

INDIAN CHRONICLE

24 April, 2026|Friday | Volume No:1| Issue No:79

Pages: 12+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Krishna (Andhra Pradesh)

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Rs.10.55 lakh fines imposed for mobile phone and siren misuse in Malkajgiri

Hyderabad: The Malkajgiri traffic police during a special drive conducted against use of mobile phones while driving and unauthorised sirens booked 1,070 cases on Thursday. A fine amount of Rs. 10.55 lakh was imposed on the violators.

K Rahul Reddy, DCP Traffic Malkajgiri said that special emphasis was placed on vehicles using unauthorised sirens. Strict enforcement measures were implemented at major junctions and accident-prone areas to address motorists' use of cell phones while driving, dangerous manoeuvres, and siren misuse.

Scooter owner booked for tampering number plate by Abid Road police

Hyderabad: The Abid Road police have registered a case against a scooter owner for allegedly tampering with his vehicle's registration number to evade traffic challans. City & Local Guides

According to the police, the accused, identified as Shaik Mustafa, a resident of Basharatnagar in Kalapathar, owns a scooter bearing registration number TS12 EU 5663. In an attempt to avoid traffic violation penalties, Mustafa allegedly changed the number plate to TS12 EX 4899, which belongs to another vehicle owned by Fahad Khan of Falaknema.



After controversial 'hellholes' social media repost, Trump calls India a 'great country'

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

The US on Thursday sought to control the damage done by a controversial social media repost by US President Donald Trump, putting out a message that the American leader believes India is a "great" country led by a "good friend of mine".

The President has said "India is a great country with a very good friend of mine at the top", the spokesperson of the US embassy said.

The spokesperson's statement came in response to queries from the Indian media about the controversy created by Trump

reposting on social media comments by radio show host Michael Savage that referred to India, China and some other countries as "hellholes".

The spokesperson did not specify where and when Trump made the remarks that India is a great country.

Savage had made the comments in the context of a case in the US supreme court challenging birthright citizenship.

When asked about about the controversy, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "We have seen some reports. That is where I leave it."

8 killed, 2 injured as vehicle plunges into gorge in Uttarakhand Tehri

Uttarakhand, April 23

Eight people were killed and two others injured on Thursday after a utility pickup vehicle fell into a deep gorge in the Chamba area of the Tehri district, officials said.

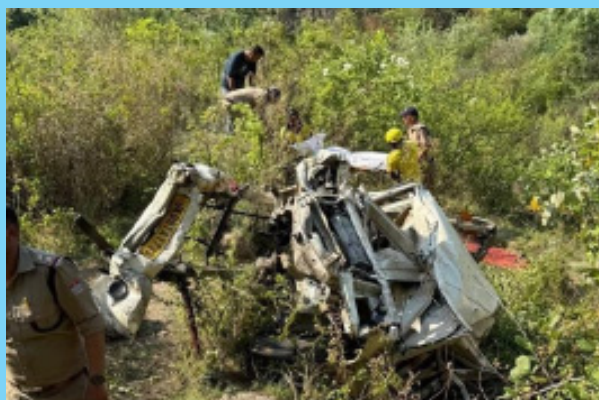
The victims, residents of Thyoldhar village in the Ghansali, were returning home after performing the last rites of a villager in Haridwar when the driver lost control of the Bolero Camper, Tehri District Magistrate Nitika Khandelwal said.

There were around 10 people on board the vehicle at the time of the accident. Emergency and rescue teams have recovered eight bodies and shifted the injured to a nearby hospital.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed grief over the incident and directed the district administration to ensure "prompt and proper treatment" for the injured.

"I pray to God to grant the departed souls a place at His feet and give the bereaved families the strength to bear this immense loss," Dhami stated in a post on X.

The Chief Minister further instructed the administration to ensure proper treatment for the injured and wished them a speedy recovery.



The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), local police and fire service personnel have rescued two individuals from the wreckage so far.

"The vehicle was carrying approximately 9 to 10 passengers. Rescue operations are ongoing to recover the remaining occupants," a senior official stated.

The accident was reported to the police via the Dial 112 emergency service, after which two ambulances and rescue teams were immediately dispatched to the spot.

I had jhalmuri, TMC feeling the heat: PM cites record voting to claim BJP surge in Bengal

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday cited record high voter turnout in West Bengal to claim a saffron surge in the eastern state.

Addressing an election rally in Krishnanagar, the prime minister said there was strong discontent against TMC's "mis-governance and lack of accountability".

"People are tired of its corruption and inefficiency. Record voting is going on. People are venting their anger. The BJP is set for a win on May 4," Modi said.

He referred to his recent stop to relish the Bengali snack of jhalmuri in Jhargram saying, "I had jhalmuri and the TMC is feeling the heat (Jhalmuri maine khaayi, mirchi TMC ko lag rahi hai)," said the prime minister.

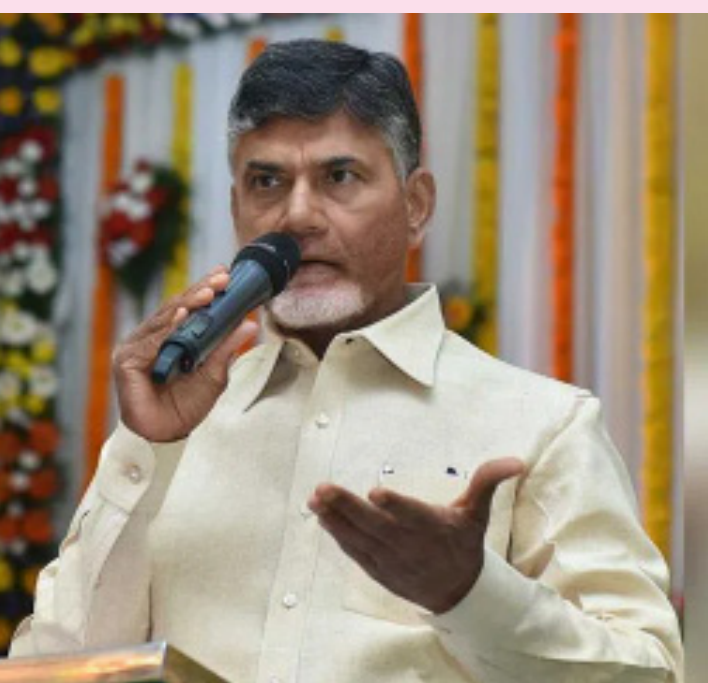
Earlier today, BJP general secretary organisation BL Santosh took to X to laud the record voting in Bengal saying this is a sign of change.

"At 11 am, West Bengal has polled 41.11% & TN is at 37.56%. Both have set the pace. Now it's time to ensure smooth finish. Both are racing towards never before numbers. Both states voting impressively for an impressive CHANGE," Santosh said.



He added that the West Bengal polled nearly 19% by 9.30 am, up from 15.4% in 2021.

"Considering voter list upgradation through SIR, looks like Bengal will click 90%. Well done Bengal. Keep pushing. You are about to witness a momentous change for better," Santosh tweeted.



Chandrababu Naidu lays foundation for Rs 5,400 crore ReNew solar plant in Anakapalli

Anakapalli: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday laid the foundation for a Rs 5,400 crore ReNew solar manufacturing facility here.

The 6 GW solar ingot and wafer manufacturing unit at Rambilli in Anakapalli district is expected to emerge as a key step to build a resilient domestic solar supply chain, an official press release had earlier said.

Addressing a public meeting, he said, "Anakapalli district is attracting development through big-ticket investments. It will reach the top position in investments in India...ReNew is setting up a 6.5 GW ingot solar wafer plant at an investment of Rs 5,400 crore."

According to the CM, the solar manufacturing unit is being established by the son of former Union Minister Yashwanth Sinha and Sumanth Sinha.

By manufacturing critical upstream components such as ingots and wafers, the facility is expected to significantly reduce reliance on imports and strengthen India's energy security.

The facility is expected to be commissioned within 24 months and generate over 2,100 direct and indirect jobs, further boosting industrial growth and employment in the region.

employment in the region.

Emphasising the importance of electricity usage, Naidu said it is one of key yardsticks to evaluate development, indicating that the higher the use, the more the development.

Further, he said the southern State is attracting investments pertaining to power-generating plants on a large-scale.

During the CII Partnership summit, the CM said ReNew came forward to invest thousands of crores of rupees in the state, and Sinha came forward to invest Rs 82,000 crore. The company will soon start renewable energy works worth Rs 10,370 crore in Anantapur and Kurmool districts, and it is also poised to set up a 777 MW wind and solar facility in Anantapur, he added. Noting that the Centre has set a target of producing 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030, he said the state will contribute 160 GW, attracting investments of up to Rs 10 lakh crore and creating 7.5 lakh jobs. Already, the State has sanctioned and inked deals for 90 GW. Naidu urged every house to become a power-generating centre through solar power units, saying the government is targeting setting up solar power units on 40 lakh houses.

Tamil Nadu Records 82.24% Turnout as Assembly Polls Conclude

Chennai, April 23

But for a couple of skirmishes between political workers and a complaint of police personnel entering the polling booth, elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Thursday were a smooth affair that saw several film stars and other celebrities coming out to cast votes despite the blazing heat in Chennai and the final polling figures crossed 84 percent, which is considered a record turnout, all over the State.

In terms of numbers, those who exercised their franchise on Thursday might not be too high when compared to the 2021 elections when the strength of the electorate was 6,29,40,693 as against the present total of 5,73,43,291, post Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

Among the 38 districts in the State, Karur recorded the maximum voting percentage of 91.86 percent on Thursday and Kanyakumari the least percentage of 75.41, while polling was brisk throughout the day when various parties raised complaints on the polling process.

The Director General of Police issued a notification urging the police officers at various levels to ensure that uniformed personnel performed their duty outside the gates of the polling stations and entered premises, if required, only at the behest of the presiding officers. He

said he had received complaints of police entry into booths which was not permitted.

In a couple of places, including a booth in Chennai's Royapuram, hitches in the Electronic Voting Machines led to the disruption of voting an hour before the machines were set right to resume the process.

Adding a romantic touch to the polling process, several couples in the State went to booths straight from their marriage ceremonies in wedding finery, surprising the officials, polling agents and waiting voters in a delightful way. N Raja Ram and V Renuka, whose marriage was solemnized at 4 am went to the booth at Al Ameen School, K Pudur, in Madurai to cast their votes, while another couple turned up at the booth in Tirupattur with the garlands still adorning them.

In Chennai, where, too, a lawyer and his bride had not removed the garland when they reached the booth in Kodambakkam straight from the marriage 15 minutes earlier, were in a hurry to leave as they had to reach Kallakurichi to enable the bride to exercise her democratic right. In Chinnakadai area of Ramanathapuram two couples of the same family voted with their garlands on and then posed for a group photograph displaying the ink mark in their index fingers.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Must ensure free & fair polls in Bengal

THE spotlight on the Election Commission of India (ECI) has intensified amid the first phase of the high-stakes elections in West Bengal today. The run-up to the Assembly polls has witnessed a bitter confrontation between the ECI and the ruling Trinamool Congress over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Mass deletion of voters' names has dominated the electoral discourse in the state over the past four months. Trouble started in December last year when the poll panel declared that "logical discrepancies" had been found in the forms of 1.36 crore people. Of these, 60 lakh were placed under adjudication, and then 27.1 lakh of them were deleted. Lakhs of aggrieved residents are still awaiting the decision of appellate tribunals on their appeals. All the chaos and confusion have undermined the sanctity of the rolls. Moreover, the avowed objective of identifying and listing "illegal immigrants" has been virtually cast aside. The ECI, whose credibility and neutrality have come under a cloud in West Bengal, faces the onerous task of ensuring free and fair elections. The Supreme Court has rightly observed that the SIR process has led to a "trust deficit" between the poll body and the state government. Notably, the exercise has been largely hassle-free in several other states and union territories. Another point of contention is the poll panel's decision to transfer around 1,100 officers, including the chief secretary, after the elections were notified. Beyond Bengal, the ECI is under increasing pressure over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation. Opposition parties have alleged that the PM's speech violated the Model Code of Conduct.

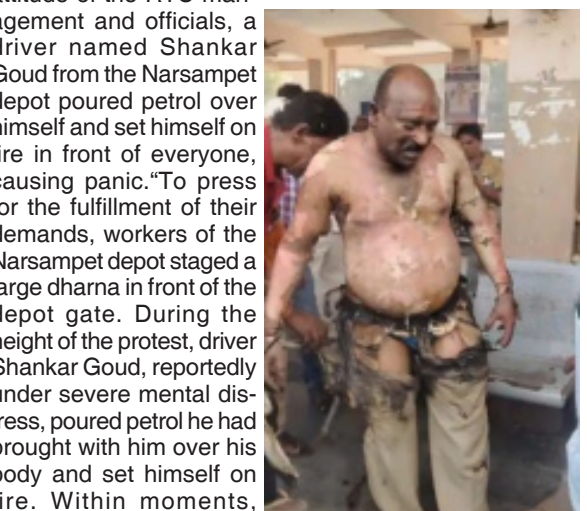
Bhagiratha Maharshi Jayanti Celebrated with Reverence



“Wanaparthy correspondent April 23, (Indian Chronicle): “Mallu Ravi, Member of Parliament from Nagarkurnool, praised Bhagiratha Maharshi as a figure who, through intense penance, brought the sacred river Ganga from heaven to earth. On Thursday, marking the occasion of Bhagiratha Maharshi Jayanti, celebrations were held at Bhagiratha Chowrasta. Mallu Ravi attended as the chief guest, along with local MLA Thudi Megha Reddy and District Collector Adarsh Surabhi. They paid floral tributes to the statue of Bhagiratha Maharshi. Later, they also participated in another Jayanti program organized under the auspices of the District BC Welfare Department at the IDOC premises, where they again offered floral tributes. Speaking on the occasion, the MP highlighted that Bhagiratha Maharshi symbolizes determination and perseverance. He stated that anyone who achieves their goals through hard work and dedication is often compared to Bhagiratha, and such efforts are referred to as “Bhagiratha Prayatnam.” “MLA Thudi Megha Reddy described Bhagiratha Maharshi as a scholar and a symbol of selflessness, dedication, and patience. He conveyed greetings to the Sagara community on the occasion of Bhagiratha Jayanti. The event was attended by Additional Collector (Revenue) Vinod Kumar, Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Khimya Naik, Wanaparthy Municipal Chairperson Madhavi, Vice Chairman Madhusudan Goud, Agricultural Market Yard Chairman Srinivas Goud, former DCCB Chairman Vishnuvardhan Reddy, public representatives, community leaders, and members of the Sagara community.

RTC driver Shankar Goud attempted suicide

Narsampet/Warangal, April 23 (Indian Chronicle) : A deeply tragic incident occurred on Thursday at the RTC depot. A protest that RTC workers had been carrying out for the past two days to resolve their issues suddenly turned violent at the Narsampet depot. “Protesting against the rigid attitude of the RTC management and officials, a driver named Shankar Goud from the Narsampet depot poured petrol over himself and set himself on fire in front of everyone, causing panic. To press for the fulfillment of their demands, workers of the Narsampet depot staged a large dharna in front of the depot gate. During the height of the protest, driver Shankar Goud, reportedly under severe mental distress, poured petrol he had brought with him over his body and set himself on fire. Within moments, flames spread, leaving fellow workers shocked and helpless. Alert staff immediately extinguished the flames and shifted him to a hospital for treatment. “Angered by the incident, workers raised loud slogans against the management. As the situation went out of control, police intervened and tried to pacify the protesters. A heavy police presence was deployed at the scene. Union leaders alleged that harassment by officials and negligence by the management led to this extreme act.



“Hyderabad, April 23 (Indian Chronicle): “A meeting of the National Executive Committee of the National Adivasi Congress, along with state chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, and district chairpersons from across the country, was held at Indira Bhavan, the AICC office in New Delhi. The meeting was attended by senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Parliament Rahul Gandhi as the chief guest. The event was presided over by AICC SC, ST, BC and Minority In-charge Koppula Raju and National Adivasi Con-

World Book Day celebrated successfully at Uppal Government Degree College “Guests stress the importance of book reading among students



UPPAL , APRIL 23 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): “World Book Day, also observed as World Copyright Day, was celebrated successfully on Thursday under the aegis of the Telugu Department at Uppal Government Degree College in Medchal-Malkajgiri district. The programme was inaugurated by the presiding officer, Dr K. Vijay Kumar, while Telugu Assistant Professor J. Viswanath Kumar coordinated the event. “Renowned feminist short story writer, poet, essayist, columnist, social activist, publisher and editor of Hasmita Publications, and retired librarian Bandaru Vijaya attended as the chief guest. Addressing the students, she delivered an elaborate lecture on the importance of book reading and said that books should become the students' closest friends and constant companions. “She also encouraged students to take up story writing and assured them



that Hasmita Publications would consider bringing out their works in book form. “Another chief guest, Balaseva Ratna awardee and Kanti Foundation founder Kandukuri Ramu, displayed posters related to the “Library Movement” and inspired students to take the movement forward as a people's initiative. “On the occasion, an essay writing competition on the theme “The Book That Inspired Me” was conducted, in which students enthusiastically participated. “Students Vasanthi, Manisha, Mallishwari, Amrutha Jyothi, Ashok and Nida Fatima won prizes in the competition. “Among those who attended the programme were Vice-Principal Dr C.H. Satyanarayana, librarians Dr R. Chandrasagar, Dr G. Tirupatayya, P. Vijay Kumar, Dr Rajashree, Dr S. Yamuna Rani, K. Geetha, Dr V. Srinivasa Rao, Dr P. Venkateswarlu, Sravanthi, Anuradha, and Anusha, along with faculty members and students.

If RTC workers are neglected, the government will face a mass public backlash: Telangana State Farmers' Association



“KHAMMAM APRIL 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “Leaders of the Telangana State Farmers' Association warned that if RTC workers continue to be neglected, the government will face widespread public unrest. “State Vice President of the association, Dondapati Ramesh, along with CPI district executive members Bezawada Ravikumar and Yagamla Anand Rao, criticized

the Congress government for failing to fulfill its pre-election promises to recognize RTC workers as government employees and resolve their issues. They extended support to the RTC workers' strike held on Thursday at the Madhira RTC depot. Speaking on the occasion, they said that workers have been waiting for the past two years for the government to address their problems, but continued inaction has forced them to resort to protests. “They warned that if the situation persists, employees across sectors may unite and launch a large-scale general strike. The leaders demanded that the government immediately initiate talks with RTC workers and resolve their issues. They also pointed out that public and employee trust in the government is already declining and urged the authorities to remember the consequences faced by the previous government over similar issues. Running RTC services without its workers is not feasible, they said, and appealed to the state government to resolve the matter promptly to ensure uninterrupted public transport services. They added that employees from various sectors, who had placed high hopes on the current government, are increasingly preparing to take the path of protest to secure solutions to their problems.

Medak District Collector Pratima Singh said that Bhagiratha Maharshi's sacrifice and perseverance are an example for everyone

“Celebration of Bhagiratha Maharshi's birth anniversary

Medak District Collector Pratima Singh “On Thursday, Bhagiratha Maharshi Jayanti” celebrations were organized under the auspices of the Backward Classes Development Department at the District Integrated Collector's Office. “District Collector Pratima Singh attended this program as the chief guest along with Additional Collector Nagesh, lit the Jyoti, garlanded the Maharshi's portrait and paid tributes. “Speaking on this occasion, the Collector said that Maharshi Bhagiratha of Sagara family was hailed as a great ascetic who brought the river Ganga from heaven to earth. “The collector said that Maharshi Bhagiratha's perseverance and service were exemplary for everyone. “He said that Bhagirath has gone down in history as a great man who made the impossible possible and brought the Ganges to the earth. “That is why great efforts are called ‘Bhagiratha effort’. “Later, officials, representatives of caste associations, secretaries, presidents, etc. paid tributes to his portrait. “In this program, DFO Joji, DPO Yadaiah,



DRDO Srinivasa Rao, Collector AO Yunus, Assistant Welfare Officer Ganga Kishan,

National Adivasi Congress Executive Meeting Held at Indira Bhavan, AICC Office

“Congress party will always stand by tribal communities, says Rahul Gandhi”



gress Chairman Vikrant Bhuria. “Addressing the gathering, Rahul Gandhi said that Adivasis are the original inhabitants of the country and the true custodians of its jal, jungle and zameen (water, forests and land). He stated that they are the rightful owners of the nation's natural resources. “He alleged that the BJP has been portraying Adivasis as “vanvasis” and is attacking their roots and culture, while handing over forest wealth, land and water resources to corporate entities. Expressing strong concern over this, he called upon Adivasi Congress workers from even the remotest corners of the country to rise and protect their rights. “Rahul Gandhi assured the gathering that the Congress party would always stand firmly in support of tribal communities. “Among those who attended the meeting were All India National Adivasi Congress Vice-Chairman Bellayya Naik, Telangana State Adivasi Congress Chairman and MLC K. Shankar Naik, Vice-Chairmen Kurakula Mallikarjun and V. Lingam Naik, state coordinators K. Mohan, K. Srinivas, V. Krishna Naik and Sunil Naik, along with district chairpersons including R. Ramachandra Naik (Sangareddy), Shrivani Naik (Karimnagar), Ketavat Yadagiri Naik (Nizamabad), Anil Naik (Narayanpet), Shivaram Naik (Vikarabad), Motilal (Suryapet), Nageswara Rao (Nalgonda) and Harikishan, among others.

District BC Welfare Officer G. Jyothi said that the ideals of Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi are a source of inspiration for everyone.



“The Birth Anniversary celebrations of Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi were conducted grandly under the aegis of the BC Welfare Department. “Several prominent personalities participated in the event. “She emphasized that the path shown by Bhagiratha Maharshi for the development of society is exemplary and should be followed by all.”

“KHAMMAM APRIL 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “District BC Welfare Officer G. Jyothi stated that the ideals of Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi are inspiring to everyone. “On Thursday, the Birth Anniversary celebrations of Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi were held grandly at the Collectorate under the auspices of the District Backward Classes Welfare Department, Khammam. “Prominent personalities including Ashok, Soma Srinivasa Rao, Vemula Yakaiah, Peddi Srinivas, N. Balakrishna, B. Vijay Kumar, Anishetty Lakshminarayana, and T. Ranganadha Swamy attended the event as chief guests. “Speaking on the occasion, District BC Welfare Officer G. Jyothi praised the greatness of Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi. She noted that his contributions to social development are unforgettable and emphasized that everyone should take inspiration from his path and actively participate in serving society. “Leaders of BC community organizations, officials, staff, and others also took part in the program.

Do Not Risk Your Lives for Fun Swimming: District SP Nitika Panth, IPS



“Indian Chronicle, Jade Srinivas, April, 23. “District Headquarters, In view of the upcoming summer holidays starting tomorrow, District Superintendent of Police (SP) Nitika Panth, IPS, has advised parents to be extra cautious about their children's safety, especially when they go out for swimming. She warned that what begins as fun can turn into a serious accident if proper precautions are not taken. “Speaking on the occasion, the SP said that during the summer season, children often visit ponds, wells, and canals for swimming. However, accidents are occurring due to lack of awareness about water depth, slipping, or not knowing how to swim. Even a small mistake or negligence can lead to life-threatening situations, she cautioned. “Emphasizing that children must be protected with utmost care, she stated that parents should always keep track of where their children are and what they are doing. If children are to be taught swimming, it should only be done under the supervision of parents or experienced adults. “She stressed that prevention is always better than reacting after an accident occurs. Following safety measures near wells, ponds, and other water bodies in villages can significantly reduce such incidents. “The SP also called upon parents and villagers to work together and remain vigilant regarding children's safety. As far as possible, children should be encouraged to stay at home and focus on studies, sports, and other constructive activities. “Additionally, she advised people stepping out for various works to take precautions against extreme heat. Drinking plenty of water, covering the head, and avoiding going out during peak afternoon hours were among the key suggestions. “She reiterated that public safety is the top priority of the police department and urged everyone to act responsibly to prevent accidents

TBA to host Players Conclave 2026 in Hyd

Hyderabad: The Telangana Basketball Association (TBA) is set to host the Players Conclave 2026 on April 24 at Shilpakala Vedika here from 5 pm onwards. The event aims to bring together players, coaches, administrators, and stakeholders to shape the future of basketball in Telangana.

The conclave is being organised under the leadership of R Sridhar Reddy, President, and A Prudhishwar Reddy, General Secretary of the Telangana Basketball Association. The event will serve as a significant platform for interaction, transparency, and growth within the basketball ecosystem. A major highlight of the conclave will be the announcement of the Telangana Juniors Basketball League (TJBL) player selection results, marking an important milestone for young athletes across the state.

I will always strive to strengthen government schools.

MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy stated. Inauguration of additional classrooms built at a cost of Rs. 42 lakhs at Agganur ZPHS school..



nately get them sanctioned as well. "He said that infrastructure facilities have been provided in the school through Amma Adarsha Committees. Since CM Revanth Reddy himself is the Education Minister, the MLA informed that the "Breakfast" scheme will be launched from June to ensure students' health is also good. "All students should study well, listen to your teachers, and never forget your goal. If you reach a good position, not only your family but your village will also be proud," he said. "Parents should enroll their children in government schools. He stated that quality education will also be provided in government schools on par with corporate schools. Parents should take the responsibility of sending children to government schools. He said efforts should be made to send them to school regularly without fail. "Later, MLA Manohar Reddy inaugurated the newly constructed Jogu Vijayalakshmi Venkatappa Indiramma house, participated in the housewarming puja ceremony, and conveyed his best wishes to them. "Similarly, the MLA attended and inaugurated the housewarming ceremonies of the newly constructed Indiramma houses of Yerukali Aliveelu Sailu, Yerukali Sujatha Srinivas, Sandagalla Yadamma Narsimlu, and Boya Eeshwaramma Kurumappa in Yalal Mandal headquarters. "Public representatives, teachers, officials, leaders, and students participated in this program."

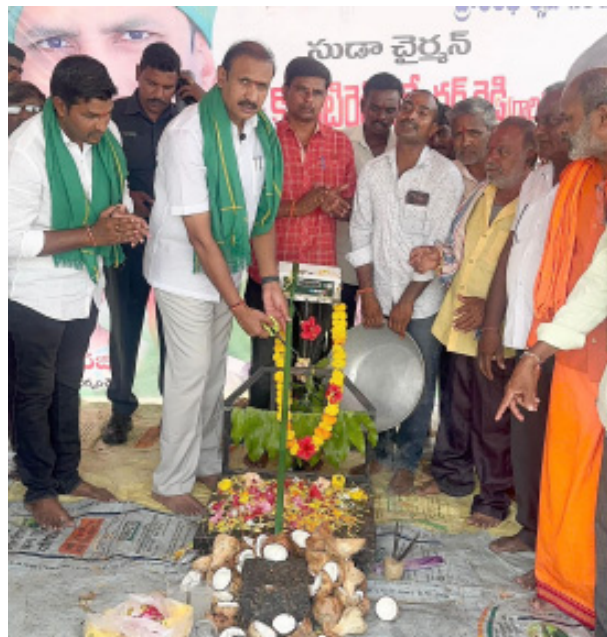
"Indian Chronicle Tandur (April 23) "On Thursday, Tandur MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy inaugurated newly constructed additional classrooms and a science lab built at a cost of Rs. 42 lakhs at Agganur ZPHS school in Yalal Mandal. "Later, addressing the students at the school, he said... "The government has constructed new buildings to expand value-based education and provide better infrastructure. He said that Agganur school is not only peaceful but also disciplined. He stated that Agganur ZPHS school is at the forefront in sports competitions at the constituency level. He expressed hope that he would strive to upgrade this school to an intermediate level. He said that teachers had requested sanction of 4 additional rooms and he would defi-

Procurement centres opened in Karimnagar Rural

SUDA Chairman says govt. committed to easing paddy sales; flags past hurdles faced by farmers.

Karimnagar April 23 (Correspondent) : SUDA Chairman Komatireddy Narender Reddy on Thursday said the State government, led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, was committed to supporting farmers and ensuring smooth procurement of paddy. Inaugurating paddy procurement centres at Jubilee Nagar and Fakirpet villages in Karimnagar Rural Mandal, he said farmers had faced several difficulties in the past while selling their produce, including delays and disputes over quality parameters.

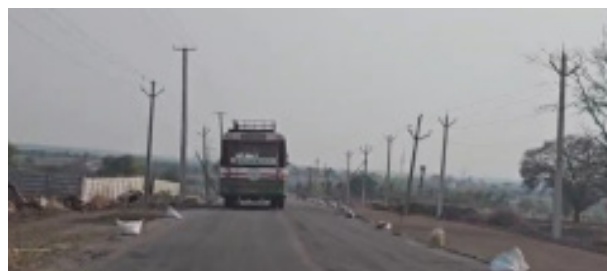
"The present government is focused on addressing these issues and ensuring that farmers do not face inconvenience in marketing their paddy," he said, adding that the objective was to strengthen the farming community and improve their economic security. Mr. Narender Reddy alleged that the previous regime had failed to procure paddy effectively, leading to hardships for cultivators. Despite inheriting a significant debt burden, he said, the government was allocating substantial resources towards farmer welfare and procurement operations. Officials including APM Ram Mohan, cooperative representatives Krishna and Ashok, PACS CEO Ramesh, and local elected representatives participated in the programme.



District SP warns of strict action if attacks are made on RTC buses



"Indian Chronicle Vikarabad (April 23) "District SP Sneha Mehra clarified that they are committed to the protection of RTC drivers and that strict legal action will be taken if duties are obstructed or buses are vandalized. On Thursday, she inspected transport arrangements at the Vikarabad bus depot. "She warned that the public transport system is a common property, and those who pelt stones at buses or engage in anarchic acts will be identified based on video evidence and strictly punished, adding that such persons will be disqualified from future government jobs. "She said that those inciting violence on social me-



dia are under surveillance and advised youth not to get emotional and ruin their lives, suggesting that if there is any protest, it should be expressed peacefully. She appealed to the public to immediately report information about anti-social activities to 'Dial 100'. "She sternly warned that cases will also be filed against those who cooperated with the strike. Police said that a case has been registered against the owner who set up a tent as a strike was launched by pitching a tent at Tandur bus depot. "However, buses are continuing to various areas under police escort. The RTC workers' strike in the district is continuing peacefully on the second day.

Thangallapalli Minority Educational Institutions in the Throes of Competitions

"Rajanna Siricilla, April 23 (Indian Chronicle): The Welfare Week celebrations organized as part of the Public Administration-Progress Plan in minority educational institutions in Thangallapalli Mandal are continuing with enthusiasm. Several competitions were held on Thursday with the aim of bringing out the talent of the students. Drawing, quiz and debate competitions were organized at the Minority Residential Girls' School, and the students participated enthusiastically. Minority Urdu Officer Aisha Talat and Principal Ursa Fatima presented prizes to the winners and congratulated them. It was special to honor the parents of students who recently passed the intermediate exams. They were honored by recognizing the role of parents in the successes of the students. Principal Ursa Fatima, teachers and staff participated in the program.



Public Schemes Must Reach People Widely: Nagarkurnool MP Mallu Ravi

*Priority to Construct Buildings for All Gram Panchayats: Mahabubnagar MP DK Aruna****Speed Up Pending Development Works: Wanaparthy MLA Thudi Megha Reddy****Wanaparthy correspondent, April 23 (Indian Chronicle):****Nagarkurnool Member of Parliament Mallu Ravi stated that it is the responsibility of officials to ensure that government welfare schemes reach people extensively and directed them to take necessary steps in that direction. A District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting was held on Thursday at the district collectorate conference hall. The meeting was attended by DISHA Committee Chairman and Nagarkurnool MP Mallu Ravi, Co-Chairperson and Mahabubnagar MP DK Aruna, Wanaparthy MLA Thudi Megha Reddy, and District Collector Adarsh Surabhi. Addressing the meeting, MP Mallu Ravi reviewed various departments in the district and instructed officials to effectively implement and deliver government schemes to beneficiaries. He emphasized speeding up pending development works in departments such as education, healthcare, roads and buildings, welfare, civil supplies, Panchayati Raj, and rural development. He directed electricity officials to create awareness about the PM Surya Ghar scheme so that people can benefit and reduce their electricity bills. Animal husbandry officials were instructed to ensure timely vaccination of livestock to support farmers. Regarding housing, out of 6,203 sanctioned Indiramma houses in the district, only 4,864 have been grounded. He ordered officials to expedite the grounding and construction of the remaining 1,340 houses and to identify reasons for delays. Beneficiaries facing financial issues should be supported through self-help group loans, he suggested. He also instructed officials to ensure that scholarships for BC, SC, ST, and minority welfare hostels are not pending and to report any delays immediately. In the Panchayati Raj Engineering Department, out of 199 sanctioned CC roads worth 13 crore, 25 roads are still pending. Officials were directed to complete them at the earliest. Out of 268 Gram Panchayats, 158 have buildings, while 29 still lack buildings. Necessary steps should be taken to construct them. The MP also directed that wages under the employment guarantee scheme be paid on time and that there should be no difficulties in accessing LPG gas. Bankers were advised to prioritize schemes like PM Employment Generation Programme, MSME loans, Mudra, and PM Vishwakarma, and to quickly process pending applications. He appreciated banks for contributing under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), noting that Union Bank of India has set up a CT scan center and constructed toilets in government schools. Bank of India will soon distribute 500 bicycles to girl students, which he praised. Mahabubnagar MP DK Aruna urged officials to ensure central government schemes reach all eligible beneficiaries and emphasized the need to construct Gram Panchayat buildings in every village. She directed agricul-



ture officials to conduct soil testing and guide farmers on suitable crops, and to ensure benefits under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme reach farmers without bias. She also instructed promotion of the Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana among workers and awareness about the National Livestock Mission for youth employment. Pending works under PM SHRI schools should be completed quickly, she added. Wanaparthy MLA Thudi Megha Reddy called for expediting pending road works under the Roads and Buildings Department and urged faster forest clearances where required. He also directed speeding up road widening works in Wanaparthy town and the construction of the medical college hospital and a 30-bed hospital in Pebber. Additional Collector (Revenue) Vinod Kumar, Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Kheemu Naik, Municipal Chairperson Madhavi, Vice Chairman Madhusudan Goud, Agricultural Market Committee Chairman Srinivas Goud, Councillor Dhanalakshmi, officials, and public representatives were present at the meeting.

RTC workers' strike continues peacefully for the second day in Tandur..

BRS party leaders express solidarity



"Indian Chronicle Tandur (April 23) "The RTC workers' strike continued peacefully for the second day in Tandur. Demanding that the RTC workers' demands be resolved, workers also staged a peaceful strike on the second day. "In solidarity with them, public organization leaders and BRS party leaders extended support today. Speak-

ing on the occasion, they demanded that the government immediately resolve the legitimate demands of the RTC workers. "BRS party Tandur in-charge leader Srisail Reddy said that their support will continue until the government resolves their demands. RTC workers' leaders along with BRS party leaders and public organization leaders participated in this program.

Arrangements should be made at the purchase centers for the convenience of farmers

Additional Collector Gaddam Nagesh.



Vemulawada, April 23, (Indian Chronicle) : Additional Collector Gaddam Nagesh has ordered that all arrangements should be made at the grain purchase centers for the convenience of farmers and that the details of the purchased grain should be recorded online from time to time. On Thursday, the Additional Collector inspected the grain purchase centers set up under the auspices of the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies in Marripalli, Mallaram, and Bala Nagar in Vemulawada town of Vemulawada Rural Mandal at the field level. He asked the administrators about the amount of grain collected so far and whether it was immediately recorded online or not. He examined the arrangements made for the convenience of farmers and



made several suggestions. He ordered that the moisture content be checked and grain should be purchased in accordance with the rules. He asked farmers to make good use of the government purchase centers. He suggested that tarpaulins be kept available so that there would be no problems in case of rain. Additional Collector Gaddam Nagesh has instructed rice mill operators to unload the grain brought from the grain purchasing centers on a regular basis. The Additional Collector inspected Manikantha Industries and Maruthi Industries in Marripalli and Sri Ramalingeswara Rice Mills in Vemulawada town. He asked them to unload the vehicles that came to the mills with grain loads without delay and help them return to the purchasing centers.

Blocking historic decisions on women's empowerment is anti-democratic: Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao



“UPPAL, APRIL 23(INDIAN CHRONICAL):”“Former Ramanthapur corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao said that attempts to obstruct the historic decisions being taken by the Central Government for women's empowerment are against the spirit of democracy. “Responding to the call given by the state unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), women leaders and party workers on Thursday left from the Ramanthapur division to take part in an “Akrosh Padayatra” in protest against the stand adopted by the Congress party and the INDIA alliance on the 33 per cent reservation being implemented for women by the Central Government. “The march was led by Mahila Morcha presi-

dent Tallamanga Goud and is scheduled to proceed from the GHMC office to Indira Park. “Speaking on the occasion, Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao said that any attempt to hinder the Central Government's historic initiatives aimed at women's empowerment was undemocratic. She asserted that the struggle for protecting women's rights and ensuring equal opportunities would continue. “Among those who participated in the padayatra were district Mahila Morcha leader Ambati Bhagalakshmi, Ramanthapur division women leaders Swarna Pinde, Aruna, Veena, Sheelam Sudha, Prameela, Renuka, Keerthi and Lavanya, along with a large number of party workers and local leaders.

Collector pays tribute to Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi



“Rajanna Sircilla, April 23(Indian Chronicle) : Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi Jayanti celebrations were held in a grand manner. Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi Jayanti celebrations were held at the district integrated offices complex under the auspices of the BC Welfare Department on Thursday, and District Collector Garima Agrawal and Additional

Collector Gaddam Nagesh were present. First, they garlanded the portrait of Sri Bhagiratha Maharshi and paid tributes. Later, they praised his services. Sircilla RDO Venkateswarlu, BC Welfare Department Officer Soujanya, District Agriculture Department Officer Afzal Begum, representatives of the caste community and others participated in the program.

Concrete foundation stone laying ceremony for new building of Rudrangi Police Station



crete foundation stone laying ceremony will be held on Friday for the construction of a new police station building at the Rudrangi mandal center. On Thursday, District SP Mahesh B. Githe reviewed the arrangements along with the concerned officials regarding this program. He made several suggestions to the officials on all the necessary arrangements for the successful conduct of the program. He stated that this concrete foundation stone laying ceremony will be held at the hands of Telangana State DGP Shivdhar Reddy, Government Whip and Vemulawada MLA Adi Srinivas. Additional SP Chandraiah, DSP Srinivasulu, Chandurthi CI Venkateswarlu, RI Ramesh, SSI Mothiram, Ramesh, Yadagiri, Police Housing Board AE Rajasekhar and others participated in this program.

Foundation Laid for 2.90 Crore Development Works by MLA Nayini



include construction of internal roads, side drainage systems, and other basic infrastructure facilities. The MLA stated that these projects aim to provide better amenities to the local residents. “He instructed officials and contractors to strictly adhere to quality standards without any compromise during the execution of the works. He also directed them to complete the projects within the stipulated time and make them available for public use at the earliest. “MLA Nayini Rajender Reddy emphasized that development programs are being carried out in a prioritized manner, keeping in mind the needs of the people, and reaffirmed his commitment to advancing the constituency in all sectors. “Local public representatives, leaders, party workers, supporters, and officials participated in the program.”

“Hanumakonda, April 23 (Indian Chronicle): As part of the public governance development initiative, Nayani Rajender Reddy, MLA of Warangal West, laid the foundation stone on Thursday for several development works in the constituency. “The works, to be taken up in the 48th and 30th divisions at an estimated cost of ₹2.90 crore,

World English Language Day celebrated with grandeur at Uppal Government Degree College

“UPPAL, APRIL 23(INDIAN CHRONICAL):”“World English Language Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm at Uppal Government Degree College under the aegis of the Department of English, marking the birth anniversary of renowned English playwright William Shakespeare. The event was organized in accordance with UNESCO guidelines and government directives, with active participation from students and faculty members. “The chief guest for the programme was Prof. Ashok, Head of the Department of English at Veeranari Chakali Ilamma Women's University, who elaborated on the immense contributions of William Shakespeare to the English language. He explained to students the significance of Shakespeare's plays, his 154 sonnets, his unique use of language, and the importance of English in personality development. “Prof. Ashok also spoke about the possibility of entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the future between the English Department of Veeranari Chakali Ilamma Women's University and Uppal Government Degree College. “College Principal Dr. K. Vijay Kumar said that proficiency in English is essential in today's highly competitive world. He noted that regular reading helps improve vocabulary and pronunciation skills and urged students to strive for mastery of the language. “Head of the English Department Dr. G. Tirupataiah highlighted the importance of Shakespeare's 37 plays and captivated students by personally enacting the famous courtroom scene from The Merchant of Venice with character portrayals. He said that the themes of love, tragedy, comedy, and history in Shakespeare's works continue



to remain relevant even today. “As part of the celebrations, competitions such as an English quiz, spelling bee, tongue twisters, and board race were conducted for students. In addition, posters featuring AI-generated images of Shakespeare, his biography, and his literary works were displayed by students, drawing special attention. “Vice-Principal Dr. Satyanarayana, NSS Programme Officer Vishwanath Kumar, faculty members Dr. Rajashree, Dr. Yamuna Rani, Geetha, Dr. Srinivas, Dr. Chandrasekhar, Dr. Venkateswarlu, Anusha, R. Sravanthi, Anuradha, and non-teaching staff also participated and contributed to the success of the event.”

Srinivas Reddy takes charge as Karimnagar Additional Collector (Revenue)

“Karimnagar April 23 (Correspondent) : D. Srinivas Reddy on Thursday assumed charge as the Additional Collector (Revenue) of Karimnagar district. Mr. Reddy, who was serving as a Special Grade Deputy Collector in the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), was recently appointed to the post.



Soon after taking charge, he called on District Collector Chitra Mishra and presented her with a sapling. The two officials reviewed key aspects of revenue administration and ongoing development programmes in the district, with a focus on strengthening service delivery mechanisms and inter-departmental coordination. Revenue Divisional Officer K. Maheshwar, along with revenue officials and Collectorate staff, met Mr. Reddy and extended their greetings.



Collectorate Administrative Officer Sudhakar, Karimnagar Urban Tahsildar Narendra, and officials Rajesh and Kalicharan were among those present.

I Will Protect Party Workers Like the Apple of My Eye

— Former BRS MLA Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar “Hanumakonda, April 23 (Indian Chronicle) : Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar said he would protect every party worker who carried the BRS flag like the apple of his eye, adding that the pink cadre are like his own family members. “A large-scale meeting of BRS party workers from the West constituency was held on Thursday at the SV Convention Hall in Vaddepally. Speaking on the occasion, the former Warangal West MLA stated that throughout his 40-year political journey and 20 years of public life, he has always stood by the people and served them. “He criticized that for the past two and a half years, while discharging responsibilities as a constructive opposition and fighting on behalf of the people, false cases were being filed against him and party workers. He remarked that cases are not new to them and asserted that his life is an open book. “He advised every BRS worker to stay closely connected with the public and work organizationally to strengthen the party. Predicting that the next government would be led by KCR and BRS, he assured that the party would stand by every worker and leader who supported it during difficult times. “He urged party workers to quickly form booth, division, and constituency-level committees and work like soldiers to restore the party's former glory through close public



engagement. “On this occasion, 50 youths from Division 63 joined the BRS party under the leadership of Mahmood. He also announced that in-charges had been appointed for 26 divisions to strengthen the party.

Collector Orders Strict Action on Illegal Seed Trade



only government-approved products with proper receipts. “The Collector also stressed strict enforcement against illegal sand transportation, mandating online booking systems for transparency. Vehicles involved in illegal activities will be seized, and offenders prosecuted. “Public cooperation was sought to report violations, with assurance of confidentiality for informants.

Public Cooperation Key for Census 2027: District Collector K. Haritha

“Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, April 23: K. Haritha, District Collector, has appealed to the people of the district to cooperate with the ongoing census activities. “In a statement, she said that as part of the statewide Census-2027 programme, house-listing operations will be conducted from May 11 to June 9. She explained that the implementation of welfare schemes and development programmes by the Central and State Governments is based on population data, and hence public cooperation is essential for preparing accurate records. “She further informed that citizens can undertake self-enumeration online from April 26 to May 10 through the official website sc.census.gov.in. During the census process, when officials visit households, residents may provide their self-enumeration ID. “The Collector urged people to provide accurate information when census officials visit their homes. “Issued by the District Public Relations Officer, Kumrambheem Asifabad District.

Quality seeds are the goal for farmers. "Telangana Seed Development Corporation Chairman Anvesh Reddy



"Telangana Seed Development Corporation Chairman Anvesh Reddy said that the government's main objective

is to provide reliable, high-yielding quality seeds to the farmers. "A wide-scale meeting was held with seed dealers, representatives of cooperative societies, FPOs and representatives of ARSK centers at Medak district IDOC conference hall on Thursday. "Speaking on this occasion, the chairman said that the Telangana Seed Development Corporation is directly connected with the farmers and the seed production will be done through them. "He said that the collected seeds are certified and given to the farmers only after strict standard tests. By this, the farmers are fully assured of the quality. "Prepare the seeds for the rainy season" He clarified that there is no shortage of seeds in the district for the current monsoon (Kharif) season. "Thin varieties: BPT 5204, RNR 15048, KNN 1638. "Types of shed: KNN 118, MTU 1010. "The above varieties of seeds are abundant in stock and the dealers have been directed to sell only the varieties prescribed by the government. "Fertilizers such as Zeeluga and Janumu seeds are also timely

Farmer welfare is the goal of the Congress people's Government

"— Parakala MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy "Sangem/ Parakala, April 23 (Indian Chronicle): "Stating that procurement centers are being opened in advance to ensure that farmers face no difficulties, Parakala MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy said that the welfare of farmers is the primary objective of the Congress people's government. "On Thursday, he inaugurated a paddy and maize procurement center at the FACS office in Kapulakanaparthi village of Sangem mandal. Speaking on the occasion, he urged farmers to make use of the paddy and maize procurement centers set up by the government and receive the Minimum Support Price (MSP). "He said the Congress government is working with a strong focus on farmer welfare and advised farmers not to fall prey to middlemen. He stated that at the procurement centers, farmers would receive a Minimum Support Price of ₹2,400 per quintal. "The MLA instructed officials to ensure that farmers do not face any inconvenience at the procurement centers. He also said that if any issues arise, officials should immediately bring them to his notice. He warned that cheating farmers would not be tolerated. "Revuri Prakash Reddy further stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, several



welfare programs are being implemented with the aim of uplifting farmers, and emphasized that the Congress government's mission is to make the farmer a king.

Support Must Be Extended to Laws Protecting Women's Rights



"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, April 23: "Responding to the call given by the state BJP party, a large number of women from Nacharam Division participated in a women's protest rally organized against the stance of the Congress party and its allies for opposing the Women's Bill. "Under the leadership of Uppal Women Convener Ampala Anita Padma Reddy and Division Women President Manjula Vani, women from Nacharam turned out in large numbers and expressed their protest. "BJP women leaders including

Varalakshmi, Lavanya, Aruna, Kantha, Rama, Mani, Indira, Sharada and others took part in the program. "Division President Naveen Kumar, District BJP leader Ragiri Mohan Reddy, senior leaders Malka Prakash, Padam Venkatesh, Uday Kiran Reddy, and youth leaders Abhishek Goud, Bhaskar, Kishore, Naveen, and Deekshith also attended the rally and extended their support. "Speaking on the occasion, the leaders stated that it is everyone's responsibility to support laws that protect women's rights.

Malkajgiri Traffic Police Crack Down on Mobile Phone Driving and Illegal Sirens



Apr 23, 2026 10:54:17 AM 25° W Gunrock Enclave

"MEDCHAL- MALKAJGIRI, April 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Malkajgiri Traffic Police conducted a special enforcement drive in Traffic Zone-I targeting violations related to mobile phone use while driving and the misuse of unauthorized sirens. During the drive, officials booked a total of 1,055 cases for mobile phone driving and 15 cases for unauthorized siren usage. Fines amounting to ₹10,55,000 were imposed on violators. The operation focused on major junctions and accident-prone areas, with strict action taken against dangerous driving behavior, including the use of mobile phones while driving and the illegal use of sirens. DCP Traffic-I K. Rahul Reddy stated that mobile phone driving is a serious risk that can lead to fatal accidents. He warned that strict action will continue against those violating traffic rules, especially in cases involving unauthorized sirens. Traffic Police officials stated that such special drives will be conducted regularly to maintain road discipline and ensure public safety.

A press conference was held at the MLA Camp Office in Dr. A.S. Rao Nagar.

"MEDCHAL- MALKAJGIRI, April 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that the High Court judgment declaring that the report submitted by the Justice P.C. Ghose Commission is no longer valid, and that no further action can be taken based on it, is welcomed. He said the judgment once again proves that truth ultimately prevails. He alleged that the propaganda carried out by the Congress against the Kaleshwaram Project has been exposed by the High Court verdict. He expressed gratitude to the High Court for delivering the judgment. He stated that KCR completed the Kaleshwaram Project within three years. He alleged that due to the inefficiency of the Congress government, there is now a resurgence of drinking water scarcity similar to the situation during the united state period. He said tanker supply has resumed across both urban and rural areas without distinction. He criticized Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, stating that he lacks concern for the people, has limited administrative understanding, and has not introduced new initiatives. He pointed out that under Section 8(B) of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, individuals must be given an opportunity to present their views before allegations are made, but this was not followed. He alleged that discussing the report in the Assembly and leaking it to the media before its official

release indicates a political conspiracy. He said the entire inquiry process was flawed and violated the principles of natural justice, and that the report was prepared in a one-sided manner favoring a particular political party. He stated that the verdict is a setback to attempts to defame former Chief Minister KCR and former minister T. Harish Rao in connection with the Kaleshwaram Project. He clarified that they are not against an inquiry, but emphasized that it must be conducted in a transparent manner, and that commissions should not be used for political vendetta. Former BRS corporators, party leaders, and workers from various divisions of the Uppal constituency attended the press conference.

Retirement is only from the job... not from service



"— Teachers of Lashkar Bazar praise the services of Jilukara Ekantam "Hanumakonda, April 23 (Indian Chronicle) : "Describing retirement as an important milestone in professional life that marks not just the end of work but the beginning of a new phase of life, Headmistress Uma of Lashkar Bazar High School and Headmaster P.V. Ramesh of the Primary School said that retirement applies only to a job, not to service. "A heartfelt felicitation ceremony was held on Thursday in the school premises to honor Jilukara Ekantam, who retired from service at the Government Primary Girls School in Hanumakonda. The event was presided over by Headmistress Uma and Headmaster P.V. Ramesh. "On this occasion, fellow teachers, friends, and

well-wishers praised the dedicated services rendered by Jilukara Ekantam to students over the years. They wished him a healthy, happy, and peaceful retired life. "Speaking to the media, Jilukara Ekantam said that for the past 27 years as a government teacher, he treated his profession as divine duty and worked with discipline to impart knowledge and values to many students, helping them grow into responsible citizens of the nation. "Later, teachers, friends, and family members felicitated Jilukara Ekantam and his wife Sujatha with shawls and bouquets. "The program was attended by Physical Director Shobha, teachers Jyothi, Raj Kumar, Narender, Uma, other staff members, relatives, Ekantam's son Sahith, daughter-in-law Sushmita, grandson Saharsh, daughter Vijeta, and other family members.

Kaleshwaram Verdict Upholds Justice

"Attempts to defame KCR have failed; this is a victory for the people of Telangana"... "Zaheerabad MLA Koninti Manik Rao...Zaheerabad April 23 (Indian Chronicle):"Zaheerabad MLA Koninti Manik Rao stated that justice has prevailed with the Telangana High Court's verdict on the inquiry into the Kaleshwaram project, calling it a significant victory for the people of Telangana. He made these remarks while addressing a media conference along with former Market Chairman Gundappa, Zaheerabad Mandal Party President Tattu Narayana, and Kohir Mandal Party President Narsimlu, among other party leaders. "Criticizing the Congress government, the MLA alleged that the P.C. Ghosh Commission constituted to probe the Kaleshwaram project was not a genuine or impartial body. "It did not function like an independent commission but rather like a 'PCC commission' driven by political motives," he said, accusing



the government of attempting to misuse institutions for political vendetta."

Dandi Suresh, District Secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), has urged the government to immediately resolve the issues faced by RTC workers and call off the ongoing strike.

"KHAMMAM APRIL 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "In a statement released today, he said that RTC workers had earlier gone on a 52-day strike in 2019 demanding solutions to their problems, and now they are once again protesting over the same unresolved issues. He questioned why the Indian National Congress, which supported the workers during the previous strike, is now not responding after coming to power. "He also criticized the Government of Telangana led by Revanth Reddy for allegedly deviating from its election promise of merging RTC with the government soon after assuming office. "Suresh expressed concern over the mental distress among workers due to the government's approach, stating that the situation has driven some to extreme steps. He cited a recent incident in Narsampet, where an RTC driver attempted self-immolation in front of the bus stand, as evidence of the severity of the issue, and held the government responsible. "He demanded that the government address the legitimate concerns of RTC workers immediately and end the strike, warning that failure to do so could lead to public anger along with the workers' protests."



Awareness Seminar on Soil Testing and Balanced Fertilizer Management Held Successfully

Scientific farming practices explained to farmers of Raikode and Nyalkal mandals "Experts highlight importance of soil testing for better productivity "

"ZAHEERABAD April 23 (Indian Chronicle):"An awareness seminar on soil testing and balanced fertilizer management was successfully conducted under the aegis of DDS-KVK for farmers from Mahaboobthupur and Itikepally villages of Raikode mandal, and Tatipalli village of Nyalkal mandal in Sangareddy district. A large number of farmers, including women farmers, actively participated and gained insights into scientific farming practices. "On the occasion, soil testing expert E. Swami explained the importance of soil testing in scientific nutrient management. He stated that soil analysis helps in accurately assessing soil fertility levels and enables farmers to apply balanced fertilizers according to crop requirements. He also emphasized that soil testing not only reduces unnece



Gujarat Gas reduces PNG price for Morbi cluster, but ceramics prices to remain dearer



GNS News Agency, April 23

Two weeks after the price of the Piped Natural Gas (PNG) proposed by the Gujarat Gas Ltd left the propane-run ceramic units in Morbi upset, the state government-run public sector unit has agreed to bring the price down. From Rs 88 per cubic metre which was offered on April 1, which would add up to Rs 93 per cm, GGL has brought the price down to Rs 77 per cubic metre following multiple negotiations. The price of PNG for the tile-makers, however, still is 48% higher than Propane-LPG (Rs 52 SCM) whose supplies ran out after the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz following the war in West Asia. It does however, bring the difference in prices between the regular users of PNG which were largely the sanitaryware units and those returning to PNG, which is the tile making units, to Rs 7 instead of Rs 23, bringing some semblance of parity to the sector.

The decision by Gujarat Gas comes two days after the retail prices of the ceramic products were increased by the Morbi Ceramics Manufacturers Association (MCMA) on April 15 by 30% to 50%. In spite of these decreased rates of PNG, the prices of end products will remain unchanged, the association said. The shutdown at Morbi cluster, which accounts for 90% of the Indian ceramic industry, started on March 17 due to the fuel shortage in India following the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran in light of devastating attacks by the US and Israel starting February 28. Almost all the fuel for the ceramic industry is imported, including all of the Propane-LPG and half of the natural gas.

According to data from Gujarat Gas, as of February 2026 (pre-crisis), of the 792 ceramic units in Morbi, 377 had been using PNG supplied by it while the other 415 units had been using Propane-LPG supplied by Oil Marketing Companies IOCL, BPCL and HPCL. While the 110-odd sanitaryware units and smaller tiles units had been using PNG, all the other tile units had been relying on Propane-LPG to fire their kilns. Before the West Asia war began, consumption of Propane-LPG was an average of 55 lakh cubic metres per day, and consumption of Natural Gas was approximately 25 lakh cubic metres per day.

After the supply of Propane-LPG to industry was throttled by lack of supplies from Qatar and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations and remaining stocks were ordered priority redirection to residential cooking needs by the Government of India, the ceramic units, mostly the tiles units, were forced to turn to Gujarat Gas seeking PNG supplies.

However, these units, which were paying Rs 52 per cubic metre for Propane-LPG before February 28, were asked by Gujarat Gas on April 1 to pay Rs 88 plus 6% GST (Rs 93), to get PNG since their usage for the previous six months was nil. This calculation was based on a Gol direc-

tive dated March 9. On the other hand, the 142-odd units, which had been regularly using PNG even before the conflict, were asked to pay Rs 66.00 plus 6% GST, which comes to Rs 70 per cubic metre. This fuel pricing differential between units in the same sector has disappointed most of the units. The MCMA representatives held a meeting with Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on March 10. They held talks with Central government officials at Commerce Bhavan in New Delhi on April 14 and finally with IAS Avantika Singh Aulakh, MD of Gujarat Gas, on April 16. Sandip Kundariya, president of the floor tiles division of the MCMA, said the association was hoping to get a rate of Rs 66 per cubic metre, which, after 6% GST, would bring them at par with the regular customers – Rs70 – but the demand was not accepted. But, these meetings did bear some fruit with the government also agreeing to the need of incentivising fuel for restarting ceramic production. On April 17, the MCMA got a revised rate for PNG at Rs 73 plus 6% GST, bringing the effective cost to companies at Rs 77.38 per cubic metre.

morbi ceramics The latest reduction in fuel costs for the ceramic units will have little impact on the retail prices of the ceramic products which were increased by the MCMA on April 15. 30-50% hike on ceramic products to remain. The latest reduction in fuel costs for the ceramic units will have little impact on the retail prices of the ceramic products which were increased by the MCMA on April 15. Narendra Sanghat, president of the Wall Tiles Division of the MCMA, said Saturday, "We have decided on a hike in product rates across the industry ranging from 30% to 50% corresponding to the type of product and the rise in production costs associated with each of them. There is currently no plan to reduce these rates."

Gujarat Gas expected an increase in its customer base in Modbi cluster from 142 to 270 by May 1 with the 128 companies signing contracts with it recently. With the latest reduction of PNG price, more business owners are likely to reignite kilns using PNG and recall their migrant workers from northern and eastern states to resume their businesses. Sources said that if conditions remained largely stable, the entire ceramics cluster could be up and running by the end of May 2026. However, this outlook currently appears to be a bit optimistic considering that a day after Iran declared the Strait of Hormuz open for commercial ships following a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, the Islamic Republic again closed it on April 18, citing continuing US blockade of Iranian ports. In its communication to MCMA members on April 17, Gujarat Gas stated, "From April 16, 2026, to May 31, 2026, the price for customers who want to enter into MGO agreement will be USD23.500 per MMBtu (approximately Rs73/SCM at 8,350 kcal/SCM at the exchange rate of Rs93.750/USD). The Minimum Guaranteed Offtake (MGO) agreements will be for a minimum period of 1 month, till May 31, 2026." In a relief to the industries, Gujarat Gas also agreed to change the billing days from the 10-day and 15-day options earlier to a 7-day option. This means that units will only have to give payment security (bank guarantee) only for 12 days at a time. Unit owners told The Indian Express that since the price of fuel had gone up from Rs 52 to Rs77, and an average major unit uses 10,000 cubic meters of PNG per day, the amount would be too huge for the owners to afford, leading to a rethink by the PSU. Gujarat Gas also asked owners to submit their prospective PNG demand for May to it by April 18 so it can calculate its own stocks for uninterrupted supply to the ceramics cluster, said sources in the PSU.

Recce done by help, 6 accused came in SUV with fake number plate: Cops on Lutyens' Delhi bungalow robbery



GNS News Agency, April 23

The house in the Golf Link area is owned by businessman Ashok Chawla, whose son Pranav owns Gurgaon-based liquor firm Whiskin Spirits (File photo). The house in the Golf Link area is owned by businessman Ashok Chawla, whose son Pranav owns Gurgaon-based liquor firm Whiskin Spirits. Over 150 CCTV cameras have been scanned to trace the accused after jewellery worth over Rs 25 lakh was robbed from a bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi Tughlak Road area on Thursday evening, allegedly by a domestic help and his five aides, said officers. Two days on, investigators on Saturday said they were trying to join the dots and gather clues about the group of men who allegedly arrived near the house in an SUV with a fake number plate and left the house after ransacking it. Police have registered a case and formed multiple teams to trace the robbers, said officers, adding that raids are being conducted in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana. The house in the Golf Link area is

owned by businessman Ashok Chawla, whose son Pranav owns Gurgaon-based liquor firm Whiskin Spirits. Ashok, his wife, Pranav's wife and his son were allegedly held hostage by the domestic help and his aides as they robbed the house around 7:30 pm on Thursday, said officers. Pranav was on his way home from the office when the incident happened. A source earlier said, "Around 7:30 pm, the main accused entered the property, and was allowed in by the family as they knew him. But five of his accomplices also followed him in, and were carrying sticks and hammers with them." They allegedly manhandled some of the family members. Officers said they went on to check each room of the house, collecting gold jewellery worth Rs 25-30 lakh. Investigators have now found that the domestic help, who was hired just a week before, had conducted a reconnaissance of the area earlier while plotting the robbery. Officers added that he knew that the back door of the house was not used often. Citing the CCTV footage, officers said the accused came near the house in an SUV with a fake number plate, then got out of it to walk towards the bungalow. They didn't gather around the house all at once, but in pairs to evade suspicion, officers added. "They entered the house through the front door, locked it, and went out through the back door. The owner's son reached the house with his friend after the incident, and had to break the door," a source said. The source added, "There was no CCTV camera on the front side of the house, while the ones on the backside were defunct." The domestic help was hired about four to five days ago on the recommendation from a former house help. His background check was allegedly yet to be done by the family, said officers.

Mini-plenary in Khammam to prepare BRS cadres for electoral battle

GNS News Agency, April 23

Khammam: The Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) mini-plenary to be held in Khammam on April 19 aims to boost the morale of the BRS cadres in erstwhile Khammam district in the wake of upcoming elections. Large-scale cadre mobilisation is being done for the meeting from all the 10 Assembly constituencies in Kothagudem and Khammam districts. Several rounds of preparatory meetings have been held in the district by senior leaders for the success of the mini-plenary. The mini-plenary to be held at Mamata Medical College grounds here is a major political manoeuvre organised in the district in recent times after the last Assembly elections as electioneering in urban local body elections was done by local leaders alone. With Siddipet MLA, former Minister T Harish Rao scheduled to attend the meeting to address the party cadres, the party leadership here expects that the mini-plenary would prepare the cadres to face future political challenges. The meeting would augur well

for the Khammam Municipal Corporation (KMC) elections which would be held anytime now. The KMC elections hold the key for the next Assembly elections as the urban local body is spread across two Assembly constituencies, Khammam and Palair. Similarly, with the State Election Commission issuing orders to district officials to prepare the voter lists for holding elections to the Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTCs) and Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTCs) the meeting helps to chalk out plans to face the elections, a senior leader said. The issues such as demolition of houses of poor families at Velugumatta in a rather inhuman manner and failure of the Congress government to provide house sites to all eligible as promised by the district ministers would be discussed in the mini-plenary. Likewise, the government's failure to speed up Sitarama Project construction and its inability to deliver the election promises such as six guarantees would be discussed, former Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar said.

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Twist in pan parlour owner's kidnap: Vadodara woman, lover abduct her husband, throw him in canal using hitmen, he survives



GNS News Agency, April 23

What appeared to be a case of a late-night robbery and abduction of a local pan parlour owner in Vadodara has now taken a far more sinister turn. The businessman, who was rammed off the road, kidnapped, and thrown into a canal near Anand district in an apparent attempt on his life, survived not only to tell the story but also lead the investigators to unravel a shocking conspiracy allegedly orchestrated by his wife and her former lover.

The victim, Girishbhai Patel, a resident of the Chhani area, was returning home on the night of April 8 after shutting down his shop as usual when a white hatchback car rammed into his two-wheeler on the Chhani-Sokhda Road. Before he could react, a group of men allegedly forced him into the car and drove away, marking the beginning of a horrifying ordeal. Even as CCTV footage of the alleged abduction went viral, the Vadodara city police began an investigation when Patel returned the following day to tell the story. According to the complaint lodged by Patel, he was held captive, physically assaulted, and robbed of his belongings, including his wallet, mobile phone, and cash by the unknown attackers. Patel has alleged that his attackers

also forced him into revealing his ATM PIN, which they used to allegedly withdraw Rs 1 lakh from multiple locations across the city and nearby highways. The accused then allegedly took Patel to a canal near Sojitra in Anand district and in an attempt to allegedly eliminate him, they threw him off a bridge into the canal. However, Patel managed to cling to a pillar in the canal and remain in hiding until dawn. Police said that he was rescued the next morning with the help of locals and later informed his family that he had survived.

A detailed probe by the Chhani police, under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone-1, Jagdish Chavda revealed that the crime was not the handiwork of random criminals but allegedly a conspiracy by Patel's wife Falguni along with Kaushik Sharma—her former lover. Police said that although Falguni and Sharma were allegedly engaged, the relationship was called off and Falguni eventually married Patel about five years ago. Police say that some time during the course of her marriage, Falguni allegedly rekindled the relationship and the duo hatched a conspiracy to kill Patel. To execute the plan, they allegedly hired multiple accomplices, including contract killers. For the police, the CCTV footage of the abduction played a crucial role in cracking the case. "Investigators identified the vehicle involved in the collision and traced movements of the suspects, including one individual who conducted a recce of the spot on a motorcycle prior to the attack... So far, seven accused have been arrested, including Falguni Patel and Kaushik Sharma, who is believed to be the mastermind. Others arrested include Rudrakumar Raval, Neelkanth Baria, Umang alias 'Shooter' Bhavesh Prajapati, Govind Bhoi, and Pruthvi... We have also recovered important evidence, including the car used in the crime, a dagger, cash, and debit cards," a senior officer said. According to the police, one of the accused identified as Nikunj, who was allegedly paid Rs 35,000 by Falguni and Sharma, is yet to be apprehended.

Bijnor 'anti-national' activities FIR: Another accused held in Delhi after return from South Africa, say police



GNS News Agency, April 23

Another accused allegedly part of a network involved in anti-national activities was nabbed soon after he landed at Delhi international airport from South Africa on Saturday, police said. His arrest comes after two other persons were apprehended earlier this month and are currently in jail. According to police, the accused, identified as Majjul, was one of the persons named in the case lodged at Nangal police station in Bijnor district and a lookout notice had been issued against him and two others identified as Aaquib and Azad. Majjul was in South Africa while the remaining two are reportedly in Saudi Arabia, police said. Majjul had landed at Delhi airport on Saturday morning from Africa when authorities alerted them following the lookout notice, Bijnor SP Abhishek told, adding, "He has been brought to Bijnor and undergoing interrogation."

According to officials, Bijnor police had lodged a case in November last year on charges of acts endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India, criminal conspiracy and possessing illegal weapons under Arms Act and IT Act at Nangal police station. The case was lodged after a video circulated on social media purportedly showing a man carrying weapons, including AK series rifle and heard making threatening statements against India while speaking with another man over Instagram. The man seen with weapons in the video was later identified as Aaquib, a resident of Mawana area of Meerut district and the other one as Majjul from Bijnor. While Aaquib then was found to be staying in Dubai, Majjul was in South Africa, police said. The then SHO closed the case stating the assault rifle seen in the video is a toy gun while the grenade is a perfume bottle and hence no serious offence is made out. The SHO had mentioned he spoke with Aaquib through video call who said that the rifle is a toy gun and the grenade actually was a perfume

bottle. On the basis of this statement, a closure report was filed and endorsed by the then Circle Officer (CO) before forwarded to the court.

Meanwhile, UP ATS arrested four terror suspects last month, including two from Meerut and others from Gautam Budh Nagar on charges of planning to plant bombs at Lucknow railway station. One of them identified as Saquib of Meerut reportedly told the ATS team during interrogation that they are linked to the same Aaquib who is allegedly part of a terror network and that Majjul, too, is connected. Following ATS investigation, it was found the weapons seen with Aaquib in the video were real and the police in Bijnor closed the case hastily without conducting an extensive investigation. The case was reopened for re-investigation and the SHO was suspended while the CO was removed along with departmental inquiry. During re-investigation, it was found there were two others who were seen in that video later identified as Azad of Mandawara area and Uvaid Malik of Raipur area, both of Bijnor district. Earlier this month, the police arrested Uvaid Malik and Jalal Haider, who are in jail currently. The Bijnor police arrested Sameer alias Ruhan of Najibabad area of Bijnor on April 15 after he was found to have allegedly been in regular contact with the other accused through Telegram. The police claimed evidence of his alleged involvement in anti-national activities was obtained from his mobile phone.

Osmania University cautions against fake job ads

Hyderabad: Osmania University (OU) on Saturday cautioned job seekers against fraudulent advertisements circulating regarding staff recruitment for the Examination Branch in a statement, the OU said no recruitment notification has been issued for the Examination Branch.

"?The viral messages and links are total fabrications designed to defraud job seekers. ?Candidates are warned not to share personal data or pay any application fees to unauthorized individuals or portals," it said.

All official notifications will be published exclusively on the University's official website, the OU said. ?The University is initiating legal action against the perpetrators, it said and informed job seekers not to fall victim to scammers.

India's natural heritage is speaking in signs and silences



ing out hydropower projects and claiming over 200 lives. While the trigger was geophysical, the scale of damage raised difficult questions about aggressive construction in ecologically fragile Himalayan zones. Road cutting, blasting, deforestation and infrastructure expansion in young mountains are not without consequence. Nature keeps its own ledger that leads to earthquakes. Floods Need Not Become Catastrophes

Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in the recurrent flood disasters across India. Assam floods, which repeatedly inundate the Brahmaputra floodplains and even engulf the Kaziranga National Park, are in part natural processes essential to the river ecosystem. But what transforms flood into catastrophe is often human interference. Wetlands are filled, floodplains are encroached, and natural drainage corridors are obstructed. The river is then left with nowhere to go except through homes, fields and wildlife habitats. Similarly, the Kerala floods of 2018 and the subsequent landslides in the Western Ghats were widely linked not only to extreme rainfall but also to quarrying, slope destabilisation and unregulated hill development. Whenever slopes are stripped of tree cover, one is effectively loosening the mountain's grip on itself. The landslides that followed were not merely acts of weather. They were acts of accumulated ecological negligence and imposed crude constructions in the name of development.

Not all disasters arrive with noise. Some descend silently. The 2015 heatwave across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which claimed thousands of lives, was one of the deadliest in recent memory. This is where natural heritage sites matter profoundly. Urban forests, wetlands, mangroves and large protected green belts moderate temperatures, reducing the heat island effect and offering cooling corridors. Destroying green cover in and around cities while lamenting rising temperatures is a contradiction we can no longer afford. Of all India's natural heritage landscapes, the Sundarbans perhaps most vividly demonstrate how nature protects people. Every cyclone that rises from the Bay of Bengal first meets this vast wall of mangroves. They absorb the brute force of storm surges, soften the wind's fury, and stand as a living barrier for vulnerable coastal communities. The Sundarbans remain one of the greatest examples of nature's quiet service to humanity. If these forests are degraded, millions across coastal Bengal become instantly more vulnerable.

Mangroves are not wasteland; they are defence infrastructure grown by nature herself. Forests, mangroves and grasslands are far more than sanctuaries for wildlife; they are the living lungs of India, breathing cool air into our fevered cities, feeding rivers that sustain millions, and buffering us from the manmade calamities we have too often invited upon ourselves. The ongoing sixth extinction, where species are vanishing at a rate the Earth has not seen in millions of years, and the cause is unmistakably human. Every forest razed and wetland buried becomes another obituary in this age of loss. Each time I watch a flock of demiselle cranes or painted storks wheel above a marsh or hear the sharp alarm call of a deer rising from the woods, I am reminded that nature's warnings are never silent. They arrive in smoke-darkened skies, rivers in furious spate, and summers that scorch more fiercely with each passing year. To protect our World Heritage landscapes is not merely to save birds, beasts, and ancient forests, but also to preserve the very breath, balance, and future of a nation.

Nature Conservation is never only about animals. It is about us, as the Tiger reserve secures rivers, a mangrove forest secures coastlines, and a mountain forest secures monsoon stability. Similarly, a wetland secures groundwater, as these Natural World Heritage sites are not isolated islands of beauty. They are the systems that allow India to breathe. The disasters of the last decade, like fires, floods, landslides, and heatwaves, are certainly not disconnected events. They are urgent messages from landscapes stretched beyond resilience. This World Heritage Day, we must learn to listen because if the forests lose their breath, so will we. Says Rajesh Bhalla, a wildlife photographer and travel consultant based at Delhi: "Preserving and Conserving World Heritage Sites is vital to the country's well-being." As of early 2026, India has seven natural World Heritage Sites recognised by UNESCO for their outstanding biodiversity, ecological significance, and natural beauty. These sites, ranging from high-altitude Himalayan parks to coastal mangrove forests, are protected for their irreplaceable value. Once destroyed, they can never ever be replaced.

CBI Joint Director, retired ACP convicted by Delhi court for raiding IRS officer, 26 yrs ago



A Delhi court on Saturday convicted a sitting CBI joint director and a retired Delhi Police officer for criminal trespass, assault and mischief during a raid and arrest of an Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer in October 2000. Ramnish Geer, Joint Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation, and V K Pandey, a retired Assistant Commissioner of Police in Delhi, have been convicted in the case filed by IRS officer Ashok Kumar Aggarwal, who had accused the CBI and police officers of forcibly entering his Paschim Vihar home and assaulting him during a raid on October 19, 2000. Ramnish was reportedly awarded the President's Police Medal for distinguished service on Republic Day in 2022. Judicial Magistrate First Class Shashank Nandan Bhatt of Tis Hazari Court will pass the order on their sentence on April 27.

In its judgement dated April 18, the court said: "...breaking open the main door of the house of the complainant during the search and arrest proceedings, without any justified reason, constitutes commission of mischief and the act of consequently entering upon the property of the complainant, with the intention of unlawfully exercising their official powers to settle professional scores, falls within the definition of criminal trespass." "The entire search and arrest proceedings... were in sheer violation of the powers

bestowed upon them by law..." the court added.

As per 1985 Batch IRS officer Aggarwal, represented in court by advocate Shubham Asri, the complainant was posted as Deputy Director of Enforcement (Delhi Zone) in 1999 and assigned the investigation of highly sensitive cases including politicians and businessmen. He alleged he was falsely implicated in a corruption case by one Abhishek Verma, who was being investigated by him in connection with FERA violations, in connivance with the CBI officials. After a raid in March 1999, an investigation against Aggarwal was lodged in a disproportionate assets case. A year later, he was transferred out of Delhi and suspended. His transfer was stayed by the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) in September 2000, subject to be reviewed in four weeks. Less than a month after the CAT order, the IRS officer said he was arrested following the raid at his residence at 5.50 am, when the accused beat the gatekeeper to forcefully enter his house. He alleged his family was locked up in a room while he was forcibly dragged out of his bedroom, resulting in injuries on his right arm.

The court noted that instead of furnishing the reply to the CAT by October 18, 2000, the office of the Superintendent of Police, CBI, held a meeting that evening and raided the complainant's house the next morning. "All these factors lead to a necessary inference that the actions of the accused persons... were mala fide and done with the object of nullifying the (CAT) order," the court added. The court also said that the accused had failed to prove the "extreme necessity for barging into the house of the complainant" when he had already appeared before the investigating officer on multiple occasions. "Not just this, there is absolutely no explanation for the injury on the right forearm of the complainant... which points towards custodial violence at the time of effecting the arrest," the court added. Speaking to The Indian Express, advocate Asri informed that Aggarwal was earlier discharged in the disproportionate assets case being investigated by former ACP Pandey, and the CBI case being probed by Ramnish.

'Women won't forget this betrayal': Delhi CM marches near Rahul Gandhi's home over 33% quota



GNS News Agency, April 23

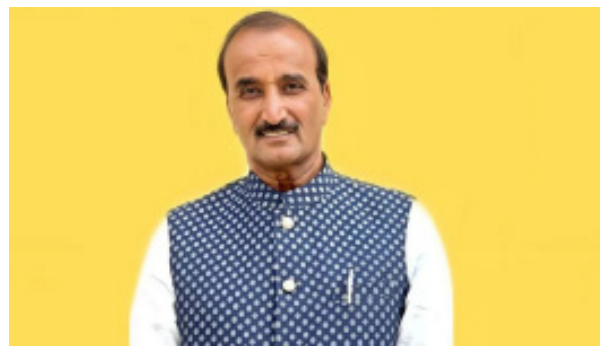
Wearing a black band on her arm, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with other BJP leaders like MP Hema Malini, staged a protest march near Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's residence at Sunehri Bagh on Saturday. The march was organised to take on the Opposition for the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill — that aimed to bring 33% reservation for women in Parliament and state assemblies — in the Lok Sabha on Friday.

Slamming the Opposition parties for raising apprehensions related to delimitation exercise and expansion of Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850, which has been linked to the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the women's quota law, Gupta wrote on X, "The women power of this country will not forget this betrayal by the Congress and its Yuvraj (crown prince). They will give a befitting reply in every election." She also shared a video showing her marching in protest, along with party colleagues, including Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva. Hema Malini also attacked the Opposition, saying, "It could not tolerate women moving forward shoulder to shoulder with men."

The protesters gathered at Moti Lal Nehru Marg, torched an effigy of Rahul and tried to reach his residence when the police used water cannons to disperse them. Near Sunehri Masjid roundabout, Sachdeva, MPs Kamaljeet Sehrawat and Bansuri Swaraj and other leaders were detained and taken to Parliament Street police station, the party state unit said in a statement. "Leaders of the Opposition cannot see beyond their own families, have worked to deprive the nation's women — half the population — of their rightful share by blocking the passage of the Bill," Sachdeva said. Meanwhile, addressing a summit organised by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), Gupta said the defeat was "painful and deeply disappointing" for every woman who hopes for dignity and equal rights. "As a woman Chief Minister, this is not merely political, it is about dignity and sensitivity... a crucial opportunity to give crores of women a role in decision-making had been taken away," she said.

Gupta said the arguments put forward by parties opposing women's reservation lacked substance and reflected an "anti-women" mindset. She also alleged that this was not the first time the Congress and its allies had obstructed women's empowerment, saying their approach exposed their real intent. The NDA-led Central government's initiatives have provided a strong platform for women's advancement, and the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam reflects that commitment, she added. Gupta claimed that the Opposition parties wanted to politicise the matter. "In 1971, the country's population was around 50 crore; now that has increased to 140 crore. In that sense, the number of seats should increase. But you (Opposition) had a problem because you did not want to divide your existing constituency into two and let a woman come forward," she added. CAIT national general secretary and Chandni Chowk MP Praveen Khandelwal, along with a large number of women entrepreneurs, were among the attendees at the summit.

April 26 Gujarat local body polls | Facing rebel trouble in several seats, BJP suspends them for six years



The BJP candidates in several seats in the April 26 local body elections will not only face candidates from opposition parties such as Congress and AAP but also their former party colleagues who are fighting the polls as independents after being denied tickets by the saffron party. The BJP has suspended all those rebel candidates from the party for six years. In Navsari, BJP president Bhuralal Shah suspended 10 workers who were holding various posts on Thursday for contesting as independent candidates in the Navsari district Panchayat, Taluka Panchayat, and Navsari Municipal Corporation elections. Navsari is among the nine new municipal corporations going to polls for the first time where the BJP has already won two seats uncontested. Rebel candidates are also creating trouble for the BJP in Surat, Tapi, Chhota Udepur and Dahod districts. In Surat district, four organisational leaders filed nominations as independents while in Tapi district three leaders, after being denied tickets, are now fighting as independents. The rebel candidates in Navsari are Dipak Patel who is contesting the municipality seat, Niral Patel and Preeti Amit and Bhusan Patil from the NMC seats, the rest contesting from seats in Vejalpore, Manekpur, Jalalpore taluka panchayat and others. In the case of Surat Municipal Corporation, Dhruvil Panchal, a former party member, is contesting as an independent from ward no 30 while Sharmishtaben Variya, former BJP member, is contesting as an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate from ward no 1.

Surat city BJP president Paresch Patel said, "We will not tolerate any activity that damages the party by any member or leader. So we have suspended all rebel candidates. Such strict actions will be a warning to the remaining party leaders and members." In Surat district, 17 party workers in Kadodara resigned in support of the four organisational leaders suspended by the district leadership for contesting as independents. These former BJP leaders are Bhola Bharwad, Deputy sarpanch of Chalthan village, Rajubhai Bharwad, president, Bakshipanch Morcha, Krunal Raghvani, BJP general secretary, youth wing and Pratap Prajapati, vice president, Bakshipanch Morcha, all from Kadodara. Sources said that Bhola Bharwad had sought a ticket to contest the Kadodara Nagar Palika election, but when his name did not appear on the final list on April 10, he staged a protest at the party headquarters. Later, Bhola along with three others filed nominations as independents from the Kadodara municipality. Bhola Bharwad said, "I was deputy sarpanch of Chalthan village in Surat district and it got merged to Kadodara Nagar Palika, last year. I have been working for the BJP since long and have supported the party during its critical times. I had appealed to the party higher ups to give me a ticket from ward 6 of Kadodara Nagar palika. This is the first time I have asked something from the party. We have made a panel of four candidates and we have filed nomination forms from ward no. 6. The party has suspended me for six years. Now our direct fight will be with BJP, not with Congress." Similarly, Tapi district president Suraj Vasava suspended Arjun Chaudhary (former vice president of Tapi district Panchayat), Jasu Gamit (former president of Vyara Taluka Panchayat), and Sharmila Gamit (former member of Vyara Taluka Panchayat) after they filed nominations as independents. In Bodeli in Chhota Udepur district, the BJP suspended former APMC chairman Hemrajsinh Maharaul for six years for rebelling against the party mandate and filing nominations from the Panaj seat of Bodeli taluka panchayat. Maharaul's wife is also a former president of Bodeli Taluka Panchayat. In Dahod district, the BJP suspended two party leaders for six years, based on a notice issued by District BJP President Snehal Dhariya for a period of five years.

Neighbour held, police probe if fight was over car accused bought or loan victim took, say police

GNS News Agency, April 23

Hours after he allegedly stabbed his neighbour and son to death, a financier living in Tara Apartments, located in South Delhi's upscale Alaknanda, was arrested late Friday from Ghaziabad. Police said the accused, Asad Querishi, had an ongoing monetary dispute with the victim, Karan Sood (30) and attacked him, his father Rakesh Sood (60), and his cousin Rahul (30) around 6 pm on Friday.

The Soods lived in O Block of the society and ran a real estate business based out of Kalkaji. Asad lived in F Block. Rahul, a resident of Shimla, had come to visit the family and was to return home on Sunday. During questioning, Asad told the police that about six to seven months ago, he had bought a second hand car from Karan, and paid Rs 5 lakh for it. "He claimed that Karan took away the car but didn't return the money. This, Asad claimed, led to their argument," a senior officer said. However, police said, according to Karan's family, he had taken Rs 1 lakh as loan from Asad, for which Asad allegedly asked for a very high interest rate. Karan allegedly settled the loan but not at the interest rate quoted by Asad, they added. Karan and Asad had then had a verbal spat over the issue. "Asad went on to get a case of attempt to murder registered against Karan at Sangam Vihar police station last year," said the officer. "The Soods, too, filed a complaint against Asad after he allegedly abused and shouted at them while standing outside their house," the officer said, adding that following this, Asad was bound down. In legal terms, to be "bound down" means to be required to appear before the investigating officer or the court on a given date. Waiting at the mortuary of AIMS, Rakesh's brother Rajesh Sood, a resident of Greater Kailash, recounted what police told him about the attack. "The three of them had just reached home, got out of the car and were heading towards the stairs of the building when Asad came and stabbed Rahul. He then went for Rakesh and Karan," he alleged. Rajesh claimed Karan had not told his father about the loan he took from Asad. "My brother didn't know about the loan. He was not worried about money; he held a langar every weekend near Kalkaji," he said.

"While Karan settled the loan with Asad at a reason-



able interest rate, Asad was not happy with it," Rajesh alleged. On Saturday, Tara Apartments were a deserted look save for a few people standing at the foot of the O Block building. Among them was Vivek Kataria, Rajesh's brother-in-law. "We are absolutely broken. He was like a brother to me. I have nurtured Karan as my own son," Vivek said. He added that the cremation, which was slated to take place at 3 pm at Lodhi crematorium, has been postponed. "They were supposed to start the post-mortem examination at 9 am. They haven't even started it yet. We will have to do it (cremation) tomorrow." Vivek claimed that very few people came to help when the attack happened. "They were screaming for help, my sister was screaming. Only one of our neighbours arranged for the ambulance. The others stood watching like mute spectators. No one called the police. Nothing," he said. Local residents, meanwhile, are trying to come to terms with a double murder taking place in a locality considered to be highly secure. "I have lived here for the last five years. I never thought this could happen here... I was going to the gym when I saw people gathered around O Block," said a resident. Vijay Kumar, former president of Tara Apartments, who recently sold his flat in December and moved to a nearby society, claimed the Querishis have had issues since moving into the society. "

Trump, Iran cite progress in talks as uncertainty hangs over Strait

cluded demanding the payment of costs related to security, safety and environmental protection services, state media said. Concern remained after at least two vessels reported being attacked on Saturday while trying to transit the waterway. India summoned the Iranian ambassador in New Delhi and expressed deep concern that two Indian-flagged ships had come under fire in the strait, the government said. U.S. Central Command said American forces were enforcing a maritime blockade of Iran but did not comment on the latest Iranian actions.

Tehran's reversal raised the risk that oil and gas shipments through the strait could remain disrupted just as Trump weighs whether to extend the ceasefire. When American and Iranian negotiators met last weekend in Islamabad, the U.S. proposed a 20-year suspension of all Iranian nuclear activity, while Iran suggested a halt of three to five years, according to people familiar with the proposals. Iran's deputy foreign minister, Saeed Khatibzadeh, said no date had been set for the next round of negotiations, adding that a framework of understanding must be agreed first. Trump had said on Friday there could be talks this weekend and that the two sides were "very close to making a deal." There were no signs on Saturday of preparations for new talks in the Pakistani capital, where the highest-level U.S.-Iran negotiations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution ended without agreement last weekend. Senior national security aides gathered at the White House on Saturday morning. Trump later went to the Trump National Golf Club with top envoy Steve Witkoff, one of his Iran negotiators. Pressure for a way out of the war has mounted as Trump's fellow Republicans defend narrow majorities in Congress in the November midterm elections with U.S. gasoline prices high, inflation rising and his own approval ratings down. Oil prices, fell about 10% and global stocks jumped on Friday on the prospect of marine traffic resuming through the strait. But hundreds of vessels and about 20,000 seafarers remain stranded in the Gulf awaiting passage through the waterway, shipping sources said. Trevor Hunnicuttt is White House Correspondent at Reuters News. He writes about U.S. foreign and domestic policy and regularly travels with the President of the United States. Prior to joining the White House team in 2021, he covered presidential campaigns, economics, finance and investing for many years. He has also served on the board of the White House Correspondents' Association. Hunnicuttt holds a bachelor's degree from Pomona College and a master's from the London School of Economics. Ariba Shahid is a journalist based in Karachi, Pakistan. She primarily covers economic and financial news from Pakistan, along with Karachi-centric stories. Ariba has previously worked at DealStreetAsia and Profit Magazine.



missiles were believed to have fallen near the east coast of the Korean Peninsula, and no incursion into Japan's exclusive economic zone had been confirmed. South Korea's presidential Blue House convened an emergency security meeting, calling the launches a provocation that violated U.N. Security Council resolutions, according to media reports. It urged Pyongyang to "stop the provocative acts". It was not clear what kind of ballistic missiles were fired, but Sinpo has submarines and equipment for testing submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The North last fired a ballistic missile from a submarine in May 2022, and it flew as far as 600 km (370 miles). North Korea has made "very serious" advances in its ability to turn out nuclear weapons, with the probable addition of a new uranium enrichment facility, International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi said on Wednesday. In late March, North Korean leader Kim said Pyongyang's status as a nuclear-armed state was irreversible and expanding a "self-defensive nuclear deterrent" was essential to national security.



between France's Dassault Aviation. The head of Dassault Aviation said on April 1 he was giving his company two to three weeks to see whether a deal could be reached on the air combat system. Late last month, Merz said he was doing everything in his power to salvage the programme and that two mediators had been appointed to overcome differences. An Airbus spokesperson in France declined to comment. The German government, the French presidency and Dassault did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Additional reporting by Tassilo Hummel in Paris, Joern Poltz in Munich. Writing by Ludwig Burger. Editing by Mark Potter

Bulgaria votes as pro-Russian former president leads the polls



SOFIA, GNS News Agency, April 23- Bulgarians went to the polls on Sunday in the eighth parliamentary election in five years, with the clear frontrunner, pro-Russian former President Rumen Radev, promising to end a spiral of weak, short-lived governments and stamp out widespread corruption. Radev, a eurosceptic former fighter pilot who opposes military support for Ukraine's war effort against Moscow, stepped down from the presidency in January to run in the election, which comes after mass protests forced out the previous government in December.

The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. A slick social media campaign, deep coffers and a pledge of stability have boosted Radev's support in the Balkan country of about 6.5 million, where voters are weary of repeated snap polls and a small group of veteran politicians widely seen as corrupt. The cost of living is also an issue since Bulgaria, a member of the European Union and NATO, adopted the euro in January. The previous government fell amid protests against a new budget proposing tax rises and higher social security contributions. That and the recent political crisis appear to be more important to voters than Radev's calls to improve relations with Moscow or resume Russian oil and gas flows to Europe. "Politicians need to come together and make decisions - not have constant conflicts and arguments, going from one election to another without getting anything done," said Bogomil Bardarski, a 72-year-old metalworker

Iran fires on ships in Strait of Hormuz as Tehran imposes restrictions again

GNS News Agency, April 23

Dubai: Iran reversed its decision to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and fired on a tanker attempting to pass the waterway on Saturday. It also warned that it would continue to block transit through the strait as long as the US blockade of Iranian ports remained in effect. Confusion over the critical chokepoint threatened to deepen the energy crisis roiling the global economy and push the two countries toward renewed conflict, even as mediators expressed confidence a new deal was within reach. Iran's joint military command said on Saturday that "control of the Strait of Hormuz has returned to its previous state ... under strict management and control of the armed forces." Two gunboats from Iran's Revolutionary Guard opened fire on a tanker transiting the Strait of Hormuz, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said. It reported the tanker and crew as safe, without identifying the vessel or its destination. TankerTrackers.com reported vessels were forced to turn around in the strait, including an Indian-flagged super-tanker, after they were fired on by Iran.

Saturday's developments came after US President Donald Trump said the blockade "will remain in full force" until Tehran reaches a deal with the US that includes its nuclear program. Tehran had reopened the strait Friday to commercial vessels. Roughly one-fifth of the world's oil passes through the strait and further limits would squeeze already constrained supply, driving prices higher once again. Iran's Friday announcement about the opening of the crucial body of water, through which 20 per cent of the world's oil is shipped, came as a 10-day truce between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon appeared to hold.

Despite the escalation, Pakistani officials say the United States and Iran are still moving closer to a deal ahead of the April 22 ceasefire deadline. The fighting has killed at least 3,000 people in Iran, nearly 2,300 in Lebanon, 23 in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Thirteen US service members have also been killed. Israel's military says another soldier died in combat in southern Lebanon, the second death announced in under twelve hours.

It brought the total number of soldiers killed in Lebanon to 15, and was the second soldier killed in combat since the ceasefire. The military said another soldier was badly wounded in the same incident, along with four moderately wounded and four lightly injured. Stéphane Dujarric, the spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, says Guterres has strongly condemned the killing of a French peacekeeper and the wounding of three others in an attack in southern Lebanon.

The UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon came under attack with small-arms fire Saturday morning. Two of the injured were hurt seriously, France's president and the force known as UNIFIL said. Both President Emmanuel Macron and the UNIFIL force blamed Hezbollah, but the Lebanese militant group denied involvement. The navy of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said it extended the closure to the corridor it had earlier designated for the safe passage of vessels through the strategic waterway and declared the strait fully closed until the US blockade on Iranian ports and ships is lifted.

On Friday, Iran said vessels could move through the strait in coordination with it and against the payment of a toll. But in a statement late Saturday carried by Iran's state media, the navy warned that any violating vessel would be targeted. Iran considers the US blockade a violation of the ceasefire between the two countries. Two vessels were attacked earlier on Saturday in the Strait of Hormuz and off Oman's coast, at least one of them by Iranian gunboats.

The military said the soldier, an officer, was killed in south Lebanon on Friday, the day after the start of a US-brokered ceasefire that has otherwise largely held. It said two other soldiers were injured in the incident, but didn't release any more details. This brings to 14 the number of Israeli soldiers killed in the latest war in Lebanon.

Naim Kassem, head of the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, in a statement read on the group's al-Manar TV said a paper published by the US State Department that it described as the text of a ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel "means nothing at the practical level, but it is an insult to our country." "Everyone knows that the government of Lebanon has not met or approved this statement," he said. The text published by the

who voted in the capital Sofia. Opinion polls on Friday showed Radev's Progressive Bulgaria securing about 35% of the vote, up from a month ago. If confirmed, that would mark one of the strongest results by a single party in years, though still short of a parliamentary majority.

Polis close at 8 p.m. (1700 GMT). Exit polls are expected as the vote closes and preliminary results could come later on Sunday or Monday. Voter interest is up. A poll by Sofia-based Alpha Research forecasts turnout of around 60%, nearly double the 34% recorded in June 2024. The figures highlight mounting frustration with the long dominance of the GERB party led by former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, which trails in second place with about 18%, and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, whose leader Delyan Peevski is under U.S. and UK sanctions for corruption. One possible coalition partner is the pro-European We Continue the Change-Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB) coalition, which also says reform is needed. Critics say Radev bears some responsibility for controversial decisions taken by interim governments he appointed during his presidency from 2016. These include a 2023 gas deal between Turkish state gas company Botas and Bulgaria's Bulgargaz that led to losses and an investigation. "Any coalition that is formed is likely to suffer from government instability and face significant scrutiny from civil society and the opposition. Another snap election in 2026 is less likely now, but remains a significant possibility," said Mario Bikarski, an analyst at risk consultancy Verisk Maplecroft.

BREAK FROM THE PAST?

Bulgaria has developed rapidly since the fall of communism in 1989 and joined the European Union in 2007. Life expectancy has risen sharply, unemployment is the lowest in the EU, and the economy has greater safeguards since joining the euro zone. But Bulgaria lags other EU countries in many metrics, and graft remains endemic, including in elections, where vote-buying is rife. Bulgaria ranks 84th in Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index, the lowest score in the EU alongside Hungary. "The state is basically falling apart," said IT specialist Evgeniy Shoh, 50, who voted in Sofia. He wants to see improvements in healthcare and education and "finally, to get out of this swamp we've been in for what, over 30 years?"

US described the 10-day truce as a gesture by Israel "to enable good-faith negotiations" toward a permanent peace agreement with Lebanon. The text gives Israel the "right to take all necessary measures in self-defence, at any time, against planned, imminent, or ongoing attacks." It does not mention any similar right for Lebanon or Hezbollah.

Kassem said the truce should entail "a complete cessation of all hostilities" and that Hezbollah "will respond to enemy violations." The Israeli military killed two UNICEF-contracted truck drivers at a water point in northern Gaza Strip, forcing the UN agency to suspend its operations in the area, UNICEF said. Two other people were also injured in the attack that occurred Friday at the Mansoura water filling point in Gaza City, UNICEF said in a statement. The firing took place "during routine, water trucking operations, with no changes in movement or procedures," it said.

The Israeli military claimed that troops opened fire on suspected militants in the area of the so-called Yellow Line, which separates Israeli-controlled areas from the rest of Gaza. It said the incident was being investigated. UNICEF said the point is being used multiple times a day to keep providing hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza City with clean water from the Mekorot water supply line.

The agency said it suspended on-site activities until security conditions in the area are restored. A UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon came under attack with small-arms fire Saturday morning leaving one French peacekeeper dead and three wounded, two of them seriously, France's president and the force known as UNIFIL said. The attack near the southern Lebanese village of Ghandouriyeh came after a 10-day ceasefire went into effect at midnight Thursday between Israel and Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group. The Iran-backed group in a statement called for caution when assigning blame and judgment, until the Lebanese army completes its investigation of the incident. Hezbollah said the peacekeeping forces should coordinate with the Lebanese army in their operations. Hezbollah expressed surprise at the hasty accusations levelled against it, especially given the silence of these same parties "when the Israeli enemy attacks UNIFIL forces." Iran's Supreme National Security Council said in a statement that Pakistan's army chief, serving as an intermediary, presented the proposals to Iran when he recently visited Tehran, and they were still under review. It was not revealed what was in the proposals. The council said Iran has yet to respond, but further talks would require the US to abandon "excessive demands and adjust its requests to the realities on the ground." It also said that Iran will maintain full control over traffic through the Strait of Hormuz until "the war fully ends and lasting peace is achieved in the region," adding that it would collect detailed information on passing vessels, issue transit certificates and impose tolls.

The council added that it considered the US naval blockade a violation of the ceasefire, and there would be no reopening of the Strait of Hormuz until that was lifted. President Donald Trump says that US talks with Iran are going well and that he expects to have more information "by the end of the day." Trump made the comments Saturday morning during a White House event where he signed an executive order directing the Food and Drug Administration to expedite review of certain psychedelic drugs designed as breakthrough therapy for mental illness.

Trump declined to take reporters' questions about Iran but said, "We have very good conversations going on." He says Iran "got a little cute," later adding, "They wanted to close up the strait again," referring to the Strait of Hormuz. "They can't blackmail us," Trump said. Pope Leo XIV said Saturday that it was "not in my interest at all" to debate US President Donald Trump about the Iran war, but that he would continue preaching the Gospel message of peace.

Leo spoke to reporters aboard the papal plane flying from Cameroon to Angola. He addressed the spiralling back-and-forth saga of Trump's critiques of his peace message, which have dominated news headlines this week. But the American pope also sought to set the record straight, insisting that his preaching isn't directed at Trump, but reflects the broader Gospel message of peace. "There's been a certain narrative that has not been accurate in all of its aspects, but because of the political situation created when, on the first day of the trip, the president of the United States made some comments about myself," he said.

North Korea fires ballistic missiles again, flexing muscle amid Iran war

SEOUL, GNS News Agency, April 23 - North Korea fired ballistic missiles into the sea on Sunday, accelerating its missile launches amid Iran war tensions and talk of possible meetings with the U.S. and South Korea. Pyongyang's intense missile activity - this was the fourth such launch this month and the seventh of the year - is meant to display its self-defence capabilities while gaining international leverage, some experts said. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.

"The missile launches may be a way of showing that - unlike Iran - we have self-defence capabilities," said South Korean former presidential security adviser Kim Ki-jung. "The North also appears to be exerting pressure preemptively and make a show of force before engaging in dialogue with the United States and South Korea," he said. IRAN WAR, TRUMP VISIT LOOM OVER ?LAUNCHES

The seven-week-old U.S.-Israeli war against Iran, which has as one aim the curbing of Tehran's nuclear programme, could reinforce Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, experts and former South Korean officials say. U.S. President Donald Trump, preparing for a summit in China next month, and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung have repeatedly expressed interest in holding talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. There are no publicly known plans for any meetings. Lee recently conveyed regret to the North for drone incursions from the South, receiving rare praise from Pyongyang. Sunday's missiles were fired from near the city of Sinpo on North Korea's east coast toward the sea around 6:10 a.m. (2110 GMT on Saturday) and flew about 140 km (90 miles), South Korea's military said in a statement.

Japan's government posted on social media that the

Mediation fails in dispute over Franco-German fighter jet, Handelsblatt says

GNS News Agency, April 23

FRANKFURT, April 18 (Reuters) - Mediators have failed to resolve a dispute between the companies involved in the Franco-German FCAS fighter jet project, though political leaders still have scope to intervene, Handelsblatt reported on Saturday. Citing people familiar with the talks, the newspaper said the mediators - one from France and one from Germany - would submit separate reports on their efforts. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. A person familiar with the matter told Reuters that the German mediator would conclude that building a joint fighter jet, once a key pillar of the project, was no longer feasible. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is to be briefed on the status of the dispute on Sunday, the person added.

Sources familiar with the project have previously told Reuters that Germany and France were likely to abandon development of the joint piloted jet but to continue cooperation on related software and data systems as well as on drones. Merz is set to meet French President Emmanuel Macron at the informal European Union summit in Cyprus on Thursday and Friday next week. The risk of failure or scale-back of the FCAS project comes as Europe seeks to boost unity and collaboration amid threats from Russia and waning support from the United States.

The project has been stalled by a dispute over control

Building the information backbone for India's drinking water future



munities can better understand whether schemes are functioning as intended and where attention is needed. Reliable operational data can transform how the sector responds to challenges. Declining source levels and irregular supply patterns can be detected early. Water quality risks can be flagged before they become public health concerns. Timely financial planning for operation and maintenance can ensure that systems continue to deliver their intended benefits.

Equally important, this visibility strengthens community governance. Gram panchayats and village water and sanitation committees play a central role in managing rural drinking water systems, with a close understanding of local needs and seasonal water realities. When local institutions can see both the physical infrastructure and how it is performing, they gain a clearer understanding of their water supply systems. Information on pipelines, pumps and tanks, combined with data on supply regularity, water levels, water quality and financial sustainability, provides village institutions with a simple but powerful view of their systems. With this data, communities can spot problems early and resolve them with engineers. For gram panchayats and village water and sanitation committees, this transparency strengthens local water management and Jan Bhagidari. As this infrastructure evolves, states can share information more easily using common formats. They retain control of their systems while enabling collective learning on what works and where improvement is needed.

These foundations can enable data- and AI-driven innovations. Frontline workers can capture images of pumps and pipelines, and AI can assess supply, detect damage, and flag maintenance needs. Analytics can identify risks and patterns that need attention. All of this depends on one thing: trusted, reliable information flowing through the system. Pipes and pumps will deliver water, but trusted, shared information will keep them working well for years. When communities understand their water systems, they care for them. When local institutions have the right information and tools, they manage them with confidence. And when digital infrastructure supports people on the ground, safe and sustainable drinking water for every rural household can be ensured. When communities understand their water systems, they care for them. When local institutions have the right information and tools, they manage them with confidence. And when digital infrastructure supports people on the ground, safe and sustainable drinking water for every rural household can endure. The Jal Jeevan Mission has connected millions of rural households to tap water. The next phase is ensuring these systems remain functional over time. The recently concluded Jal Mahotsav 2026 reflected this shift, recognising communities across the country for their role in managing drinking water assets, showing that this spirit is already taking root at the grassroots and must now be strengthened to ensure systems remain functional over time.

Data and its management are the backbone of any system, and any differences in that may appear technical but have real consequences. When definitions differ and data sources conflict, states spend valuable time reconciling spreadsheets instead of solving problems on the ground. Engineers struggle to prioritise repairs and progress slows down, not because of lack of effort, but of absence of a holistic picture.

As India undertakes one of the world's largest rural water supply transformations, this challenge needs urgent attention. Since the launch of the Jal Jeevan Mission in 2019, household tap water coverage in rural India has increased from 16.72% to over 81%. This achievement is not just about pipes and connections. It is about lives changed, saving over 5.5 crore lives of daily drudgery (largely for women), and preventing nearly four lakh deaths from diarrhoeal diseases. But building pipes and pumps is only one part of the journey. The real test is ensuring water flows regularly, safely, and sustainably for years to come. That requires constant monitoring of infrastructure, early detection of problems, and coordinated action across multiple institutions. This is where India has begun laying the foundations for Digital Public Infrastructure for the drinking water sector. A key building block in this effort is the creation of a unique digital identity for every drinking water scheme through Sujalam Bharat IDs and Sujal Gaon IDs. A Sujalam Bharat ID establishes a comprehensive digital record of hydraulically connected assets from source to tap. Integrated with platforms such as the Sujalam Bharat App, it enables the creation of Sujal Gaon IDs and provides a clear view of how water systems are interconnected. This enhances monitoring, promotes transparency, and contributes to building a technologically empowered Viksit Bharat @2047. Scheme performance

Infrastructure data alone are not enough. For drinking water systems to remain reliable, digital systems must also capture how these schemes perform over time. Data on the regularity of water supply, water levels in sources, water quality indicators and the financial sustainability of schemes are equally important. When such information flows regularly into digital systems, governments and com-

Uttar Pradesh top performer under PM's solar power scheme: UPNEDA



sustainable energy adoption, while also creating more than 60,000 jobs across the State," said Inderjit Singh, Director of the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA). "The March 2026 installations in Uttar Pradesh represent the highest monthly deployment achieved by any State since the inception of the scheme, underscoring the State's leadership in accelerating decentralised solar adoption.

As per the national portal, Uttar Pradesh has achieved 4,48,233 cumulative rooftop solar installations, placing it third in India. However, given the current growth trajectory, the State is well-positioned to surpass Maharashtra and move to second place in the coming months. The State also recorded multiple operational milestones during the month, including a record 3,188 installations in a single day on 31 March 2026, marking the highest-ever daily achievement. The total installed capacity has now reached 1,524.61 MW. Additionally, approximately ₹4,000 crore in subsidies have been disbursed, including ₹2,985 crore from the Central government, directly benefiting lakhs of households," reads an official statement. This large-scale solar expansion is delivering measurable socio-economic and environmental benefits. Rooftop solar adoption has resulted in an estimated saving of more than 6,000 acres of land, which would otherwise be required for ground-mounted plants. The installed capacity is generating approximately 6.8-7.0 million units of free electricity per day, translating into direct consumer savings of ₹4 to ₹4.5 crore daily.

Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the top-performing State under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojna, in March 2026, setting a new national benchmark in rooftop solar deployment. With 52,729 installations in a single month, the State has outperformed leading States such as Gujarat and Maharashtra. The State has consistently remained among the top two States since July 2025, with the government arguing that it reflects sustained momentum, strong execution, and robust field-level governance. "Under PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, Uttar Pradesh has surged ahead with more than 1,524 MW of rooftop solar capacity, generating approximately 6.8-7.0 million units of green energy daily and enabling households savings on electricity bill. This progress positions Uttar Pradesh as a national leader in

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Rajnath Singh's remarks: 'Response to any attack would be 'swift, calibrated and decisive'



Mr. Asif took to X to respond to remarks by his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh, who earlier said that any "misadventure" from India's neighbour in the prevailing situation would invite an "unprecedented and decisive" action. Speaking at an event in poll-bound Kerala, Mr. Singh on Thursday (April 2) said that following the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 lives, India had destroyed the terrorist hideouts and infrastructure in Pakistan. He contended that during Operation Sindoor, Indian forces brought Pakistan to its knees within 22 minutes.

"Repeated rhetoric reflects not strength, but visible strategic anxiety as the anniversary of the Pahalgam" attack approaches, Mr. Asif said. Mr. Asif further said: "Such threat-mongering is not new; it is part of a predictable pattern - externalising internal fragility, and attempting to provoke escalation under the garb of unsubstantiated allegations for vested political interests." Recalling the four-day conflict in May, the Pakistani Minister said that history was

a stark reminder that miscalculation has consequences. "The next time our response will be even more forceful and decisive. Let there be no ambiguity: Pakistan remains committed to peace and regional stability, but its resolve to defend sovereignty is absolute, its preparedness complete, and its response will be swift, calibrated, and decisive," he said. The Pahalgam attack that took place on April 22 last year resulted in a brief conflict between the two countries.

Telangana DCA serves notices to 75 medical shops over weight loss drug violations

Hyderabad: The Drugs Control Administration (DCA), Telangana on Thursday issued show cause notices to 75 medical shops for various violations while selling weight loss drugs. The special drive focused on weight loss drugs containing Tirzepatide (Mounjaro) and Semaglutide (Ozempic, Wegovy, Rybelsus) as well as generic equivalents of Semaglutide formulations, manufactured by various companies and recently introduced into the market following the patent expiry of the innovator's Semaglutide formulations, along with other weight loss drugs. The violations detected included sale of drugs without prescriptions and without issuing bills, failure to produce sales bills, failure to maintain prescription drug registers.

'Operation Chabutra' sparks debate over safety and freedom on Hyderabad streets



A late-night policing drive targeting groups 'loitering' on city roads has triggered a split in public opinion, with residents and netizens sharply divided over whether it enhances safety or encroaches on personal freedom. The initiative titled Operation Chabutra is being carried out across Hyderabad, particularly in the south and Old City areas, where police say complaints of harassment, intimidation and petty crime tend to surface after midnight. Teams patrol identified stretches, questioning those found sitting on roadside platforms, street corners and relatively isolated locations.

Police officials maintain that the operation is aimed at deterrence rather than indiscriminate action. DCP, Golconda Zone, G. Chandra Mohan said the questioning is based on behaviour rather than mere presence. "The motive behind the questioning is that whoever is loitering on streets, or sitting in isolated places, will be pulled up, not all. When some are found catcalling couples, women, and indulging in extortion, we counsel them in front of their parents or elders. If they are involved in crime against women, teasing, or property offence, that will be a case. Minor scuffle will be dealt with counselling," he said. An officer from the Charminar zone said the timing and approach are calibrated based on past incidents. "The operation usually starts after midnight. If found roaming without a purpose, we cross check them once, but roaming after 1 a.m. is dealt with strictly. Recently, there were incidents of a couple being assaulted, and a delivery boy robbed. The South and South-West range get more of such cases."

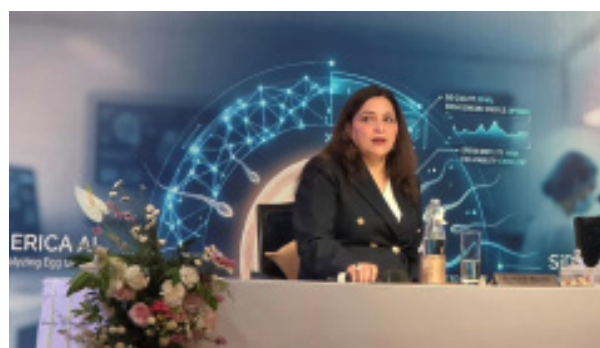
He added that the drive is intended to remain largely non-confrontational. "It is a peaceful operation, mostly counselling. There is a misconception of using lathi by police. That happens in isolated cases when a group tries to escape or evade questions. If there is a complaint about it, we will surely take action." The term 'chabutra' itself reflects a long-standing social culture in parts of the Old City, where

residents, particularly youth, gather on raised platforms or 'arugu' during summer nights. Advocate Vasudev Raju from Nampally Criminal Court said that such spaces have traditionally been part of community life. "I am basically from a place called Aliabad in Old City, south of Charminar near Rajanna Bowl. Life here has to be experienced, not just witnessed. Youth can really enjoy summer nights on an arugu or chabutra. But they should not run away when patrol vans or police come, should avoid vices and always be in a place covered by CCTV to establish that nothing nefarious is done."

However, legal concerns have also been raised over the manner of enforcement. Advocate Rama Rao Immaneni criticised the operation, calling it an overreach. "Innovative humiliation in the name of a new device called Operation Chabutra turned out to be a source of public humiliation. Powers of police with regard to surveillance are limited to erstwhile AP Police Standing Orders 601 and 744 adopted by Telangana after reorganisation. It forms no part of their duty to publicly thrash the citizens by branding them. Crime control cannot be under unconstitutional methods as we are living in a democracy," he said. Videos of the operation, particularly from Mailardevpally and surrounding areas, have circulated widely online, drawing contrasting reactions. Some users have welcomed the move, arguing that stricter enforcement is necessary to address nuisance. One comment described the action as a "good job", adding that certain groups take advantage of perceived leniency and need to be controlled to maintain order.

Others have raised concerns over the manner of policing. A user questioned why people were being 'harassed' instead of simply being asked to disperse, while another replied that such an approach often fails. Questions have also been raised about freedom of movement on public roads and the use of force in certain instances. At the same time, there is support from residents in other localities who say similar nuisance persists in their areas. Some have called for such drives in places like Balapur, citing disturbances through the day and night. Sai Sagar, a resident from Maruthi Nagar, said, "I often reach home around 2 a.m. and see boys ganged up with beer bottles in the end of my lane. There is definitely a need for such vigilance to ensure public safety," he said. Police also clarified that individuals returning from work or with valid reasons are not targeted. In recent checks, youth allegedly driving under the influence of alcohol were counselled, 81 bikes were seized, and small quantities of marijuana cigarettes were found in a few cases. Officials added that no one was detained unnecessarily, countering claims circulating online.

AI tools to increase IVF success rate and reduce patient costs



Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help reduce patient costs by achieving pregnancy faster during IVF (In vitro fertilisation) process, said Dr. Manika Khanna, Chairperson and MD at Gaudium IVF, while introducing two new AI tools — SiD (Sperm Identification Device) and ERICA (Embryo Ranking Intelligent Classification Assistant) — in New Delhi on Wednesday (April 1, 2026). These AI tools have been developed by the IVF 2.0, a UK-headquartered embryology innovation organisation, founded by embryologists Dr. Jacques Cohen and Dr. Alejandro Chave.

SiD is an AI system designed to optimise sperm selection during fertility treatments. It identifies the most viable sperm for fertilisation, which can lead to better-quality blastocyst formation. While ERICA supports embryologists

in embryo selection, provides objective, data-driven ranking of embryos. It is done by analysing static images of blastocysts based on key morphological and developmental characteristics. They have been data-fed by the genome sequencing data from India as well, said Dr. Khanna. The newly introduced technologies are designed to enhance critical stages of the IVF process.

Together, these non-invasive tools assist embryologists in improving decision-making and reducing variability. Early clinical observations suggest that the integration of these AI systems can significantly improve fertilisation and blastocyst development rates. Dr. Khanna said that nearly 15% Indians (male and female, both) are infertile now. She attributes it to increasing stress and exposure to pollutants, consumption of preservative-rich food, use of tobacco and unverified fitness supplements. By improving precision and consistency, the adoption of AI has the potential to reduce the need for repeat cycles, thereby lowering the emotional, physical, and financial burden on patients while inspiring confidence among clinicians and stakeholders, added Dr. Khanna. She said that these AI tools analyse the sample on 2.5 million parameters and help embryologists choose the best sperm and embryo. Dr. Khanna added that AI increases first-cycle IVF success rate by 5-7%. While these AI tools help reduce time and money, the base price for an IVF cycle begins around ₹2,00,000 at Gaudium IVF, with additional costs for complex cases.

Belagavi entrepreneur helps commercial units overcome LPG shortage using alternative energy sources

Since the war in West Asia began a month ago, hotels and industries in Belagavi have been facing the shortage of commercial LPG cylinders. However, a third of them have switched to biomass-based stoves, water heaters and steam generators, thanks to Sameer Kanabargi, an innovator and entrepreneur who runs Phoenix Industries. For over 35 years, this small unit in the Udyambag Industrial Estate in Belagavi has been silently working in the field of alternative energy sources and disseminating technology developed by premier institutions like IIT, IISc, TERI and others. Phoenix Industries has designed and produced a range of equipment for the Indian Army and the Border Security Force. Some of the over two dozen tools and implements produced by Mr. Kanabargi are his own inventions. Phoenix produces biomass-based stoves, water heaters, gasifiers, steam generators and other equipment. They can be used to feed a small family of two to a crowd of two lakh. They use inputs, including agriculture waste like bagasse, stems, leaves and other farm residue, twigs, tree branches, coconut shells or other waste, paper, cardboard and plywood. "The input can be any inflammable waste material. There is no need to modify any of our equipment," Mr. Kanabargi said. It is estimated that around 150 of the 350 hotels and around 100 small and medium industries in Belagavi and Maharashtra have switched to biomass-based stoves and burners. Some of them have made the switch now while those that had stopped using them have returned to the renewable and low-cost energy source. The current LPG shortage has increased the demand by multiple times and the factory is working in three shifts to meet the demand. "I think the demand and inquiries we have got in the last 10 days is equal to the demand we received in the last 10 years," he said. "While we need to rely on foreign countries for LPG supply, biomass is easily available all around us. In rural areas, it is virtually free, while in the cities, it costs around ₹5-₹7 per kg. Three kilograms of biomass gives the same amount of heat energy as one kilo of LPG. But then, the final cost works out to be 40%-50% cheaper. Industries that use our products have recovered the cost in 30-100 days," he said. Mr. Kanabargi was



among the earliest adopters of the ASTRA Ole no smoke chulha designed by IISc's Centre for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Areas. "We produced over 20,000 model ASTRA Ole that were given to rural poor by the government and other agencies. He was among the few industrialists invited by IIT Bombay for a feasibility study of biomass-based gasifiers and other tools. He mass produced biomass stoves designed by TERI under its extension programme. He designed a portable room heater that runs on pine needles for BSF personnel working in sub zero temperatures and transferred the technology free. Mr. Kanabargi says he has this streak of "think differently" from the crowd. "It all started when I was in ninth standard," he recalls. He designed a multi-purpose kitchen stove that can cook rice and generate hot water at the same time. He won a State-level award for the project. He still keeps the working model in his office. He inherited a factory from his father Surendra Kanabargi but soon shifted focus to innovation-based products. He designed and produced sheep shearing kits and modern Charkhas using bicycle wheels that were faster and needed less labour. These units were commissioned by the India Development Society founded by activists S.R. Hiremath and Shyamala Hiremath. Dayanand Appayyanavarmath, owner of Shri Basaveshwara Khanavali, has introduced biomass-based stoves and heaters in all his eateries."

40 Years of Sensex: What It Means to India and Its People



As part of its awareness initiative #BeTheSmartInvestor, aimed at helping everyday citizens understand the pulse of the Indian economy, BSE, in association with The Indian Express, took to the streets to gauge public perception of the Sensex. The initiative seeks to bridge the gap between complex financial concepts and the general public, making economic information more accessible and relatable to people from all walks of life. Over the past four decades, India has witnessed a rapid transforma-

tion. New flyovers, expanding metro networks, and growing cities stand as visible signs of progress. Amid this change, one constant has continued to act as a key indicator of the country's economic health — the Sensex. In this video by BSE, in association with , people on the streets are asked a simple question: What does the Sensex really mean? The responses reveal a wide range of understanding. Some describe it as stock prices moving up and down, reflected in green and red lines, while others admit they have little idea, especially if they are not from a finance background. For many, the Sensex represents the overall condition of the stock market and the performance of companies listed on the exchange. The discussion also looks at whether tracking the Sensex is important. While some believe it matters mainly to those who invest, others compare it to a health check-up for the economy — something that helps assess whether India's growth is on track. Participants note that market movements can influence prices of goods, raw materials, and everyday expenses. The video explains that the Sensex is India's oldest and most widely tracked stock market index, launched on 1st January 1986. More than just a number, it reflects India's economic journey and serves as a key indicator of market health.

Atomic Energy Commission clears FDI policy, sends it for inter-ministerial consultation

Prasad also highlighted the need to shorten approval timelines for nuclear projects. CEA Chairperson Ghanshyam Prasad also highlighted the need to shorten approval timelines for nuclear projects. The dilution of the liability clause under the proposed SHANTI Act is expected to boost foreign direct investment (FDI) in India's nuclear power sector as it opens up to private participation. Speaking at a high-level workshop on the Act, Seema Jain, Member (Finance), Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), said on Friday the Atomic Energy Commission has approved an FDI policy, which has now been sent for inter-ministerial consultation. Jain said that achieving the target of 100 gigawatt (GW) of nuclear power capacity by 2047 would require investments of at least Rs 20 lakh crore, assuming a baseline cost of Rs 22 crore per megawatt (MW). "Now that kind of financing will require all sorts of innovative measures to happen so that you know that kind of money and the financial space is made available for this sector," she said, adding that initiatives related to banking and FDI are in the pipeline. The inaugural session of the workshop was also attended by Ghanshyam Prasad, Chairperson of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA); Gurdeep Singh, CMD of NTPC; and Praveen Gupta, Member (E&C), CEA. Indigenisation of LWR tech future roadmap



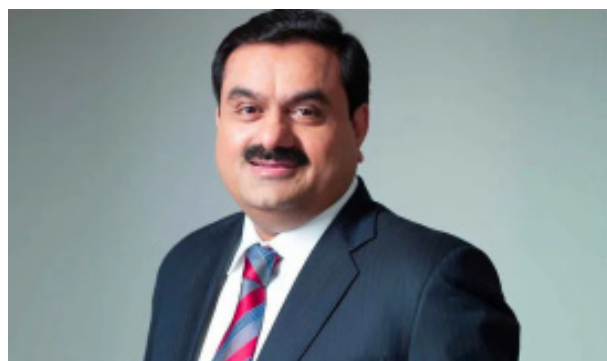
Indian industries but also for exporting this technology in the neighborhood," Jain said. Delivering the keynote address, CEA Chairperson Ghanshyam Prasad said nuclear power remains the only viable alternative to coal for baseload generation, given its ability to provide stable and clean energy. However, he flagged concerns over higher tariffs for new nuclear power plants compared to older ones. "...the tariffs of the old nuclear power plants are right now ranging from 272 to 387 paisa per unit. Which is a very good tariff price. This reminds me of the hydro segment which at the time when you build it, it looks to be higher. But over a period of time you find that it is one of the cheapest sources," he said. He said the challenge is going to come from the new plants which are coming up as the tariff of these plants range somewhere around 5.50 to 6.50 paisa per unit. "We will have to take steps to reduce this tariff by way of some measures," he added. Prasad also highlighted the need to shorten approval timelines for nuclear projects. At present, the entire process — including regulatory clearances and implementation — takes around 13 years. He stressed the need to reduce this to about 8–9 years.

SEC, Adanis seek more time, propose new schedule in US case

New York: The US Securities and Exchange Commission and Indian businessmen Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani have jointly requested a US court for more time to file key submissions in a civil securities case, proposing a revised schedule for motions and responses. In a filing before the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York, the parties said they had conferred in line with the court's April 7 directive and agreed on a new timeline, which has been submitted for approval by Judge Nicholas G Garaufis.

The SEC had sued Adani Group founder Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar in November 2024, alleging they had misled investors by failing to disclose an alleged bribery scheme linked to Indian state officials, framing the case under US securities laws. Denying all allegations, the two, through their lawyers, filed a pre-motion letter on April 7 ahead of a planned April 30 motion, seeking dismissal of the fraud lawsuit, arguing the case represents an impermissible extraterritorial application of US law and fails for lack of personal jurisdiction.

Under the proposed schedule, the defendants' (Adanis) motion to dismiss would be due by June 8, the SEC's amended complaint or opposition by August 7, and the defendants' reply by September 21. The parties also suggested May 20, May 22 or May 29 as potential dates for a pre-motion conference, subject to the court's availability. The request follows a pre-motion letter filed by the defendants on April 7, after which the court directed both sides to confer on the next steps. In their anticipated motion to dismiss, the Adanis are expected to argue that the court lacks juris-



diction because the claims concern conduct outside the United States, that the alleged statements are too general to be relied upon by investors, and that they were not involved in a USD 750 million bond offering in 2021.

The SEC filed the lawsuit in November 2024, alleging violations of US securities laws. An earlier briefing schedule approved in January had set April 30 as the deadline for the motion to dismiss, June 29 for the SEC's response and August 13 for the defendants' reply. The Adanis have denied the allegations and said they will seek dismissal of the case. Gautam Adani is represented by Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, while Sagar Adani is represented by Nixon Peabody LLP and Hecker Fink LLP. The SEC is represented by its New York regional office.

Lenskart apologises after online backlash, releases new style guide welcoming religious symbols

New Delhi: Following massive online backlash over a purported internal grooming document, eyewear retailer Lenskart has issued a public apology and released a standardised 'In-Store Style Guide' that allows employees to wear religious and cultural symbols at work. In a statement on X, the company said it is making its guidelines public and transparent to address the concerns of its customers and community. The new policy "explicitly and unambiguously" welcomes all symbols of faith carried by team members, including the bindi, tilak, sindoor, kalawa, mangalsutra, kada, hijab, and turban. "If any version of our workplace communication caused hurt or made any of our team members feel that their faith was unwelcome here, we are deeply sorry. That is not who Lenskart is, and it is not who we will ever be," the company said.

This comes following a controversy that erupted earlier this week when a document, alleged to be Lenskart's employee grooming policy, went viral on social media. Netizens pointed out that the policy restricted employees from wearing certain religious markers, particularly the bindi and tilak, sparking outrage and calls for a boycott.

Addressing the uproar a few days ago, Lenskart



founder Peyush Bansal had stepped in to clarify that the viral document was an "outdated version" and did not reflect the company's current stance. "I want to speak directly that this document does not reflect our present guidelines. Our policy has no restrictions on any form of religious expression, including bindi and tilak," Bansal had stated, apologising for the confusion and concern the situation had caused.

The animal that eats its own brain: Strange life of the sea squirt



Losing your brain sounds like the end of everything. But for one small marine creature, it's just part of growing up. Sea squirt, a tiny sac-like sea creature, keeps replacing its brain throughout its life cycle. This marine animal belongs to the genus Ciona and looks like a soft, blob-like tunicate attached to rocks. But its life story is one of the strangest transformations in the animal kingdom. Sea squirts don't start life as stationary blobs. One of the most popular brain-replacing species in this genre is Ciona intestinalis, also known as sea vase—a solitary, translucent, filter-feeding sea squirt found in temperate coastal waters. As larvae, they resemble tiny tadpoles (~1-2 mm long), complete with a simple cerebral vesicle (a.k.a. their brain), a dorsal nerve cord, a notochord, and a muscular tail for free-swimming exploration in ocean currents.

This larval stage lasts 1-3 days, powered by phototaxis and rheotaxis to find suitable settlement sites. Studies using electron microscopy show that the larval brain contains ~200 neurons involved in sensory processing. Then, something bizarre happens: upon settling headfirst via adhesive papillae, metamorphosis triggers autophagy—self-digestion of ~80% of the central nervous system, including

most of the brain, tail, and notochord tissues within hours.

Why would an animal do that?

As an adult, it becomes a stationary filter feeder, staying fixed in one place and feeding by pulling in water. It uses tiny openings in its body called gill slits to filter out plankton and nutrients. In fact, it can pump over 100 times its own body volume in water every day.

Since it no longer moves or searches for food, it no longer needs a complex brain. And brains are expensive to maintain—they can use up a significant amount of energy. So instead, the sea squirt redirects that energy toward survival and reproduction, producing hundreds of eggs in a single cycle. At a microscopic level, scientists have found that genes linked to brain development become much less active once the animal settles down. At the same time, the body increases production of enzymes that help break down and absorb the unused brain tissue. Even after all this, the sea squirt isn't completely without a nervous system. It retains a very simple set of nerve cells—just enough to handle basic reflexes, like closing up if something touches it.

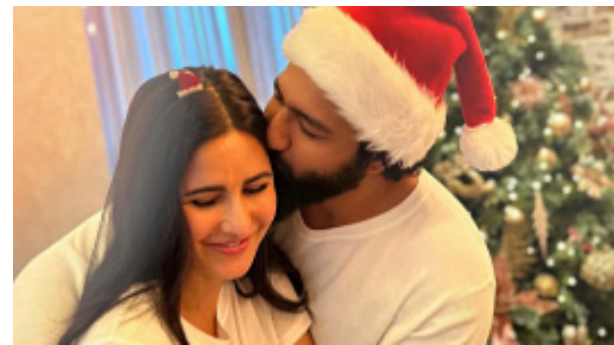
So is the brain actually replaced?

It's not exactly "replacing" the brain, but more like a one-time radical rewiring. The sea squirt builds a simple brain during its free-swimming larval stage, then absorbs it completely once it settles down, essentially shedding traits it briefly shared with more complex chordates, a group it diverged from around 550 million years ago. This unusual life cycle challenges the idea that brains are always preserved across related species. In a way, the sea squirt offers a striking lesson in efficiency: intelligence is not always necessary, it's situational. Scientists have even found that if the animal is prevented from settling, this brain resorption is delayed, proving that it's an adaptive response rather than a fixed timeline. In nature, survival isn't about holding on to complexity; it's about keeping only what you truly need.

The Vicky Kaushal guide to ending a 'kalesh': 'Don't cater to logic'

Arguments, conflicts, or what many, especially in northern India, casually call kalesh, are an unavoidable part of daily life—be it with partners, family members, or even colleagues. But how you respond in those moments can either resolve the issue or make it worse. Uri actor Vicky Kaushal once shared a relatable take on handling such situations. "Always the way to navigate through a kalesh is to cater to the person who is most emotionally hurt. Don't cater to logic; cater to emotions. Kalesh happens when one person is logical, and the other is emotional," he said in an interview with ETimes while promoting his film The Great Indian Family (2023).

But how accurate is this advice from a mental health perspective? We reached out to Dr Anitha Chandra, Consultant – Psychiatry, to break it down. Why emotions take over during conflicts? According to Dr Chandra, Vicky's statement reflects a common psychological dynamic seen in arguments. "In emotionally charged situations, the brain's limbic system—the emotional centre—tends to dominate over the rational part. This is why logic alone often fails to resolve conflicts when someone is already hurt or overwhelmed," she explains. When one person is seeking emotional validation, and the other responds with facts or reasoning, it can feel dismissive—fueling the conflict further. Vicky Kaushal, Vicky Kaushal and Katrina Kaif got married on December 9, 2021 (Image: Instagram/Vicky Kaushal). Addressing emotions first can calm the situation. Dr Chandra agrees that acknowledging emotions is often the first step to de-escalation. "When you validate someone's feelings, it helps them feel heard and understood. This, in



turn, reduces emotional intensity and makes them more open to listening," she says. Simple responses like "I understand why you're upset" or "That must have been difficult for you" can go a long way in diffusing tension.

While emotional validation is important, Dr Chandra cautions against completely ignoring logic. "If you only address emotions and not the underlying issue, the conflict may resurface. Sustainable resolution requires a balance of empathy and rational discussion," she adds. In other words, emotions may open the door to resolution—but logic helps close it. However, in professional or high-pressure settings, combining emotional intelligence with clear communication is key. Nevertheless, Vicky Kaushal's advice highlights an important truth: people need emotional validation before they can engage in logical conversation. As Dr Chandra explains, the most effective way to handle a "kalesh" is not to choose between emotion and logic—but to use both, in the right order.

Stop the cold shock: Why lukewarm water is better for managing fever



A proper sponge bath is simple, but technique matters, says Dr Thakral. "Use a soft cloth and lukewarm tap water," advises Dr Thakral. "Gently sponge areas like the forehead, neck, armpits, and back, where heat can escape more easily." She cautions against overdoing it. "Do not use very cold water or soak the entire body. Keep the room comfortably warm and stop if the person starts to shiver." The goal, she emphasises, is comfort, not rapid cooling. "Along with this, ensure proper hydration and follow medications like paracetamol as advised by your doctor."

ICICI Bank Q4 profit rises 9 per cent to Rs 14,755 crore

Mumbai: ICICI Bank on Saturday posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 14,755 crore for the fourth quarter of FY26, a 9 per cent year-on-year (YoY) rise. The second-largest private lender had reported a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 13,502.22 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The lender's core net interest income (NII) rose 8 per cent YoY to Rs 22,979 crore during the quarter, compared to Rs 21,193 crore in the same period last year, the bank said in an exchange filing. Total income for the quarter stood at Rs 84,613.66 crore, up from Rs 79,747.77 crore in Q4 FY25. The bank's interest earned during the quarter came in at Rs 49,593.75 crore, compared with Rs 48,363.84 crore in the previous quarter. Other income — which includes premium income from the insurance business and other operating revenues — rose to Rs 35,019.91 crore from Rs 31,360.85 crore a year ago. Operating profit (before provisions and contingencies) increased to Rs 21,004.88 crore in Q4 FY26. Total expenditure stood at Rs 63,608.78 crore, while employee costs for the quarter came in at Rs 6,256.82 crore. Provisions (other than tax) and contingencies declined sharply to Rs 260.67 crore in Q4 FY26, compared with Rs 2,646.52 crore in the previous quarter. On the business front, total assets rose to Rs 29.14 lakh crore, compared to Rs 26.42 lakh crore a year ago. Deposits increased to Rs 18.30 lakh crore, from Rs 16.41 lakh crore in the year-ago period. Gross advances rose to Rs 16.44 lakh crore, compared to Rs 14.20 lakh crore a year earlier. Apart from earnings, the lender has announced a dividend of Rs 12 per equity share for its shareholders which is subject to necessary approvals. Shares of ICICI Bank on Friday settled at Rs 1,352.80, up 0.54 per cent on the NSE.

When someone has a fever, the instinct is often to cool the body down as quickly as possible—sometimes with cold water. But experts say this approach can backfire. According to Dr Meenal Thakral, Consultant-Geriatric Medicine, Artemis Hospitals, using room-temperature or lukewarm water is not only safer but also more effective.

Why not cold water?

"Water that is room temperature or lukewarm is better because it cools the body slowly without making it feel stressed," explains Dr Thakral. During a fever, the body's internal thermostat is already set higher. "Cold water shocks the skin, causing blood vessels to narrow and triggering shivering, which actually generates more heat," she says. In contrast, lukewarm water works with the body. "It allows heat to escape gradually through the skin, helping bring the temperature down naturally," she adds. It's also far more comfortable, especially for children, making the process calmer and more effective.

Can cold water make fever worse?

"When very cold water is applied, the body tries to conserve heat," says Dr Thakral. "This leads to shivering and vasoconstriction, which prevents heat loss." The result? The cooling effect is short-lived. "The fever may return quickly, and the person may feel more uncomfortable and stressed," she notes.

Why children and the elderly need extra care "Children and older adults have less stable systems for controlling body temperature," explains Dr Thakral. "Children tend to shiver quickly, which can push their temperature up further, while older adults may have poor circulation and slower responses." She adds that these groups are more vulnerable to discomfort and complications. "Cold sponge baths can make them feel weak, chilled, or even unwell," she says. Because of this sensitivity, gentle and controlled cooling is essential. The safest way to give a sponge bath

India women's hockey team fights back to draw series 2-2 with Argentina



Buenos Aires: The Indian women's hockey team showed immense grit to finish their four-match tour of Argentina with a 2-2 draw. After a difficult start to the series, the Indian side fought back brilliantly, winning their final two matches to finish the tour on a high. The tour began with a competitive opening match on April 13, where Navneet Kaur (22) and Annu (29) found the net for India. While Argentina eventually won 4-2, with Maria Emilia Larsen (11), Victoria Granato (18), and Julieta Jankunas (42, 55) among the scorers, India showed strong attacking intent throughout.

In the second match, played on April 14, Ishika (22) gave India an early lead before the hosts secured a narrow 2-1 win behind a brace from Agustina Gorzelany (34, 48). India found their rhythm in the third match on April 16, securing a 2-1 victory to stay alive in the series. Navneet Kaur (26) and Neha (37) both scored from penalty corners to give India a comfortable 2-0 lead. Despite a late goal from Argentina's Agustina Gorzelany (52), the Indian side stayed composed to secure the win and set up the final day drama. On April 17, the series finale was a hard-fought encounter that ended 0-0 in regulation time. Both teams had chances to score, but the Indian defenders stood tall to keep a clean sheet throughout the match. In the shootout, India held their nerve to win 3-2 and ensure the series ended level. The team will now return home to continue their training camp and build on these positive results. This tour has been a vital part of their preparation, providing the squad with important experience against a top-tier opponent on away soil. Reflecting on the tour, stand-in captain Navneet Kaur said, "I am incredibly proud of how the team responded after the first two matches. It isn't easy to trail 0-2 against a world-class team like Argentina, but we showed the heart and character needed to fight back. These back-to-back wins prove that we are moving in the right direction and can handle pressure on the big stage."

Chief selector Ajit Agarkar to get an extension till June 2027



Ajit Agarkar, the chairman of the senior selection committee, under whose tenure India won three ICC trophies, will get an extension when his contract expires in June this year. The Indian Express understands that Agarkar's contract will be extended by a year till June 2027. The Indian men's team ended their ICC trophy drought by winning back-to-back T20 World Cup titles — in 2024 and 2026 — and also the Champions Trophy last year with Agarkar at the helm of the senior selection committee. India also reached the 2023 ODI World Cup final at home. With the 50-over World Cup to be played next year in October and November, the BCCI is keen to retain Agarkar, who is known to take tough calls, for a longer period of time.

"Under Agarkar's tenure, the team had a seamless transition and was fearless in taking bold decisions. The board felt he should continue. The BCCI officer bearers will be speaking to him on the sidelines of IPL games to update him," a BCCI official said. The board wanted continuity and experience, especially with two selectors, RP Singh and Pragyan Ojha, yet to complete a year in the job. India went through a tricky phase that involved the departure of three stalwarts, Kohli, Sharma and Ravichandran Ashwin from the Test team. New captains too were picked — Shubman Gill in Tests and Suryakumar Yadav in T20Is. Though Gill was successful in his first tour as Test captain when India drew the series in England, the team lost to South Africa at home last year. The form of the Test team and Indian batsmen's ability to play spin will be a concern for the se-

lection committee, given that India were blanked 3-0 by New Zealand at home when Rohit was skipper. However, in the shorter formats, India has been successful, while Agarkar has not shied away from calling the shots. Under his leadership, the selection committee took the bold call of recalling Ishan Kishan for the T20 World Cup at home earlier this year and dropping Gill from the squad.

"Two keepers at the top (Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan), that's the way we want to try and the team management will eventually decide what kind of combinations they want to play. Rinku (Singh) has come in, who gives us a little bit more depth in the lower middle order. It's about combinations, so someone has to miss out, and unfortunately, it is Gill at this point," Agarkar had said. The same committee had picked Gill out of nowhere for the Asia Cup six months earlier. That move had never quite worked — it had pushed Sanju Samson down the order, disrupted the fearlessness the team had built, introduced an anchor into a team built specifically to eliminate anchors. The decision had already invited scrutiny. Months earlier, Agarkar had floated an idea that surprised even his own colleagues: look beyond Hardik Pandya for the T20 captaincy. Pandya was captain-in-waiting. The succession had seemed settled. The meeting was a divided house. Agarkar voted for Suryakumar. "One of the main issues discussed was that you want a captain who's likely to play all the games," he said. "We think he is a deserving candidate." The room came around. Suryakumar got the captaincy. The selection committee has also been open to recalling players who fell down the pecking order once they performed. Past grievances didn't affect the decision-making. Ishan had returned to India from South Africa in late 2023, seeking a mental break — a decision that hadn't gone down well with the panel. He had been slow to return to domestic cricket. His reluctance to join the Test tour of England, citing a minor injury, hadn't helped. But last season he went back, scored heavily, with the selectors keeping close watch. When Gill's replacement was being discussed, Ishan wasn't the first name on the list — Jitesh Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal were ahead of him in the queue.

Punjab Kings captain Shreyas Iyer: 'If someone tells me I can't do something, trigger ho jaata hai mind mein'



Shreyas Iyer of Punjab Kings and Prabhsimran Singh of Punjab Kings during Match 24 of the TATA Indian Premier League 2026 between Mumbai Indians and Punjab Kings at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, India, on April 16, 2026. Shreyas Iyer of Punjab Kings and Prabhsimran Singh of Punjab Kings during Match 24 of the TATA Indian Premier League 2026 between Mumbai Indians and Punjab Kings at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, India. Shreyas Iyer's flying catch has gotten presiding deity of fielding, Jonty Rhodes to wax eloquent on the fielding craft, and feel like a grandfather. But the Punjab Kings skipper, who has been sublime for his franchise since last season, and highly popular despite RCB claiming the title, has continued riding the wave, with even his leadership getting rave reviews.

In a teaser of an interview with the host broadcaster JioHotstar's 'Believe' show hosted by Irfan Pathan, Shreyas has dropped some pearls on his mindset and witticisms. Dubbed Sarpanch at Punjab Kings, Iyer starts by saying, "Honestly speaking, main instinctive type hoon" even as Pathan calls him the man with Midas touch. The Mumbaier has offered stability and guts to a Punjab lineup, and brought the mentality that makes the northern franchise rise up to the challenge of the biggies — RCB, MI, KKR and CSK. More than anything Shreyas has brought the finishing ability to their batting. "I want to be not out and finish the game," he says. On his own mindset, Iyer says he abhors hearing something is 'impossible'. "It's impossible — I hate hearing that. Once you are in control of emotions, you can be very clear in mindset and be decisive," he says on Believe. "It's not over till last ball is done. For me winning is everything," says the ace No 4.

In one of the biggest insights into how he goes about cricket, Iyer says, "Mujhe bole ki yeh nahi sak saktaa (If someone tells me if I can't do something)... trigger ho jaata hai mind mein ki ekdum achha karke hi dikhaana hai..." It's become the epitome of his resilience and shaped his lead-

ership, says the former winning star for KKR, DC and now PBKS. On taking on the big opponents, Iyer says, "Message was crystal clear — jaake waha bajaana hai ekdum." (Go chomp). He also recalls anecdotes of there being 10 balls left, "I thought ek toh ball milega." Another time he recalls when all bowlers were getting slammed and his ace came and asked to bowl. "Sab bowlers maar kha rahe... koi saamne se aake bolta hai mujhe bowling do." On what draws the guffaws from Pathan, Iyer tells the JioHotstar show host, "When you look good, you feel good, when you feel good, you play good... And when you play good,they pay good!" (Loud laugh).

Eshan Malinga a pure T20 bowler with all-round ability: Varun Aaron

New Delhi, Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) bowling coach Varun Aaron heaped praise on Eshan Malinga for his brilliant bowling performance against five-time Chennai Super Kings (CSK), calling him an underrated T20 bowler with all-round ability.

SRH held their nerve in a tight finish against CSK by 10 runs in Hyderabad, successfully defending 194 on the back of a collective bowling effort. Malinga led the bowling effort with 3-29 and was named Player of the Match for his key strikes. The Sri Lankan bounced skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad out, denting CSK chase. When Sarfaraz Khan and Matt Short attempted to rebuild with a 46-run stand, his ability to access the yorker length produced two more wickets, removing Short (34 off 30) and Sarfaraz (25 off 19).

"Eshan Malinga is a very underrated bowler. Since the start of the campaign, he has bowled very well. He bowled well last season too. Especially when the ball reverses, he becomes even more effective towards the death overs. He can bowl at around 145 km/h, has a sharp bouncer, and can nail the perfect yorker. He is a pure T20 bowler with all-round ability. I believe he can take the new ball as well, not just for us going forward, but even for Sri Lanka," Aaron said on JioStar.

Besides Malinga, Nitish Kumar Reddy bowled his full four-over quota in IPL for the first time, delivering figures of 2-31, while Sakib Hussain and Shivang Kumar chipped in with one wicket each.

Who is the player making Pep Guardiola's heart go "...pff" ahead of Man City-Arsenal decider?



Rayan Cherki had got Guardiola confessing that he was loosening some of his controlling strings ahead of the Chelsea game last week. (AP Photo) Rayan Cherki had got Guardiola confessing that he was loosening some of his controlling strings ahead of the Chelsea game last week. There are Arsenal's highly controlled, clockwork, almost Teutonic setpieces. And then there's the free-flowing, mind-of-his-own Man City playmaker, Rayan Cherki.

Ahead of the big Premier League showdown against Arsenal, Man City coach Pep Guardiola, was trying to contain and channel the effervescence of his young French midfielder, who tends to do his own thing but is highly effective for the team. Cherki had got Guardiola confessing that he was loosening some of his controlling strings ahead of the Chelsea game last week. "Rayan is a special, special player. He is a little bit of a free soul. I am a manager who likes control, we know this. So sometimes, on the touchline, it is so, so tough to watch. My heart... pff," he was quoted as saying by Goal.com. City have Haaland and they have a bunch of others who he has tried to fit into his patterns. But Cherki has left Guardiola reconsidering his own beliefs.

"He gets the ball, he starts the tricks, and my instinct is to shout, 'Rayan, please, play simple!' But if I tell him against Chelsea, 'Stop this, I destroy the player. I take away his incredible quality. What he did against Arsenal, against Liverpool... exceptional. Unbelievable," he was quoted as saying by Goal.com. Cherki is ambidextrous, and is known to use his left foot 56% while dribbling which turns into viral reels and right 44% that's used for corner kicks. He creates electricity in the last 30 minutes with his slalom dribbles

that run riot using his triple crochet hooks and chops as per goal.com. His rabona passes and feints are known to boggle defenders. His other eccentricities include wearing opposition players' shirts while on the bench, according to goal.com. "Only Bruno Fernandes has more assists than him in the Premier League season, while Cherki has the highest number of goal creations in open play, with only one of his assists coming from a set-piece," goal.com wrote.

Product of the Lyon academy, he became the club's youngest ever goalscorer at 16. But his coaches are often left with the 'pff' feeling because of his blazing cocksure confidence. "So, I want to see it again. If he feels it, he does it. Go out, express yourself, have fun, and show the world how good you are," Guardiola said. Arsenal are however a more robotic, mechanical unit than Chelsea, albeit winning despite their dull play. Cherki's Chelsea performance led to the impossible — Guardiola telling him he didn't need to put in the defensive shift. "His mum and dad gave us a talent to play close to Haaland but sometimes he plays close to [Gianluigi] Donnarumma and that is useless," Guardiola had said recently.

"First half, he played close to me. Play close to [Erling] Haaland and the wingers and the attacking midfielders and use the talent that mum and dad gave to you. When he starts to do that, he will become an extraordinary player with his mindset and mentality. We'll bring the ball to you. It's not necessary to come down," he said of the signing ahead of Florian Wirtz. Former City defender Gael Clichy, who coached the player with France's under-21 side as an assistant coach to Thierry Henry, had told goal.com back in September, "If we talk about the quality of the player, I haven't seen anyone that good. That's a big quote, but I do feel that if he can bring his off-the-ball game to a certain level, I think we could be talking about a player that can reach Kevin De Bruyne's numbers, because in tight spaces, in key areas of the pitch, he can create danger." Guardiola even admitted after a CL game that he should've started with Cherki. "Now you can criticise me incredibly, for the selection, now I deserve it. It's sometimes for the balance. We learned in the beginning that when we played Erling with Jeremy (Doku) or Cherki that we are incredibly unbalanced, we do not have the stability that teams in the Premier League have to have," he explained the conundrum.

Injured Ayush Mhatre likely to be out of IPL 2026 for three weeks



Ayush Mhatre is likely to be out of action for three weeks after the batsman tore his left hamstring in Chennai Super Kings' defeat to Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday. The 18-year-old, who has been in sparkling form, is set to undergo scans on Monday when he reaches Mumbai, where the Super Kings play their next fixture on Thursday. Mhatre, who came in as Impact Player during the chase of 195, was on 30 off 12 deliveries when he injured his hamstring while running a double. He appeared in pain and was immediately attended to by team's physiotherapist Tommy Simsek. The Indian Express understands that Mhatre's injury isn't as bad as one feared with the batsman not experiencing any pain as of now. However, the real extent of the injury would be known only on Monday when he goes for a test. That he has been able to walk without any pain suggests, there is a chance of Mhatre coming back at a later

stage of the tournament.

Though Mhatre went on to continue batting after being attended by the physio, his inning didn't last long as he was dismissed soon after. CSK's batting coach Mike Hussey had revealed Mhatre had torn his hamstring. "Obviously a hamstring tear. I don't know how bad it is. I'm sure we'll scan him probably tomorrow or the next day. It looks pretty bad, unfortunately. And he's going to be a big, big loss because he's been in really nice touch for us," Hussey said. Mhatre's absence would be a huge blow for CSK. Batting at No 3, the Mumbai batsman has been giving his team solid starts at the top of the order and with Ruturaj Gaikwad struggling, there were deliberations to make him open alongside Sanju Samson.

Given what Mhatre offers to the team, that he continued to bat despite appearing in visible pain came under scrutiny. R Ashwin, on his YouTube channel, questioned the intention. "I hope he is back. But by the look of it, I fear he will be out for a while. While coming into bat, he came with a strap on his knee. For two-three matches now, he has been playing as the impact sub. His injury has been a concern. It couldn't have been a cramp because he did not field at all. If he had cramps when not fielding, we have to look at his hydration. Okay, let's assume it was an injury. The physios have gone out and checked him. He was limping, but you are asking him to play another ball and making him run between wickets. Should he have not retired out when he was limping? I don't understand how they can handle him so carelessly. It was shocking."

Ruturaj Gaikwad's mind appears to be a bit cluttered: R Ashwin



GNS News Agency, April 23

Chennai Super Kings' captain Ruturaj Gaikwad leaves the ground after losing his wicket during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Punjab Kings in Chennai, India, Friday, April 3, 2026. (AP Photo/Aijaz Rahi) Chennai Super Kings' captain Ruturaj Gaikwad leaves the ground after losing his wicket during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Punjab Kings in Chennai, India, Chennai Super Kings endured another tough defeat in the Indian Premier League (IPL) at the hands of Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday which was their fourth loss in six IPL games so far. Multiple things are not clicking for the franchise, but former India star Ravichandran Ashwin has pointed out how the SRH game demonstrated how captain Ruturaj Gaikwad is under "immense pressure" and his mind appears to be "a bit cluttered".

The 10-run defeat to Sunrisers saw Gaikwad get dismissed for 19 off 13 balls after Ayush Mhatre had given the side a great start after coming in at one drop after Sanju Samson's wicket. "It was the best chance for him to score runs. He didn't need to take risks or score at a fast pace because of the way Ayush Mhatre started. They were running away with the powerplay. It was right there for Ruturaj to take some time, score some runs, and come back into form. After Ayush Mhatre's wicket, Ruturaj got a very good ball, it's not easy to beat him on the pull. I just feel he is under immense pressure, and his mind appears to be a bit cluttered," Ashwin said on JioHotstar. Gaikwad has managed only 82 runs in his first six matches of the 2026 season. This poor form has seen him average just 13.67 with a strike rate of 112.33. The game saw CSK being asked to

Syndreela Das wins Under-19 title, completes double at national table tennis meet

Hyderabad: Syndreela Das capped a remarkable run by defeating Divyanshi Bhowmick 4-1 in the Under-19 singles final, bringing the curtain down today on the girls' team events, the first leg, of the 87th UTT Inter-State Junior and Youth National Table Tennis Championships at the Multipurpose Hall, Parade Ground.

With this victory, Syndreela completed a rare double, having already secured the Under-17 singles crown at the same championships. The promising paddler from West Bengal continues her impressive rise, adding to her earlier silver at the Senior National Championships in Indore. The second leg of the tournament will commence the day after, with the boys' events set to begin following a transition day tomorrow. Divyanshi, meanwhile, appeared fatigued after a gruelling seven matches, including two doubles on the final day. The physical toll was evident. Although she claimed the opening game, Syndreela quickly seized control, winning four consecutive games to close out the match in dominant fashion. Divyanshi put herself in control early against Delhi's Diya Bramhachary, racing through the first two games with ease in the first semifinal. However, Diya fought back strongly to level the match by taking the next two, pushing the contest into a decider. Holding her nerve in the closing stages, Divyanshi regained momentum and closed out the final two games to book her place in the final.

Mohanlal finally meets Jayakrishnan of Thoovanathumbikal, the man for whom Padmarajan built a memorial



Who is Karikkath Unni Menon?

Recently, YouTube channel Pappappa released a special segment in which Karikkath Unni Menon talked about his life and also sat down for his first in-person conversation with Mohanlal, marking the union of the real and reel Jayakrishnan. "Padmarajan was my close friend. He created the character Jayakrishnan after closely observing my characteristics and even the affairs I had," Unni recalled during the segment, adding that much like the character, he too maintained different personalities in front of different crowds in life. Interestingly, the 86-year-old is still a man of letters, as he was in his youth, and is as sharp as ever. An alumnus of Sree Kerala Varma College in Thrissur, he initially joined the BSc Chemistry course in 1957 after noticing that a film director had a BSc Honours. However, he eventually realised he had little interest in Chemistry and decided to pursue Literature instead. Back then, he frequently wrote stories for weeklies as well. It was during one of those days that he met Padmarajan, who was working at All India Radio at the time, and they immediately hit it off. "During one of their nights of madness, Unni Menon and my father, along with their friends, went to a hilltop. Seeing that earthly beauty basked in moonlight, Unni uncle felt like jumping from the hill. There's no reason why he felt like dying at that time; that's just how eccentric he was. He even made a leap, but Dad pulled him back," Anantha Padmanabhan recalled. From his words, it's clear why Padmarajan decided to base Jayakrishnan on Unni Menon. Must Read | Before KH x RK Reunion, landmark Malayalam film Twenty:20 tried to bring Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan together; producer reveals why it didn't happen

As he sat down for the chat with Mohanlal, the real Jayakrishnan revealed that he watched the movie for the first time while in Dubai. "I was shocked upon seeing the film. Although Padmarajan made several alterations, many of the incidents depicted in Thoovanathumbikal had actually happened in my life," he told the Malayalam superstar. Opening up about his life philosophy, Unni shared that he had never hesitated to spend lavishly. "Celebration," he said, "that's what I live by. It's all about celebrating the moment we are living in." Revealing that he wanted to live as a chronic bachelor forever, Unni said it was his meeting with his now-wife, Usha, that changed his mind. He also shared that the character of Radha, whom Jayakrishnan eventually ends up with, is based on Usha. As the conversation progressed, Mohanlal recalled learning from somewhere that Unni told Padmarajan during their final interaction, before the ace filmmaker passed away in 1991, "Usually, people make memorials for others after they die. But you made a memorial for me while I am still alive." He admitted that it actually happened. Unni Menon on losing both his sons, and turning to Osho. Although a man who wished to celebrate every moment in life to the fullest, tragedy struck Karikkath Unni Menon's life as he and his wife lost both their sons in a gap of two months, leaving them emotionally shattered. In the aftermath, while struggling to come to terms with their children's deaths, they found solace in the writings and teachings of Osho Rajneesh. Expressing his elation at finally meeting the person on whom one of his most iconic characters was based, Mohanlal likened the sensation he was feeling at that moment to the high only a thousand bottles of wine could give. The superstar also revealed that Padmarajan never told him that the character of Jayakrishnan was based on one of his friends, let alone reveal Unni Menon's identity.

Who is Thoovanathumbikal's Clara?

As the conversation moved to its final leg, Mohanlal posed the question that Malayalees have long been asking themselves: Who is Clara? One of the most iconic female characters in Malayalam cinema history, Clara is seen as both a symbol of the liberated woman and an embodiment of selfless love. She and rain have been depicted in the movie as inseparable, and, accompanied by Johnson's legendary background score, the trio still gives fans goosebumps. "Even I have often wondered: has it (meeting someone like Clara) actually happened in my life? The Clara storyline could very well have happened, especially since we all lived in a similar setup at the time," he noted, underscoring how Padmarajan brilliantly fused fiction and reality to create one of the most iconic romantic sagas in Malayalam.

'Love story with Aadesh Shrivastava was way better than my original love story': Vijayta Pandit

Vijayta Pandit says her love story with Aadesh Shrivastava was way better than Love Story with Kumar Gaurav. Vijayta Pandit says her love story with Aadesh Shrivastava was way better than Love Story with Kumar Gaurav. Eleven years after the death of her husband and popular music composer Aadesh Shrivastava, actor Vijayta Pandit maintains her real-life love story was "way better than" her debut film, Rahul Rawail's 1991 blockbuster romantic film Love Story. Vijayta started her career alongside Kumar Gaurav and also fell in love with him, only for the two to go separate ways due to parental pressure and neither making it big as an actor in Bollywood.

"Meri real life ki love story jo Aadesh Shrivastava ke saath hain, I think woh love story meri original love story se bahut achhi hain (I think my real-life love story with Aadesh Shrivastava was way better than my original love story)," said Vijayta recently. "There was a lot of love there. We both had a similar family background. We met, just fell in love, and got married. I was very happily married to him," she added.

Vijayta Pandit, sister of actor-singer Suklakhshna Pandit, and cousin of popular music composer duo Jatini-Lalini, found a common music background with Aadesh Shrivastava when they met in the US during her show. "We met in America. I was there for a show with my family. Then we just fell in love, he proposed to me, and spoke to my parents. That's how my real love story began. It was a great love story," said Vijayta when she appeared as a guest on the latest episode of popular singing reality show Indian Idol. She added that her love story with Aadesh turned into a "sad story" after he was diagnosed with cancer, and eventually succumbed to the disease in 2015. "But still, he is never far away from me. He is always with me," said Vijayta, adding his death "really hurts" her even today. "He was a great person, a very nice husband, and so talented, as you



all know. She was a very good singer and composer. It's very rare to find so many skills in one person. I was very lucky." Vijayta Pandit tied the knot with Aadesh Shrivastava in 1990. After the marriage, Vijayta quit acting and gave birth to their sons Avitesh and Avinesh. However, before she met Aadesh, she dated her first-ever co-star, Kumar Gaurav. A lot of producers wanted to sign the real-life couple after the success of Love Story, but that faced opposition from Gaurav's father and veteran actor Rajesh Kumar. "Rajendra ji got me removed from all the films. He is the main person who didn't let me work with Bunty (Kumar Gaurav).

Shaka Laka Boom Boom child actor Sainee Raj faced 300 rejections, now writes for Shah Rukh Khan



When we hear Shaka Laka Boom Boom, most of us instantly think of Sanju and Karuna, played by Kinshuk Vaidya and Hansika Motwani. But tucked within that magical world was another unforgettable character—Ritu, the fearless, tomboyish girl who stood up to bullies. She was played by Sainee Raj, whose journey since then has been anything but ordinary. Today, Sainee is no longer just remembered as a child actor. She is a poet, writer, lyricist, and the founder of a virtual book club. She has written lyrics for "Sab Sahi Ho Jayega," sung by Shah Rukh Khan during the COVID-19 lockdown, collaborated with Badshah, and even penned the short film Int. Cafe Night, directed by Adhiraj Bose and starring the legendary Naseeruddin Shah. But behind these achievements lies a story filled with rejection, resilience, and quiet determination.

'Started acting when I was 7'

Sainee's journey began early—almost too early. "I started acting when I was 7," she once shared in a podcast with Rueben Kaduskar. A naturally dramatic child, she would dance unabashedly at home, much to her parents' embarrassment. Recognising her energy, her mother decided to channel it into something constructive. In a twist that sounds straight out of a movie, Sainee landed her first acting gig by trusting a "stranger uncle" who asked where she lived—and she simply took him home. Despite her mother's hesitation, her stubbornness paid off. "I earned Rs 300 for my first gig," she recalled. "The keeda was always in me. I was the one who wanted to work." But the road ahead wasn't easy. Even after becoming a known face on television, Sainee faced relentless rejection. She auditioned nearly 300 times for advertisements, only to be turned away—not for lack of talent, but because she didn't fit conventional beauty standards. "They would say, 'We are looking for a fair kid,'" she recalled. "I was chubby and dark. At that time, I didn't care much, but later I realised how mean that was." Despite the harshness, she didn't let it break her. Her parents cre-

Ram Gopal Varma reveals the secret underworld drama behind Salman Khan's Chori Chori Chupke Chupke



Abbas-Mustan's 2001 romantic comedy Chori Chori Chupke Chupke, starring Salman Khan, Preity Zinta, and Rani Mukerji, is known for one of Bollywood's earliest portrayals of surrogacy, even though the treatment was rather misleading. However, it's known in the film lore for another completely different reason—a connection to the Mumbai underworld—even though financier Bharat Shah was initially unaware of it. "At a point of time, he (Bharat Shah) got a guy who told him he has Salman Khan's dates. So, he said, 'Okay, cool.' But since that guy didn't have a film background and wasn't even rich, Bharat bhai called Salman," recalled filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma, who co-produced Dil Se with Bharat Shah around the same time. "Salman told him, 'Yes, I've given him dates.' That reassured Bharat bhai enough for him to give the money and the film Chori Chori Chupke Chupke started," added Varma.

"After some time, he got to know the producer, Nazim Rizvi, has some connection with Chhota Shakeel. But he thought he's doing a legal business, and if the producer has some underworld connection, how does that concern him? He's himself not even a criminal, but just associated with a criminal," RGV told crime author Hussain S Zaidi in his podcast. A businessman from the film industry, whom Ram Gopal Varma didn't name, got an extortion call for Rs 5 crore from the underworld back then. So, he begged Bharat Shah to help him, hoping Rizvi would help out given his connection with Shakeel. When the call to Shakeel was made, he decided to settle the extortion for Rs 2 crore.

Bharat Shah's indirect underworld connection

That led to more businessmen from the film industry approaching Bharat Shah for help. "But he wasn't getting any money. He was just helping out. But the cops were tapping his phone," said Varma, recalling, "He was trembling with shock and fear. The cops suggested maybe Shakeel was acting for you. So, Bharat bhai said, 'Why would he act for me? I'm just a filmmaker.'" Both Bharat Shah and Nazim Rizvi were arrested by Mumbai Police in 2001. Bharat was convicted for not disclosing the producer's underworld connection and was sentenced to one year in jail. But since he already spent 14 months in prison during the trial, he was released immediately. Meanwhile, Nazim and

ated a protective bubble around her, ensuring those rejections didn't define her self-worth. "They made me feel like I was the most good-looking child in the world," she said. On working with Hansika Motwani. Even working alongside someone like Hansika—then considered the "quintessential" child star—never made her insecure. "I used to work with Hansika and at that point, Hansika was considered as the quintessential beautiful kid—cute fair skinned, thin, and she was THE pretty girl in the show also, who the boy liked. I didn't care. I was the tom boy who beat up the boys and I was really happy about it because my family made me feel it was very normal. I never had a single insecurity."

Like many child actors, she also faced the strange reality of being remembered selectively. While audiences still recall Sanju and Karuna, many have forgotten the others. "People remember just Hansika and Sanju," she admitted, reflecting on how child actors often outgrow the identities audiences fix onto them. Yet, she never compromised on her education or discipline. Her days were exhausting—school in the morning, shoots till late at night, followed by homework. And while her teachers were supportive, her school life had its own struggles, including social isolation from peers. "I had a lot of guy friends in school. We were called the bikers. I was like the seventh guy in the group. The girls hated me." Auditioning for Slumdog Millionaire. As she grew older, acting opportunities dwindled. She auditioned for Slumdog Millionaire and even read with director Danny Boyle, but didn't make the cut. "I was neither young enough nor old enough," she said—a reminder of how timing can shape careers as much as talent. Eventually, the uncertainty of waiting for roles took its toll. "It's scary to sit at home every day waiting for a phone call," she admitted. Unlike the glamorous success stories often highlighted, hers was one of many quieter journeys—those who don't "make it" in the conventional sense. But Sainee didn't stop. She evolved.

Instead of chasing validation, she turned inward—towards writing, poetry, and storytelling. During the pandemic, she rediscovered reading, which led her to start a virtual book club encouraging people to "read one book a month in an age of endless scrolling." In one of her Instagram posts, she wrote: "If you've been here long enough, you know that I started reading regularly (obsessively) during the pandemic and it's changed my life! We've built our tiny little community of readers and I'm so grateful that I get to share this gift with more like me."

After finishing her education, Sainee has carved a new path for herself as an active writer and poet, with several performances and spoken-word pieces showcased through videos of her shows on YouTube. She has also appeared in the Netflix series Stories by Rabindranath Tagore, further showcasing her versatility as a performer. Chances are, you may have already come across her poetry while scrolling through YouTube or Instagram—perhaps without realising that the voice behind those words once belonged to Ritu from Shaka Laka Boom Boom. Sainee Raj's story is not about overnight success or constant spotlight. It is about persistence—about showing up, even when the applause fades. From a child actor rejected for her appearance to a multifaceted creative voice shaping her own path, Sainee Raj proves that success doesn't always follow a straight line. Sometimes, it quietly rewrites itself.

his producing partner Abdul Rahim Allahbaksh Khan were convicted for forging links with the underworld and extorting film personalities. They were fined Rs 15 lakh each and sentenced to jail for six years.

Bharat Shah, a diamond merchant and one of the richest men in Mumbai at that time, was the chief financier for top production houses like Yash Chopra's Yash Raj Films, Yash Johar's Dharma Productions, Shah Rukh Khan's Dreamz Unlimited and later, Red Chillies Entertainment. He also served as a co-producer on films like Chopra's 1993 romantic thriller Darr, Aziz Mirza's 1997 rom-com Yes Boss, Mani Ratnam's 1998 romantic drama Dil Se..., Rajkumar Santoshi's 2000 action thriller Pukar, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2002 period epic Devdas, and Farah Khan's 2004 action romance Main Hoon Na among others. During the podcast, Ram Gopal Varma recalled another underworld episode with producer Mukesh Duggal, whom he encountered a couple of times at the office of his co-producer on his 1995 seminal rom-com Rangeela, Jhamu Sughand. "Duggal was close to Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Shakeel when they were together. He used to drink with them, and pull up Shakeel for not mixing his drink properly. After the split, Mukesh Duggal came into films. He did only legal business," revealed RGV. When Mukesh Duggal was involved in a property dispute that also concerned Chhota Shakeel, the latter put out a contract to kill the former, also thanks to their past association. "Duggal got information of the contract somewhere. So, he called the left-hand guy of Dawood, who then called Shakeel, convincing him to cancel the contract, saying, 'Hum sab ek hi hain.'" But three hours after the phone call, Duggal was found dead. Shakeel said he tried but couldn't contact the shooter in time," added the filmmaker.

Ilaiyaraaja to score music for epic film 'Valmiki Ramayana'

New Delhi: Celebrated music composer Ilaiyaraaja has joined Bhavna Talwar's upcoming film "Valmiki Ramayana".

Ilaiyaraaja, whose acclaimed work includes compositions such as "Rakkamma Kaiya Thattu" and "Sundari Kannal", will compose the music for the theatrical retelling of the ancient Hindu epic. The makers shared the new posters of the film on Sunday on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, confirming Ilaiyaraaja's attachment to the project. "Valmiki Ramayana" is set to release in theatres on October 2. It has dialogues by Chandraprakash Dwivedi and cinematography by Binod Pradhan. The screenplay has been written by Anand Neelakantan (based on the original Valmiki text), and Resul Pookutty is the sound designer.