said. Khera alleged the saffron party's manifesto was new 'jumlas' and untrustworthy. "None of the governments before this has suffered the 'disease' of shifting goalposts. What you said in 2014, you gave no ac-



count on that in 2019 and you put new 'jumlas' and goalposts in 2019. In 2024, you're talking about 2047," he said. "They (BJP) have written in the manifesto that they will host the 2036 Olympics. Where would you be then? Will you be there in the government? You should give an account of 5 years. They lie with so much clarity but now that they have lied so much that no one trusts them now," he added.

"The young people is looking for jobs. Inflation is rising. He is not worried about inflation and unemployment. In 10 years, this man couldn't do anything for the poor. It is not correct to trust his manifesto. It proves that he has nothing to offer people," he added. Delhi Minister and AAP leader Atishi asserted that BJP's manifesto is a 'jumla patra' (a document of fake promises) and that there was not much focus on inflation and unemployment.

"People are worried because of unemployment. The price of (LPG) cylinders has risen from Rs 300 to Rs 1,200. Diesel price has risen from Rs 55 to Rs 90. Every family is facing difficulty in meeting expenses. This 'jumla patra' that has been released by BJP today won't be trusted by anyone now," she said. Voicing similar sentiments, Congress leader Manish Tewari slammed the BJP for not giving focus to inflation in its manifesto. "What people want to know is why the common man is reeling under the burden of inflation. What people want to know is the MNREGA budget, which is an indicator of rural distress, has gone up from Rs 33,000 crore to almost Rs 90,000 crore in the past 10 years," he said. "So, there are real issues on the ground troubling people. The discontent on the ground is going to translate into an electoral defeat for the NDA and BJP," he said. Earlier today, PM Modi released the BJP's manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections at the party headquarters in Delhi. Titled 'Modi's Guarantee 2024', the manifesto - also known as 'Sankalp Patra' - focusses on women empowerment, the upliftment of youth and the poor. The manifesto targets GYAN - which are schemes for the 'Gareeb' (poor), 'Yuva' (youth), 'Annadaata' (farmers), and 'Nari' (women). It also focusses on making India prosperous, strengthening its international relations, and fostering the development of the country's heritage, among others.

## Eknath Shinde speaks to Salman Khan after firing outside home, assures security

GNS News Agency, April 18

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday spoke to Salman Khan over the phone and assured him of increased security after two bike-borne assailants fired several rounds of shots outside the Bollywood actor's residence in Mumbai. The police have already launched a search for the suspect, while heightening security arrangements around the Galaxy Apartments in Bandra. Shinde held a discussion with the Mumbai Police Commissioner, after which it was suggested to increase Salman Khan's security.

Addressing reporters, the Chief Minister called the incident "unfortunate", adding that the "accused will be caught, and stringent action will be taken against them." "Those who take the law into their own hands won't be spared. Mumbai Police Commissioner has been informed to assess the security of Salman Khan and his entire family and increase security. I spoke to Salman Khan and told him that the government is with him, and he does not need to worry," Shinde added. The incident occurred at 4.51 am on Sunday when the two perpetrators fired three rounds and another four rounds outside the Galaxy Apartments before fleeing the spot. CCTV footage showed the bike-borne men speeding towards Salman Khan's house. However, the Opposition has blamed the Shinde-led government in Maharashtra for a dangerous law and order situation in the state which led to Sunday's incident. Addressing reporters, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut asked where the state's Home Minister was, adding that "he is in election mode 24 hours".

"Law and order is in danger in the state. Where is the Home Minister? He is in election mode 24 hours, sometimes in Delhi, in an election campaign meeting, sometimes sitting in a conspiracy to eliminate his opponent. Who will look after law and order by the BJP?" Raut further said that the "Home Minister is busy in politics but the Mumbai Police is not doing politics, right? They are also doing politics behind his back".

"The firing that happened outside Salman Khan's



house is a sign. Bullets can be fired anytime and anywhere in this Mumbai." On her part, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi said "Home Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis and this illegitimate government are directly responsible for the breakdown of law in Maharashtra". In a post on X, she added, "The shoot out outside Salman Khan's house is not just shocking but also shows their inability to focus on governance over their politics."

The Home Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis and this illegitimate government are directly responsible for the breakdown of law in Maharashtra. The shoot out outside Salman Khan's house is not just shocking but also shows their inability to focus on governance over their politics — Priyanka Chaturvedi @Yashika (@priyankac19) April 14, 2024 Sunday's incident came more than a year after Salman Khan's office received an e-mail threatening the Bollywood actor in March 2023. The Mumbai Police had registered an FIR against gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar and another person under Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 506-II (criminal intimidation) and 34 (common intention) of the IPC. Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldie Brar have announced several times to kill Salman Khan. According to sources, they had also sent their shooters to Mumbai to kill the actor.

## Arvind Kejriwal denied in-person meeting with wife, AAP calls it inhumane

GNS News Agency, April 18

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sanjay Singh on Saturday claimed that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is currently lodged at the Tihar Jail after his arrest in the liquor policy case, has been denied permission for an in-person meeting with his wife Sunita and can only meet her through a window. He slammed the move as "inhumane". Addressing a press conference in Delhi, Sanjay Singh, who was granted bail earlier this month after spending six months in Tihar following his arrest in the same case last October, said that "even dreaded criminals are allowed to have meetings in their barracks." "But a three-time Chief Minister of Delhi is being made to meet his wife through a window with a glass in between. Why such inhumane behaviour?" he queried. The AAP leader said "when Sunita Kejriwal applied for a meeting with her husband, she was told that they could only have a face-to-face meeting." They were

denied an in-person meeting inside a room, and were only permitted to meet each other through a window," he said, adding that this was being done to "humiliate and break the morale" of the Delhi Chief Minister. "Arvind Kejriwal is being tortured at the behest of the Central government and the Prime Minister. He is being deprived of his basic rights." Sanjay Singh further claimed that a meeting between Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann was also cancelled at the last moment. "Mann and Kejriwal's physical meeting was also denied by Tihar Jail authorities. We have been told that the two Chief Ministers will have to meet through the window as well." The AAP leader further claimed that the late founder and chairman of Sahara India Pariwar, Subrata Roy had "internet, phone and office facilities in Tihar", while the "Chandra Brothers were allowed to hold regular meetings and also sign files" at the prison premises. "Why are you so afraid of Arvind Kejriwal?" he asked.



## Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: 10 things to know about the force



GNS News Agency, April 18

Iran on Saturday night launched an attack with missiles and drones on Israel in response to a strike widely blamed on Israel on an Iranian consular building in Syria earlier this month which killed two Iranian generals. Israel said Iran launched 170 drones, more than 30 cruise missiles and more than 120 ballistic missiles. Iran claimed that Israel was responsible for the killing of a senior commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' overseas Quds Force and other officials in the airstrike on its consulate building in Damascus on April 1. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had vowed to take revenge. Khamenei had said Israel "must be punished and shall be" for an operation he said was equivalent to an attack on Iranian soil.

IRGC was established after Iran's 1979 revolution to protect the new Islamic regime. Its role is to protect Iran against internal and external threats. IRGC runs parallel to Iran's regular armed forces. More than 190,000 troops are reportedly under its command. It is one of the most powerful paramilitary forces in the Middle East. As per reports, IRGC has supported militant groups in Lebanon, Gaza, Syria, Yemen, Iraq etc. IRGC was designated a terrorist organization in 2019 by the United States. It controls large parts of the Iranian economy to help it fund its activities. The force also holds sway in the country's politics and helped suppress anti-government protesters in the country. As per some reports, IRGC may have played a role in the October 7 attacks on Israel by Hamas. Reports also say that IRGC supplied drones to Russia in its war against Ukraine. IRGC is believed to be involved in oil smuggling and other black market activities to bolster its finances amid sanctions. IRGC also helps Iran by doing rescue operations during natural disasters in the country. Meanwhile, Iran has concluded the attack on Israel and urged it not to retaliate or escalate the situation. "The matter can be deemed concluded," Iran's mission to the United Nations said in a post on social media platform X. "However, should the Israeli regime make another mistake, Iran's response will be considerably more severe," the Iranian mission warned.

## Pope Francis warns against 'spiral of violence' after Iran attack on Israel

GNS News Agency, April 18

Pope Francis on Sunday made a "pressing appeal" against a "spiral of violence" after Iran's unprecedented missile and drone attack on Israel, warning of a potential regional conflagration. "I make a pressing appeal for an end to any action which could fuel a spiral of violence that risks dragging the Middle East into an even greater conflict," the Argentinian pontiff declared following his traditional Sunday prayer in Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican.

"I am praying and following with concern, but also pain, the news that has come in recent hours about the worsening situation in Israel due to Iran's intervention," the pope told worshippers. "No one should threaten the existence of others. All countries must, however, side with peace and help Israelis and Palestinians to live in two states, side by side and in security," he said. "That is their



right," Francis insisted as he once again repeated earlier calls for a ceasefire in Gaza and "negotiation." world and urged the "immediate release of the hostages kidnapped months ago" by Hamas, setting in train the latest chapter of violence in the region.

## At least 14 killed after landslides hit Indonesia's Sulawesi island



GNS News Agency, April 18

At least 14 people have been killed in landslides on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, the country's disaster mitigation agency said on Sunday, with rescue efforts ongoing for those reported missing. Landslides triggered by high-intensity rains affected two villages in the region of Tana Toraja, in South Sulawesi, killing 14 people and destroying four homes, Abdul Muhari, the spokesperson

for the agency said in a statement.

Search and rescue efforts for missing residents are continuing, he said, without providing details about how many were unaccounted for. Local media has reported that at least two people are missing. Photos of affected villages provided by the agency showed rescuers trawling through the rubble for survivors, with homes flattened and reduced to planks of wood and concrete.

Emergency response efforts have been complicated by poor weather conditions and damage to roads into the affected areas, making it difficult for vehicles, including ambulances to evacuate victims, the agency's spokesperson said. Located in the centre of Sulawesi island, the mountainous region of Tana Toraja is about 300 kilometres (186 miles) from the provincial capital, Makassar. Floods and landslides killed at least 26 people on Indonesia's Sumatra island last month, with torrential rains destroying hundreds of homes, and displacing thousands. Indonesia's rainy season began in January with the meteorological agency forecasting a first-quarter peak, particularly on the islands of Java and Sumatra.

## Sydney knife attack: Indian-origin couple recall how they survived

GNS News Agency, April 18

An Indian-origin couple have recounted how they survived the horrific knife attack in Australia's Sydney on Saturday. Shoi Ghoshal and her husband Debashis Chakrabarty were at the Westfield shopping centre at Bondi Junction when the attack happened. Ghoshal told the BBC that they hid themselves along with 20 to 25 people other people, in a backroom and used cardboard boxes to barricade for protection. "We went into a backroom, a storeroom, and used boxes to barricade ourselves in," Ghoshal said, reported news agency "It was just beyond horrible. It plays on your mind that you could have been one of the victims. We are grateful we are safe and our thoughts are with those who have suffered. It is terrible for their families," she told the BBC.

Ghoshal shared that they got to know of the situation as "people were say-



ing someone is stabbing rampantly". She revealed that the group they were hiding with, made calls to the police who relayed to them what was happening and told them to "stay there, stay calm."

She shared that they were later evacuated through the emergency exit of the mall. In the horrific attack, four women and one man were killed at the scene, while a fifth woman

died from her injuries at a hospital. Meanwhile, eight people are being treated for their injuries at hospitals around Sydney.

The attacker, identified as 40-year-old Joel Cauchi, was shot dead by a police officer. NSW Assistant Police Commissioner Anthony Cooke told reporters at a media conference on Sunday that Cauchi suffered from some mental health issues. "We are continuing to work through the

profiling of the offender but very clearly to us at this stage it would appear that this is related to the mental health of the individual involved," Cooke said.

There is still, to this point... no information we have received, no evidence we have recovered, no intelligence that we have gathered that would suggest that this was driven by any particular motivation - ideology or otherwise," he added.

## Hijacked ship MV Abdullah released after \$5 million ransom payment, Somali pirates say



GNS News Agency, April 18

Somali pirates released a hijacked ship, MV Abdullah, early on Sunday after a \$5 million ransom was paid, according to two pirates. "The money was brought to us two nights ago as usual... we checked whether the money was fake or not. Then we divided the money into

groups and left, avoiding the government forces," Abdirashiid Yusuf, one of the pirates, told Reuters. Somalia government officials did not respond to a request for comment.

The MV Abdullah, a Bangladesh-flagged bulk carrier - a type of merchant ship used to transport large amounts of cargo - was hijacked in March as it was heading from Mozambique to the United Arab Emirates. The hijacking happened about 600 nautical miles east of Somalia's capital Mogadishu. Somali pirates caused chaos in the waters off the country's long coastline from about 2008 to 2018. They had been dormant until late last year when pirate activity started to pick up again. Maritime sources say pirates may be encouraged by a relaxation of security or may be taking advantage of the chaos caused by attacks on shipping by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group while war rages in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

## South African President Ramaphosa urges Muslim community members to join active politics

GNS News Agency, April 18

Johannesburg, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has called on the members of the Muslim community, many of them of Indian origin, to join active politics like their forebears to make the country a place of equality, shared prosperity and true freedom. Ramaphosa was speaking at a huge Eid gathering in the Indian township of Laudium, near the capital Pretoria. "It is regrettable that over the years one of our once vibrant and politically active communities has retreated into the background of our national life," he said on Thursday.

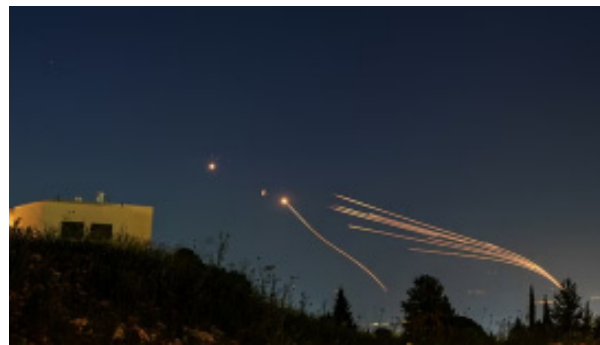
"Much of our politics has come to be defined by internal squabbles and regrettably by racial and other forms of chauvinism. This has led to some of these communities questioning their place in South Africa today," Ramaphosa said ahead of next month's general elections. He was indirectly referring to increasing concerns among minority communities such as the 1.6 million South Africans of Indian origin, who have increasingly been concerned about laws and policies on issues such as employment equality and quotas at educational institutions sidelining them in favour of the Black majority

population.

Ramaphosa highlighted the role that the Muslim community had played in the freedom struggle. "We salute the many great leaders that the Muslim community has produced - Yusuf Dadoo, Rehana Moosa, Ahmed Timol, Cissy Gool, Imam Haroon, Ahmed Kathrada, Don Maiter, Chief Justice Ismail Mahomed, Dullah Omar, the parents and sons and daughters of the Cachalia and Pahad families and many others," he said as he made an impassioned plea to the gathering. "Your country needs you. Your country looks upon you. Join us in rebuilding South Africa," the president said.

He said South Africa was built through the actions of patriotic men and women of different races, classes and political affiliations. "They were united by a common goal and it is this spirit of unity we must channel today," the President said. "So let us join hands to make South Africa a place of equality, shared prosperity and true freedom for all," Ramaphosa concluded. This article was generated from an automated news agency feed without modifications to text.

## Iron Dome to Arrow System: Know Israel's multilayered air-defence system that blocked Iran's unprecedented attack



GNS News Agency, April 18

Israel said 99% of the more than 300 drones and missiles launched toward its territory by Iran were thwarted with the help of its allies, hailing its successful air defences in the face of an unprecedented attack by Tehran. While Iran and Israel have been engaged in a shadow war for years through its proxies, Sunday's attack marked the first time Tehran has launched a direct military assault on its arch-foe in the Middle East. "Iran launched more than 300 threats and 99% were intercepted," said Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the Israeli military spokesman. "That is a success." Asked if Israel would respond, Hagari said the country would do what was needed to protect its citizens.

Over the years, Israel has established a multilayered air defence network to counter a spectrum of threats ranging from short-range rockets to long-range ballistic missiles. This intricate network comprises several advanced systems developed in collaboration with the United States. Let's delve into the key elements of Israel's formidable defence shield:

1. Arrow System: Developed in collaboration with

the United States, the Arrow system represents the pinnacle of Israel's defence against long-range ballistic missiles. Operating beyond the Earth's atmosphere, Arrow is engineered to intercept incoming threats, including the ballistic missiles Iran claimed to have launched. Its successful deployment in intercepting long-range missiles from Houthi militants in Yemen underscores its effectiveness and reliability.

2. David's Sling: David's Sling, also developed in collaboration with the U.S., serves as a crucial component of Israel's air-defence architecture, primarily targeting medium-range threats. Specifically tailored to counter missiles possessed by groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, David's Sling enhances Israel's ability to neutralise aerial threats before they reach critical targets.

3. Patriot System: A cornerstone of Israel's air defence legacy, the Patriot system has been in service since the First Gulf War in 1991. Initially deployed to intercept Scud missiles from Iraq, the Patriot system has evolved to address diverse threats, including aircraft and drones. While its primary function has shifted over the years, the Patriot remains a vital asset in Israel's defence arsenal.

4. Iron Dome: Iron Dome, which specialises in shooting down short-range rockets, boasts an impressive track record, intercepting thousands of projectiles with a remarkable success rate exceeding 90%. Its pivotal role in defending against attacks from Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon underscores its importance in safeguarding Israeli lives and infrastructure.

5. Iron Beam: Positioned as the next frontier in Israel's air-defence capabilities, Iron Beam harnesses cutting-edge laser technology to intercept incoming threats. Though still under development, Iron Beam promises to revolutionise Israel's defence strategy with its cost-effective and precise countermeasure capabilities.

## Iran's attack on Israel brings back Nostradamus's eerie 2024 prediction of naval war

GNS News Agency, April 18

Amid escalating tensions in the Middle East following Iran's recent attack on Israel, parallels are being drawn to the prophetic musings of Nostradamus. On April 13, Iran launched a suicide drone, missiles and rocket attack on the Jewish country starting the whole world. With air raid sirens sounding across multiple regions, spanning from northern and southern Israel to the northern West Bank and even the Dead Sea, Nostradamus's references to naval warfare and geopolitical strife have resurfaced. As Iran launches a multifront attack using suicide drones, missiles, and rockets, directly challenging Israel, internet users are concerned about the possibility of a third world war. Many users believe that if World War 3 breaks out, there would be two sides: one with NATO, the United States, Israel, and the United Kingdom, and the other with Russia, China, Iran, Yemen, and North Korea. A user wrote, "Fears Iran and Israel's rivalry 'could spark World War III' with Vladimir Putin 'rubbing his hands.'" "Germany joining forces with the United States, Great Britain, France, and Poland during World War III." Wrote another.

What is Nostradamus's eerie 2024 prediction?

Are you familiar with the famous 16th-century French astrologer, Nostradamus? He's known as the prophet of

doom, and his predictions have often sent shivers down people's spines. In his book 'Les Propheties' (The Propheties), Nostradamus made some terrifying predictions for the year 2024, and some of them have already come true while others are in progress. For instance, he predicted a terrible naval war that the world will witness in 2024. It's quite eerie, isn't it?

Nostradamus 2024 predictions: Echoes of war and looming famine, will Dragon rise as global power?

One of the translated verses reads, "Red adversary will become pale with fear, putting the great Ocean in dread". There are some opinions that the particular statement is related to the tensions between China and Taiwan, but recent attacks by the Houthis on ships in the Red Sea looks more relevant.

The series of attacks in the nearby regions have seriously hampered international trade, especially in the Red Sea-dependent oil industry. Additionally, Iran's attack on Israel has added another layer of complexity further destabilising the condition of the Middle East. Israel, which was already engaged in a conflict with Palestine, experienced consecutive attacks on April 13, when Iran used its allies Syria, Yemen, and Iraq's land to launch a drone directed towards Israel.



## China's factory activity falls faster than expected as recovery stumbles

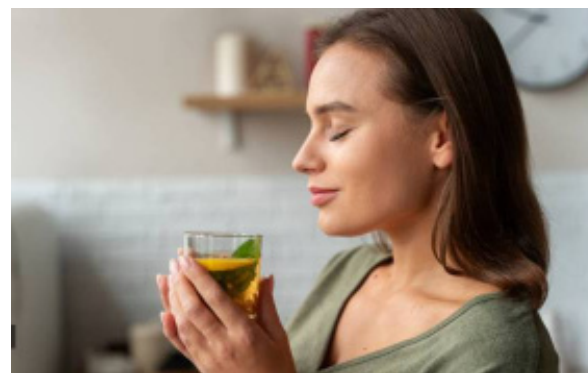


economy is emerging from three years of pandemic lockdowns, but the recovery has been uneven with services spending outperforming activity in the factory, property and export-oriented sectors. The PMI subindexes for May showed factory output swung to contraction from an expansion while new orders, including new exports, fell for the second month. Chemical, ferrous metal smelting and rolling processing industries faced significant declines in production and demand, said NBS. In the services sector, rail and air transport, accommodation and catering sectors remained in the expansion, on the back of strong May Labor Day travel, while real estate activity fell. Losing momentum, the PMIs and other economic indicators for April add to evidence that the rebound is losing steam. Last month, imports contracted sharply, factory gate prices fell, property investment slumped, industrial profits plunged and factory output and retail sales both missed forecasts.

Analysts are now downgrading their expectations for the economy with Nomura and Barclays both cutting China's 2023 GDP growth forecasts. "Proactive fiscal policies, rate cuts or RRR cuts and targeted monetary policy tools together with structural reform would be key," Jones Lang LaSalle's Pang added. To spur credit growth, the central bank in March cut banks' reserve requirement ratios. Premier Li Qiang said this month more targeted measures were needed to boost demand while China's central bank said on May 15 it would provide "strong and stable" support for the real economy. Amid the weakness, China's post-pandemic stock rally is faltering as small-time investors turn bearish on equities to double down instead on safer assets. "The sentiment in the financial market is quite bearish. It is not clear how the government interpret the current economic condition," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management. "There is no sign of imminent policy response. The government may continue to take a 'wait and see' stance for now."

China's factory activity shrank faster than expected in May on weakening demand, heaping pressure on policymakers to shore up a patchy economic recovery and knocking Asian financial markets lower. The official manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) fell to a five-month low of 48.8, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said on Wednesday, down from 49.2 in April and below the 50-point mark that separates expansion from contraction. The PMI also dashed forecasts for an increase to 49.4. Service sector activity expanded at the slowest pace in four months in May, with the official non-manufacturing PMI falling to 54.5 from 56.4. The readings pushed markets in Asia into the red with the yuan and Australian and New Zealand dollars tumbling and regional stocks falling sharply. "The PMI data reveal that China may heading to a K-shaped recovery," said Bruce Pang, chief economist at Jones Lang LaSalle. "The sluggish domestic demand could weigh on China's sustainable growth, if there are no efficient and effective policy moves to engineer a broad-based recovery," said Mr. Pang. The PMIs also echoed weak factory data from other parts of Asia with Japan reporting a surprise decline in output and South Korean production weakening. The world's second-largest

## Green tea for the skin: Dos and don'ts to keep in mind



Owing to its many healthy properties — from promoting weight loss, being rich in antioxidants, to aiding brain and heart health — green tea has become a much-loved beverage. But this you know that green tea is also beneficial for your skin? Yes, that's exactly why you may have come across various skin care products that claim to have green tea extracts. In a similar vein, Dr Aanchal Panth, a dermatologist, wrote on Instagram, "Green tea extract or EGCG, when applied on the skin, has antioxidant, UV protective, anti-aging, anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory effects. It also potentiates wound healing and skin repair. It also improves skin hydration and protects against skin wrinkling".

### Benefits of green tea for skin

Green tea has been widely recognised for its numerous health benefits, including its positive effects on the skin. Speaking with indianexpress.com, Dr Swapna Priya, Consultant Dermatologist CARE Hospitals Hi-Tec City, Hyderabad, shared some of these as: Antioxidant properties: Green tea is rich in antioxidants, particularly catechins, which help protect the skin from damage caused by free radicals. These antioxidants can help reduce signs of aging and improve overall skin health. Anti-inflammatory effects: The anti-inflammatory properties of green tea can help soothe irritated skin and reduce redness. It may be beneficial for conditions such as acne, rosacea, and eczema. UV protection: Green tea contains polyphenols that have been shown to provide some protection against the harmful effects of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. While it shouldn't replace proper sun protection measures like sunscreen, it can complement them. Anti-acne benefits: The antibacterial and antimicrobial properties of green tea may help in the management of acne. It can potentially help reduce sebum production and the growth of acne-causing bacteria.

How to incorporate green tea in your skincare routine?

To incorporate green tea into your skincare routine, you can try the following things as suggested by Dr Priya. Green tea cleanser: Look for cleansers that contain green tea extracts or brew a cup of green tea and use it as a facial cleanser. Green tea face masks: Mix green tea powder or brewed green tea with other beneficial ingre-

lients like honey, yoghurt, or clay to create a face mask. Apply it to your face, leave it on for 10-15 minutes, and rinse off. Green tea toner: Brew green tea, allow it to cool, and use it as a toner by applying it to your skin with a cotton pad. Green tea moisturiser: Look for moisturisers that contain green tea extract or green tea seed oil to hydrate your skin and enjoy its potential benefits. Things to keep in mind When incorporating green tea into your skincare routine, keep the following things in mind: Patch test: Perform a patch test on a small area of your skin before applying green tea products to your entire face to check for any adverse reactions. Quality of green tea: Use high-quality, organic green tea products to ensure you are getting the maximum benefits and avoiding any potential contaminants. Sensitivity: If you have extremely sensitive skin, it's best to consult a dermatologist before introducing green tea into your skincare routine. Do's and don't when introducing green tea to skincare

### Do's:

– Start with a small concentration of green tea in your skincare products.

– Use sunscreen along with green tea products for adequate sun protection.

– Stay consistent with your skincare routine to see potential benefits.

### Don'ts:

– Don't use green tea products excessively, as it may cause dryness or irritation.

– Avoid using green tea products if you are allergic to tea or caffeine.

– Don't rely solely on green tea products for all your skincare needs. It's important to maintain a balanced skincare routine. Drinking green tea regularly can provide your body with antioxidants that help fight oxidative stress and promote overall skin health. Drinking green tea regularly can provide your body with antioxidants that help fight oxidative stress and promote overall skin health. (Pic source: Freepik)

### Can drinking green tea also be beneficial for skin?

Along with topical application of green tea, consuming green tea internally can also contribute to healthy skin. "Drinking green tea regularly can provide your body with antioxidants that help fight oxidative stress and promote overall skin health," shared Dr Priya.

DIY remedies with green tea Green tea can be used in various DIY skincare remedies. "You can create your own green tea-infused toners, face mists, or even ice cubes to soothe and refresh your skin. Just remember to perform patch tests and use fresh ingredients to avoid any potential contamination," shared Dr Priya. She concluded, "Remember that skin care is not just about external treatments. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, proper hydration, and adequate sleep, can complement the benefits of green tea and contribute to healthy, glowing skin".

## Metal recycling startup Runaya ready with paper work for IPO launch, says CEO

Runaya, a metal recycling startup of two sons of Vedanta executive vice-chairman Navin Agarwal, said it is ready with all paper work and waiting for bankers' go-ahead to launch its initial public offering. "We are prepared from the paper work point of view. We are 100 per cent prepared," Annanya Agarwal, one of the co-founders and CEO at Runaya, told PTI in an interaction here.

The company, however, is yet to have any timelines or dates as far as its initial public offering (IPO) plan is concerned. "We are focusing on building our company... from the execution point of view we try to stay ready... we want to be ready and we want to build the best company... And when our bankers tell us it's the right time (to go public) then we will go ahead," Agarwal said. Runaya has already invested around Rs 300 crore and plans to infuse an additional Rs 700 crore over the next 18-20 months for the expansion of its business.

"This (Rs 700 crore



investment) will include expansions within our aluminium dross. It will include expansions in our zinc. So the zinc and dross will contribute around 30 per cent of that value," he said. "We are looking at a new project. So the green metal, what I mentioned to you, the green aluminium that we are recovering, the lowest carbon aluminium in the world. We are trying to find additional products that can be made from that aluminium," he explained.

The company, he said, is hopeful to start its

project to begin manufacturing green aluminium powder which finds its basic application in paint. The Mumbai-based company currently deals in green aluminium recovery and diversified metal recovery under its sustainability operations. Runaya is expecting its revenue to scale up to Rs 1,200 crore in the ongoing fiscal and Rs 2,000 crore in the next financial year. The company achieved a revenue of Rs 500 crore in FY24. The company recycled 57,377 metric tonnes of waste in

the last fiscal while producing 24,391 metric tonnes of green metal.

It hopes to continue the momentum in the ongoing financial year with a total waste recycling of 1,00,000 metric tonnes and 45,000 metric tonnes of green metal, and in FY26, with a recycling of 2,00,000 metric tonnes of waste and 90,000 metric tonnes of green metal. Runaya aspires to process five million tonnes per annum of waste and recover 250 kilo tonne per annum of green metal.

## TCS shares slip after advancing over 1% on March quarter results



Shares of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Monday climbed over 1.50 per cent after the IT services major reported a 9 per cent growth in net profit at Rs 12,434 crore in the January-March quarter of FY24 due to strong domestic business even as the company struggled in its key markets overseas. Its market valuation zoomed by Rs 7,489.44 crore to Rs 14,54,832.99 crore amid rally in the stock. The company's earnings were announced post-market hours on Friday. In the entire fiscal year, the Tata Group company's net profit surged 9 per cent to Rs 45,908 crore, while the revenue went up to Rs 2,40,893 crore from Rs 2,25,458 crore a year ago.

North America, the biggest market by geography, reported a 2.3 per cent dip in revenues, while continental Europe, the third biggest, witnessed a 2 per cent decline in revenues during the latest January-March period. However, its domestic business, which saw nearly 38 per cent growth in revenues, helped the company post a 3.5 per cent growth in revenues to Rs 61,237 crore during the quarter. TCS chief executive and managing director K Krithivasan told reporters that uncertainties are hampering growth in North America and the largest sector of banking, financial services, and insurance, but exuded confidence that things are bottoming out and growth should return. "It is difficult to say when growth will re-

turn... but FY25 will be better than FY24," Krithivasan said, adding that though he is not disappointed with the performance, an additional growth of up to 1 percentage point would have made him happier.

## Hyderabad ranks among world's top 10 fastest-growing cities, predicts massive GDP surge

Hyderabad: Hyderabad has clinched a spot among the world's top 10 fastest-growing cities in the world. According to a comprehensive report by Knight Frank India, in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Hyderabad's staggering GDP growth rate between 2019 and 2035 has propelled it into the global spotlight. The report unveils Hyderabad's remarkable economic trajectory, showcasing a Growth (YoY) percentage of 8.47 per cent. In 2018, Hyderabad's GDP stood at an impressive \$50.6 billion in Constant 2018 prices, a figure projected to soar to a whopping \$201.4 billion by the year 2035. Ranked fourth in the report, Hyderabad finds itself in the company of Surat, which secured the top position followed by Agra and Bengaluru. The report, titled 'India Real Estate: A Decade From Now 2024,' analyzes the economic and real estate sector potential over the next decade. The report states that one of the pivotal catalysts propelling India's meteoric rise is the advent of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), which have injected vital liquidity into the market, attracting a diverse range of investments from both domestic and international sources. The Indian REITs portfolio showcases Hyderabad's prominence, with entities such as Mindspace Business Parks REIT boasting a substantial 14.1 million square feet of space in the city.

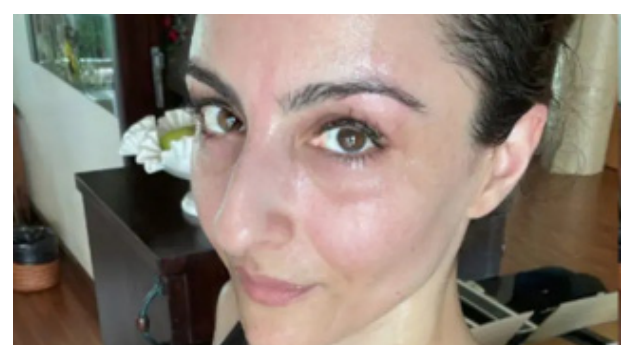
## Soha Ali Khan goes for a run in summer: Things to consider when exercising in the sweltering heat

Going by the updates on her social media, Soha Ali Khan seems to be extremely particular about her fitness routine. From bodyweight exercises to weight training, Soha ensures to stay fighting fit, come rain or shine. So it was not surprising that even the sweltering heat could not stop the Rang De Basanti actor from going for a run. Sharing a picture of herself dripping in sweat, Soha wrote, "A run is the best primer for your make-up! #glowandgrow #nomakeup (except last night's water-resistant eyeliner)." Take a look.

While some may enjoy basking in the sun and making the most of the sunny mornings, for others, summer can be a challenging time to work out. As such, here's what to keep in mind. "While extreme heat is a no-no for a workout, you can make the best of your fitness routine by practicing your workout routine indoors and balancing your diet according to the season," said Miten Kakaiya, fitness coach at Miten Says Fitness. According to Kakaiya, working out in the heat can be challenging, but following a few measures can make it a safe and enjoyable experience. "Indoor workouts, drinking enough water, maintaining a proper diet, etc can help you make the most of your summer workouts while staying healthy and injury-free," said Kakaiya as he listed some dos and don'ts.

\*Stay hydrated! It's crucial to drink plenty of water before, during, and after a workout to avoid dehydration. Avoid sugary drinks or caffeine as they can dehydrate you quickly. Electrolyte-rich drinks can be a good option to replenish the body's lost nutrients. "Avoid working out during peak hours when the sun is at its strongest. The best time to exercise in the summer is early in the morning or late in the evening when the temperature is comparatively lower.

\*Wear breathable and light-coloured clothing that helps in dissipating heat and sweat. "Clothing made of synthetic materials can trap sweat and heat and lead to



discomfort, making it important to choose your workout attire carefully," said Kakaiya.

"What you eat and drink during a heatwave can alter the body's ability to regulate temperature, he stressed. "Include cooling foods like curd, amla, fennel seeds, buttermilk, etc in your diet to regulate body temperature," he added. workout If you feel dizzy, nauseous, or have a headache, stop your workout immediately (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

\*Listen to your body! "If you feel dizzy, nauseous, or have a headache, stop your workout immediately. These can be signs of heat exhaustion, which is a serious condition that requires medical attention," he mentioned.

\*Don't push yourself too hard during a workout. High-intensity exercises can put additional stress on your body in the heat and increase the risk of heat-related illnesses.

\*Don't forget to warm up and cool down. Doing so helps in preparing your body for a workout and prevent muscle injuries.

\*Don't overlook the importance of rest days. "Over-exercising can increase the risk of injuries and burnout, making it crucial to take rest days and allow your body to recover," said Kakaiya.

## Know Your Body: What is nerve flossing, and can it actually help ease numbness in the hands?

Whenever we start our hunt for a new piece of interesting information about the human body, we are left stumped by the amount of information and trivia available — all of which we have vowed to share with you as part of our 'Know Your Body' series. So, in keeping with the promise we have made, we are back with yet another piece of the nugget — this time to help you manage that numbness and tingling feeling in your hands. All thanks to Kristi Barker, a physical therapist, who introduced us to the concept of "nerve flossing", after she shared a few stretches that she said can help tackle numbness in the hands. Yes, turns out, flossing is not just for your teeth, but even your hands can do with some "flossing". "Have you heard of the term 'flossing' your nerve? and I am not referring to dental floss! Nerve flossing is a way to improve your nerve mobility! Our nerves should move and glide just like our muscles do! Sometimes they get compressed and irritated when they aren't moving enough," she captioned the video, adding that the exercises shared target the median nerve, which is one of the main culprits for carpal tunnel syndrome.

Why do you experience numbness?

Dr Ankit Batra, orthopaedic surgeon, Sharda Hospital said that all nerves have various points along their respective courses where compression is common as they are surrounded by bony and soft tissue structures and pass through very narrow tunnels, canals, and spaces. "Compression neuropathy, like carpal tunnel syndrome from using the keyboard or writing too much, along with vitamin B12 deficiency, diabetic neuropathy, traumatic nerve injury, excessive stretching, etc can all cause numbness in the hands," he said.

### Does nerve flossing work?

Nerve flossing is also called nerve glide or nerve stretching. "It is a kind of exercise that is said to improve neurodynamics to mobilise compressed or irritated nerves. This allows the nerve to glide freely along the movement of the joint," said Shalom Abraham, lead physiotherapist, Manipal Hospital, Old Airport Road, Bangalore. According to Abraham, nerve gliding exercise is usually used in rehabilitation programs and during the post-surgical period. "These exercises are performed around the mid-range of joint movement," said Abraham.



## Critics may rant, but Erling Haaland's second season for Manchester City has been far from disappointing



the Premier League and Real Madrid.

But all this was only to be expected. The second season would have always been tougher than the first. Defenders get more accustomed to his movements and patterns, analysts spend more time on detecting his fallibilities. Even greats like Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi have waded through such passages. Barcelona rendered Ronaldo a mere spectator in the 2009 Champions League final, and as did Inter Milan lock Messi in the next edition. But both bounced back to scale greatness. Haaland has not yet been granted entry to that hallowed space, but his prowess gleams. Easily forgotten is that he spent a considerable time of the season on the treatment table. It perhaps explains his rush to strike — last season he spent .88 seconds for every goal-bound shot. This season, he has expended only .69. He could be over-awful of tackles flying into him. With more goals, he could rediscover his composure. Another much circulated criticism is that Haaland could be a liability when he does not score. Of the 41 games he has not scored in, City have lost nine. When he scores, the win percentage shoots to 88. Keane blasted his lack of work-rate when City did not have the ball and his lack of contribution in defensive transitions.

Manchester City's Erling Haaland, centre, celebrates after scoring his side's third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Luton Town at Etihad stadium in Manchester, England, Manchester City's Erling Haaland, centre, celebrates after scoring his side's third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Luton Town at Etihad stadium in Manchester, England. (AP) But this was a pact with the devil Guardiola made when he signed him, when he chose a classical striker for a false nine, or an auxiliary midfielder. He had to re-tool his team to a more direct entity, as Haaland likes the ball quickly into him. It meant less control in midfield and fewer passing options in the centre of the park. The absence of John Stones, the play-making centre-back, the recurring injury to Kevin de Bruyne and the departure of Ilkay Gundogan this season only compounded Guardiola's woes and, in turn, reduced the Haaland's influence.

There, though, are ample signs that he is sharpening his defensive side. There was an instance in the game against Real Madrid wherein he galloped back frenziedly to catch Vinicius Junior at the other end. Guardiola pointed out how he has helped create space for his colleagues. "He helps us to make more spaces in the areas and his contribution has been exceptional since the day he arrived last season," he said before the game against Luton Town when probed about Haaland's impact. The City manager, of course, has heard and read about the doomsday narratives surrounding Haaland from the day he landed in England. From 'will he adapt to the physicality in the Premier League' to 'how long will the bubble last' tropes. Last year, he would even say: "You are waiting for Haaland to fail." Still they are, and even minute blemishes are overblown. And they would be when Real Madrid arrive at the Etihad this week to decide the Champions League quarterfinal. He might nick a goal, or perhaps not, he might win another treble, win the Golden Boot and perhaps the Ballon'd'Or. But the same rant would echo: "What does he know of English football?"

## Candidates controversy: Alireza Firouzja claims arbiter told him 'not to walk anymore during game', change shoes for next game



GNS News Agency, April 18

Candidates chess controversy: Alireza Firouzja claims arbiter told him not to walk during game against Ian Nepomniachtchi which cost him his focus. (PHOTO: Maria Emelianova via Chess dot com) Candidates chess controversy: Alireza Firouzja claims arbiter told him not to walk during game against Ian Nepomniachtchi which cost him his focus. Candidates controversy: There was massive controversy in Toronto during Round 9 of the Candidates chess tournament after one of the contenders, Alireza Firouzja, claimed he was told by the arbiter to stop walking during games because "his shoes were making a lot of noise." The Iran-born, French grandmaster posted a series of tweets right after his game against the open category leader Ian Nepomniachtchi ended in a draw on Monday morning. Firouzja also claimed the arbiter had asked him to wear a different pair of shoes in

the next round. He said that the arbiter's words had made him lose focus.

What happened in Alireza Firouzja vs Ian Nepomniachtchi game?

Nepo was in trouble during the game at the Candidates, but escaped to hold on to a draw. The result kept him in the joint lead along with Indian teenager Gukesh after nine rounds. "Shameful action by the chief arbiter Marghethis towards me during the game. Middle of the game in the most intense moment when I was walking during Ian's move, chief arbiter came to me and told me to not walk anymore because my shoe is making noise on the wooden floor. He told me to not walk and bring new shoes for tomorrow but I have the formal shoe that is approved and am wearing it for more than 1 year. This was a big distraction for me during the game and I completely lost my focus. I told one of the organisers this arbiter needs to be punished," Firouzja tweeted.

"Honestly all these unprofessional things are happening to me in almost every tournament and really its taking me to point of exhaustion," he added. The incident reminded social media users of the infamous incident where Anna-Maja Kazarian was asked to change her sneakers and was fined 100 euros by FIDE at the World Rapid and Blitz Championship. Responding to a social media user on what kind of shoes he was wearing, Firouzja said: "Its a normal, formal men's shoes. In the women section they are wearing high heels and no action by arbiter."

## MSD's hat-trick of sixes trumps Rohit Sharma ton as Dhoni's love affair with Wankhede continues

GNS News Agency, April 18

Synopsis: Dhoni's hat-trick of sixes and Pathirana's four-wicket haul negated Rohit Sharma's excellent 63-ball 105 as Chennai Super Kings beat Mumbai Indians by 20 runs. Dhoni's love for Wankhede continued as his 4-ball 20-run cameo made the difference in the end. The Chennai Super Kings fans that packed the Wankhede Stadium wanted only one thing — to watch Mahendra Singh Dhoni come out to bat. After all, it was at this hallowed venue 13 years ago that he sealed India's World Cup win with an iconic six.

In what could be his last IPL match — never say never when it comes to him — at the ground, Dhoni didn't disappoint. Throughout CSK's innings, there was a deafening noise whenever Dhoni was shown on the big screen. It got louder when they saw him put on his helmet towards the end. It's not often that fans wish their own team would lose a wicket, but such is Dhoni mania. When Daryl Mitchell was caught at long-on off the second ball of the final over, the roar was thunderous as the man himself walked out to bat. And he came with only one intention — whack the back as hard as only he knows how to. Here's how he made a mockery of Hardik Pandya's bowling. It could've been a perfect six-fest but the last ball only found the bottom edge of the bat though Dhoni managed to get a couple of runs to finish with 20 in just four balls and blow the roof of the Wankhede Stadium for the umpteenth time. Sri Lankan pacer Matheesha Pathirana had been threatening this season but hadn't been a real game-changer. That changed on Sunday as he picked up a four-wicket haul, conceding just 28 runs in the 4 overs (12 runs came in his final over when the game was in CSK's bag), that ultimately won the match for CSK. More than his economy, it was the wickets at crucial junctures that ultimately turned the match in CSK's favour.

MI were threatening when Pathirana was given the ball in the eighth over. On his first ball itself, he got the wicket of Ishan Kishan, who picked out Shardul Thakur at midwicket. Two balls later, he got the dangerous Suryakumar Yadav out courtesy a superb catch by Mustafizur Rahman on the boundary. Pathirana then got the wicket of Tilak Varma before cleaning out hard-hitting Guyanese Romario Shepherd to seal the deal for CSK. Shivam Dube has been in the form of his life this IPL season and continued his superlative touch against MI at what is technically his home ground. CSK coach Stephen Fleming, on the eve of the match, spoke about how Dube worked on his problem area — short balls. "He worked on the mental aspect of it too", Fleming said. It was quite



evident as Dube punished Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya and Romario Shepherd when they tried to bowl short — though they didn't exactly hit their mark.

Like Fleming said, if Dube continues his hitting prowess, it will be hard for the selectors to ignore him for the T20 World Cup later this year. New CSK captain Ruturaj Gaikwad has been receiving flak on social media, with fans calling him too slow despite his consistent performances this season. He didn't open the innings and came at No.3 but that didn't matter as he backed Fleming's "cut from the same cloth as MS Dhoni" comment with a 40-ball 69 with a strike rate of 172.5. Mumbai's Afghan off-spinner Mohammad Nabi had said on the eve of the match that it's very difficult for off-spinners at the Wankhede because of the dew factor and the batting-dominant nature of T20 cricket. "The conditions at Wankhede are really tough to bowl as an off-spinner. Leg-spinners have a lot of varieties but as an off-spinner, it's tougher to bowl here," he said. With CSK known to dominate the middle overs, Nabi was handed the new ball and Pandya wanted him to finish his spell as early as possible. Nabi didn't disappoint, varied his bowling excellently to restrict the CSK batters and give Mumbai an ideal start, conceding just 19 runs in his 3 overs. After losing their opening three matches, Mumbai bounced back to win the next two. And while Jasprit Bumrah was instrumental in ensuring the opposition didn't go berserk with their scoring, it was MI's opening combination of Kishan and Rohit Sharma that set up the innings superbly. Against Delhi Capitals, their opening stand yielded 80 runs. In the next match against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, they scored 101 and on Sunday against CSK, they added 70 before Kishan departed. Rohit was brilliant in his unbeaten 63-ball 105, hitting 11 boundaries and five sixes for his first century of the season, but without the required support, it turned out to be a lost cause.

## Kieron Pollard defends Hardik Pandya, hails him as one of the great all-rounders India has produced

GNS News Agency, April 18

Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard lauds hailed Hardik Pandya as one of the great "all-rounders" India has produced and believes the fans will 'sing praises for him' soon. "I don't know if it will affect his confidence. He is a confident guy, he has been great around the group," Pollard said after Mumbai's 20-run loss against Chennai at the Wankhede Stadium.

It was Hardik Pandya's last over, in which MS Dhoni slammed three sixes and scored 20 runs off just four balls. Those runs in the last few balls proved crucial as Mumbai suffered their fourth loss in six matches in the tournament. "In cricket, you have good days and bad days and I am seeing an individual who is working bloody hard to improve his skills and plying his trade," he said. Pollard also slammed fans and pundits for putting blame on Pandya for Mumbai Indians inconsistent start to the tournament.

"I am fed up of [us] looking to pinpoint individuals; cricket is a team game at the end of the day." This is an individual that is going to represent the country in less than six weeks' time, and all are going to cheer him and want him to do well. "So high time we try to encourage and stop nitpicking and see if we can get the best out of one of the great all-rounders India has produced. He can bat, bowl and field, and has a X-factor about him." I hope very well deep down within my heart that when he comes out on top, I'll sit back and watch everyone sing his praises. "In his six outing as Mumbai Indians captain, Pandya has amassed 131 runs at the strike rate of 145.56 and has picked up three wickets with an economy rate of



"In cricket, you have good days and bad days and I am seeing an individual who is working bloody hard to improve his skills and plying his trade," he said.

12.00. "As an individual you have to evolve," Pollard said of Hardik's batting methods. "When you are young, you have the youthful exuberance. You go out and do things in a certain manner. The older you get, accountability and responsibility kick in. "What I am seeing is the guy is evolving. We, as individuals, want to see certain things but sometimes the game does not demand certain things and players are going to make mistakes as you go along, as we all have done. The individual has put in the work and hard work pays off. So, all of us will be singing his praises when time comes."

## With women's 10m air pistol bronze, Palak Gulia makes it 16 out of 16 pistol/rifle quotas for Paris Games

GNS News Agency, April 18

Saturday night, when Asian Games gold medalist Palak Gulia talked to her coach Rakesh Singh, she only mentioned the Rio de Janeiro tourist spots, and how she will spend Sunday morning in meditation. It must have worked as the Haryana youngster bagged India's 20th Paris Olympics quota in shooting with a women's 10m air pistol bronze medal at the ISSF Olympic Qualification. "The new format sees the final held a day after the qualification. It can work to the advantage of some and not for others. But Palak was only talking about sightseeing spots and exotic food on offer there. When I talked about finals, she was quick to reply, "Woh kal hai na, toh woh kal ki baat hai (It's tomorrow. So we will talk about it tomorrow). And that's what she showed today in the final," Rakesh told The Indian Express. Palak's father Joginder Singh Gulia runs a construction business in Faridabad. He took his young daughter to Rakesh's academy in Faridabad and Ballabgarh to train for pistol shooting. The family, which has roots in Nimana village in Jhajjar district, would shift to Gurgaon and later Faridabad to support Palak's dream of being a shooter.

"She had not seen shooting or knew about the different events prior to joining the academy. But once the coach chose pistol events for her, her focus



was on that particular event. It took a lot of time to travel to the academy, so she would take her books along with her or study till late at night to strike a balance."

Joginder remembers. Two years after she started, Palak would finish sixth in the 10m air pistol event at the 2021 national shooting championships before becoming the champion at the ISSF Junior Cup the following year. The same year, she won the bronze medal in the ISSF World Cup in Changwon, Korea.

"Palak was as focused on her studies as on shooting. So it was easy for me to train her on the basics. She was quick to understand them and it helped me to work on her aiming and wrist position. From shooting close to 50-60 shots, she now shoots 200-250 shots per day which helps her confidence," says the coach. Palak's biggest breakthrough came at the Asian Games at Hangzhou last year where she be-

came the first Indian woman shooter to win the 10m air pistol gold with a record score of 242.1. After that, she won the National Games title before coming to Brazil. Palak Gulia shooting paris 2024 Indian shooter Palak Gulia bags the 20th Paris Olympics quota in shooting for India and wins a bronze medal in the ISSF Olympic Qualification Championship in Brazil.

On Saturday, Palak qualified for the final in sixth spot along with compatriot Sainyam seventh. Both Indians, along with five other shooters, were competing for two Paris quotas on offer with Elmira Karapetyan of Armenia having already earned one. After the first series, Palak and Sainyam were joint sixth with a score of 48.3 before Palak climbed to fourth spot with a score of 97.9. At that time, the Haryana youngster was trailing leader Veronica Major of Hungary by 4.8 points. The next 12 shots saw Palak shooting

scores of 10.0 or above six times as the youngster sealed the Olympic quota edging out fourth-placed Major. It meant that the Indian rifle/pistol team has secured all 16 quotas on offer. Asian Games silver medalist Esha Singh had secured the first quota in women's 10m air pistol. "The quota pressure is always there since it was the last event for achieving it in pistol. But Palak kept her cool to cut down the deficit and seal the quota. There was a bit of inconsistency initially but I am glad that the quota pressure is off. Once she is back, our focus will be on the four Olympic trials," shared Rakesh. The Gulia family knows how Palak will celebrate. "Her 10-year-old siblings Jivesh and Jahnavi, who are twins, are waiting to turn 12 to start shooting. So Palak will be spending some time with them telling them about her experiences in Brazil. Hopefully, she will go to Paris and win a medal to show to them," says Joginder.



## Parineeti Chopra pens emotional note after Chamkila, responds to Priyanka Chopra's praise: 'I am back, and not going anywhere'



for the actors, a few hours back Parineeti Chopra took to Instagram and penned an emotional note thanking all for the response to the film. Sharing a series of stills from the movie, Parineeti wrote, "Curled up in my blanket. Overwhelmed with your words, calls, and movie reviews. (tears are not stopping) "PARINEETI IS BACK." These words are ringing loud. Hadn't thought of this. Yes, I am back, and not going anywhere!"

While the actress is overwhelmed by the response she is getting, she now also hopes that good directors call her. On X (formerly known as Twitter), a fan wrote, "What an actor Parineeti Chopra has been right from Ishaqzaade to Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar and now in Amar Singh Chamkila. If she had the kind of backing that her contemporaries had, she would have done wonders in the last decade." Replying to this Parineeti said, "Hoping this changes after Chamkila. Want to do lots of good work, waiting for good directors to call me!"

Before Amar Singh Chamkila's success, Parineeti's last film was Mission Raniganj that released last year. Like her other big-screen outings, Mission Raniganj also didn't do very well. But now with the response her latest biopic is receiving, the tables might turn for the actress. As of yet, Parineeti has not announced her next project.

Diljit Dosanjh and Parineeti Chopra's latest film Amar Singh Chamkila released on Friday on Netflix. Right from its first reviews the Imitiaz Ali directorial is being appreciated. Based on the real-life story of Punjabi singer Amar Singh Chamkila and his wife Amarjot who were murdered in their prime, both Parineeti and Diljit have delivered brilliant performances. Recently, Parineeti also received praise from her cousin Priyanka Chopra Jonas who shared a still from the film and wrote, "Congratulations Imitiaz sir, Diljit, Tisha, and the team. Looks so good."

While a lot more appreciation has been pouring in

## Diljit Dosanjh gives a befitting answer to Punjabi stereotypes: 'They said we don't know fashion, can't act in films; I said I will show you'.



Diljit Dosanjh's Mumbai concert night was memorable for many reasons. From star-studded concert-goers to the actor-singer hyping Crew co-star Kareena Kapoor Khan and the performance — which followed the premiere of his film Amar Singh Chamkila — taking social media by storm, his Saturday concert was a night of fun and revelry, to say the least. A day after his show, Diljit took to his social media handles to give a peek into his concert and shared glimpses from the packed venue where female fans held placards with 'Marry Me, Diljit' written on them. Some were even seen shedding tears of happiness and excitement on seeing their favourite singer perform live. The Punjabis present in the crowd broke into bhangra as they enjoyed the concert.

A video sees Diljit interacting with fans from the stage and speaking about breaking the Punjabi stereotype. "They said Punjabis aren't fashionable and I said, I will show you. They said Punjabis can't act in films, I showed them I could. They said Punjabis can't go to Mumbai, and

I proved them wrong. They said Punjabis can't sell tickets for the bar arena, I had the stadium packed at my concert. They said Punjabis can't do Illuminati, I said, I will do 'Di-Illuminati,'" said the actor-singer as he announced his Vancouver concert on April 27.

While celebs such as Varun Dhawan, Ayushmann Khurrana, Vijay Varma, who were in attendance posted fun moments from Diljit's concert — where the artiste belted out hit tracks like "Love", "Naina", "Vibe" and "EK Kud" etc on Saturday — the singer dropped a series of videos and photos from his concert on Sunday. Going by the visuals, Diljit, who is basking in the success of Imitiaz Ali-helmed biopic, had a blast performing for Mumbai. In one of the videos, actor Angad Bedi is seen giving a shout-out to Diljit as he grooves to his peppy music, while the singer is seen setting the stage on fire with his songs and electrifying dance moves. It also features Ayushmann and brother Aparshakti dancing and shouting, "We love you Diljit paaji!"

Diljit also reposted photos and videos of Bollywood celebs who attended his concert, on his Instagram story, thanking them for all the love they showered on him. The star-studded evening witnessed the presence of actors such as Tamannaah Bhatia and Vijay Varma, who arrived hand-in-hand. Director Imitiaz Ali also attended the concert. Other notable stars who were present at the event included Rajkumar Rao, Patralekha, Kriti Sanon, Varun Dhawan, Manish Paul, Tahirah Kashyap Khurrana, Taapsee Pannu and Karan Kundrra, as they joined in the festivities, adding to the glamour and excitement of the night.

## Randeep Hooda 'thanks' unidentified men who shot Sarabjit Singh's killer: 'Karma does catch up'



Talking to IANS, Randeep shared, "While doing the Sarabjit biopic it was always a very tragic feeling that when things were on the verge of working out to extradite him to India and get him back home to his family he was murdered in the jail," said the actor. He further added, "Hearing about his attacker being killed, I wonder what Dalbir ji (Sarabjit's sister) would have felt. I'm sure it would have been a feeling of some justice served after she fought to get him for years on end." The actor, who attended the last rites of Dalbir Kaur who died in 2022, added, "Karma does catch up even if through unknown men" Sarabjit, who was sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 1991, spent two decades in prison for alleged terrorism and spying where he was eventually murdered.

Randeep Hooda, who played Sarabjit Singh in his biopic, Sarbjit, reacts to the death of his alleged murderer. Randeep Hooda, who played Sarabjit Singh in his biopic, Sarbjit, reacts to the death of his alleged murderer. Following the death of Amir Sarfaraz — a key figure in Sarabjit Singh's murder in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail in 2013 — who was reportedly assassinated in Lahore, actor Randeep Hooda, 'thanked' unnamed individuals responsible for shooting Amir. Randeep, who was recently seen in Swatantra Veer Savarkar, played Sarabjit in Omung Kumar-helmed biopic, Sarbjit in 2016. The biopic also stars Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Richa Chadha and Darshan Kumar. Reacting to the news of Amir also known as Tamba — a notorious underworld figure from Pakistan — being shot, Randeep, took to X (formerly Twitter), and wrote, "KARMA. Thank you unknown men (sic)" with folded hands emoji.

The actor shared a screenshot of the news on his account and tweeted, "Remembering my sister Dalbir Kaur and sending love to Swapandeep Poonam, today some justice to martyr Sarabjit Singh has been served." Amir is said to have been attacked by assailants riding motorcycles, at his Lahore residence. He succumbed to the injury and died. For the unversed, Sarabjit Singh, a resident of Punjab, inadvertently crossed the border into Pakistan while working in his fields. He was accused of involvement in bomb blasts in Pakistan's Punjab province in 1990 and sentenced to death.

## Akshay Kumar-Tiger Shroff's film trails behind OMG 2, fails to cross Rs 50 cr mark despite BOGO push



Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff's latest film, Bade Miyan Chote Miyan, continues to maintain its stride at the box office after encountering a sharp decline on its second day of release. As per industry tracker Sacnilk, the movie amassed Rs 9 crore on Sunday, bringing its total domestic earnings to Rs 40.75 crore. Made at a reported budget of Rs 350 crore, the film's makers had also introduced a buy-one-get-one offer on Sunday.

The film made its debut at the box office on Thursday, coinciding with Eid festivities, and garnered Rs 15.65 crore in its opening. However, it experienced a setback in box office figures on the subsequent day, witnessing a 51 percent drop and earning Rs 7.6 crore on Friday. Despite a slight weekend surge, the collection remained in the single-digit range, with Rs 8.5 crore on Friday and Rs 9 crore on Sunday.

For both Akshay and Tiger, Bade Miyan Chote Miyan holds significance as they strive to shake off the streak of unsuccessful films. Following a series of flops like Samrat Prithviraj, Raksha Bandhan and Cuttputlli, Akshay found success with OMG 2. However, Bade Miyan Chote Miyan has yet to surpass or match the box office performance of OMG 2, which amassed Rs 55.17 crore within the same timeframe.

Tiger, on the other hand, has also not delivered a hit since 2022. His last few films Ganapath and Heropanti 2

failed to mint moolah at the box office. While Ganapath, which was made on a budget of Rs 130 crore, earned merely Rs 15.5 crore, Heropanti 2, also was declared a flop as it raked in only Rs 35 crore.

Competing alongside Ajay Devgn's Madaan at the box office, Bade Miyan Chote Miyan has outpaced its counterpart in terms of earnings. Madaan has accumulated only Rs 21.85 crore within the initial four days of its release. Featuring a star-studded cast including Alaya F, Manushi Chhillar, Ronit Roy, Sonakshi Sinha, and Prithviraj Sukumaran, Bade Miyan Chote Miyan is helmed by acclaimed director Ali Abbas Zafar.

## Ranveer Singh and Kriti Sanon walk the ramp at Varanasi's Namoo Ghat for Manish Malhotra: 'Better than Mumbai's 5-star banquet'



Before gracing the ramp, Ranveer and Kriti paid a visit to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple to offer prayers. Donning a yellow kurta-pyjama set, Kriti exuded grace, while Ranveer opted for a pristine white kurta. Manish Malhotra was spotted in a pink and white ensemble.

Manish Malhotra turned Varanasi's Namoo Ghat into a runway as he exhibited his collection at the two-day event, organised by the Indian Minorities Foundation. Ranveer Singh and Kriti Sanon served as muses for Manish as they walked the ramp for his collection titled Banarasi Saree — a vibrant portrayal of Indian culture and craftsmanship.

Videos capturing Ranveer and Kriti's runway walk at the event are being circulated widely on social media. Ranveer was dressed in a striking metallic and dark-colored sherwani, while Kriti looked enchanting in a bridal red lehenga. Against the backdrop of fireworks and diyas adorning the runway, the Bollywood stars added glamour to the event.

Ranveer called the experience of walking the ramp on a Ganga ghat 'million times better' than walking in a

banquet. He told ANI, "The event was amazing. I was talking to the other models backstage that we have walked in many fashion shows but this is once in a lifetime opportunity. Walking on the banks of river Ganga felt a million times better than walking in Mumbai's 5-star banquet." Before gracing the ramp, Ranveer and Kriti paid a visit to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple to offer prayers. Donning a yellow kurta-pyjama set, Kriti exuded grace, while Ranveer opted for a pristine white kurta. Manish Malhotra was spotted in a pink and white ensemble. On the professional front, Ranveer will next be seen in Farhan Akhtar's Don 3. Meanwhile, Kriti, who is currently enjoying the success of her heist comedy Crew, alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan and Tabu, alongside Diljit Dosanjh and Kapil Sharma, is gearing up for her upcoming project, Do Patti.

## Salman Khan's father Salim Khan breaks silence after bullets fired outside Galaxy apartment: 'They just want publicity'



Following a shocking incident on Sunday morning, in which two unidentified individuals on a motorcycle fired multiple shots outside Bollywood actor Salman Khan's Bandra residence in Mumbai, authorities have launched a full-scale investigation. The incident occurred around 5 am, and fortunately, no injuries were reported. Salman Khan's father and noted screenwriter, Salim Khan has opened up about the incident and assured that the family is safe, dismissing it as a mere 'publicity stunt' pulled by the unidentified men who fired the shots. "There is nothing to tell. They just want publicity, there is no need to worry," he told CNN News 18.

A Facebook post allegedly uploaded by Anmol Bishnoi, the younger brother of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, claims responsibility for the firing, calling the incident outside Salman's Galaxy Apartment the 'first and last warning'. Later, on Sunday evening, police sources identified one of the suspects captured on CCTV as Vishal alias Kalu, a shooter in the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

Security beefed up at Salman Khan's Galaxy

Prem Raj Soni, who directed Salman's Main Aur Mrs Khanna and lives in the same building as Salman, told IndiaToday.in, "He's absolutely fine from what I know

apartment. Security beefed up at Salman Khan's Galaxy apartment. Authorities have imposed heightened security measures for Salman who already has Y-plus category security cover. Barriers have been erected on key roads as the search for the suspects intensifies. Following the incident, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone 9, Raj Tilak Roushan, told ANI, "Two unknown persons came on a motorbike and fired rounds outside actor Salman Khan's house around 5 am and escaped. Around 4-5 rounds were fired. We have formed 15 police teams to

probe the matter. We are investigating the case from all angles. We will certainly nab the shooters soon." This is not the first time Salman Khan has been targeted, as he previously received death threats from Canada-based fugitive gangster Goldy Brar, who publicly declared the actor was on his gang's hit list. Last year, Mumbai Police filed an FIR against gangsters Bishnoi and Goldy, along with another individual, following an email threatening Salman at his Mumbai residence.

Prem Raj Soni, who directed Salman's Main Aur

Mrs Khanna and lives in the same building as Salman, told IndiaToday.in, "He's absolutely fine from what I know. Everything's being taken care of. Things are under control and there's nothing to worry about." He further added the incident was rather 'scary' for others. "It's rather worrying for all of us. But honestly, the authorities are taking care of it and we are all safe," he added. After the gunfire incident, several celebrities and notable personalities paid a visit to Salman's house including Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray and Salman's sister Arpita Sharma.