

NIA team arrests 2 key conspirators amid attack by crowd

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi, April 6: The National Investigation Agency on Saturday arrested two key conspirators in a 2022 blast case amid an attack on the probe agency's team by a crowd in West Bengal's East Medinipur district, an official said here. NIA officials attacked villagers in Bengal, not other way round, says CM Mamata Banerjee. Very serious situation, has to be dealt with all seriousness: West Bengal Governor on attack on NIA team. An NIA officer was injured and a vehicle belonging to the probe agency was damaged in the attack, a spokesperson of the federal investigating agency said. "In a major breakthrough in West Bengal's Bhupatinagar blast case, in which three persons were killed in December 2022, the NIA arrested two key conspirators amid stiff resistance from an unruly crowd in the state's East Medinipur district," the spokesperson said. The duo - Balai Charan Maity and Manobrata Jana - were arrested after extensive searches at five locations, including the house of Jana, where locals tried to obstruct the NIA team. A member of the NIA team suffered minor injury and the agency's official vehicle was also damaged, the spokesperson added. Three persons were killed when an explosion ripped apart a kutchha house in Bhupatinagar on December 3, 2022. The investigation was later handed over to the NIA. Saturday's incident also brought back memories of January 5 when three officials of the Enforcement Directorate were attacked by a mob in North 24 Parganas district's Sandeshkhali during a search on the premises of ruling Trinamool Congress leader Shajahan Sheikh in connection with alleged irregularities in the public distribution system.

PM Modi tears into Congress manifesto at Saharanpur rally

Simmi Kaur Babbar Saharanpur, April 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a scathing attack on the Congress manifesto, likening it to the ideologies of the Muslim League and Left parties. PM Modi doesn't know history, Syama Prasad Mookerjee himself was part of government with Muslim League: Congress Addressing his second election rally in Saharanpur for the BJP candidate and the RLD candidate in Kairana, Modi remarked, "Once hailed as India's largest party with leadership spread across the nation, it appears the Congress has lost sight of national development. The recently unveiled Congress manifesto lacks vision, resembling the mindset of the Muslim League and the Left. The Congress seems to have faded into oblivion, unable to drive the nation forward." Contrastingly, Modi emphasized his relentless commitment to national progress. "My actions speak louder than words—I work tirelessly, round the clock, aiming to secure a better future for your children, despite attempts by corrupt elements to intimidate me. "Our mission is clear: to eradicate corruption from its roots. However, those vested interests are working to shield the corrupt. But let me assure you, Modi will not waver. The crackdown on corruption will persist—I guarantee it." Modi highlighted India's emergence as a global power, attributing it to the strength of 1.4 billion Indians. "BJP follows 'Rastraniti' (national policy), not 'Rajniti' (politics)," he added. Touching upon welfare measures, Modi emphasised, "Welfare of the poor is not merely a poll promise for the BJP; it is our mission. In just 10 years, the BJP has accomplished what the Congress couldn't achieve over several decades."



ing for progress by 2047. This is Modi's new mantra—your dream is Modi's pledge." Shifting focus to corruption, Modi asserted, "Today, I am dedicated to rooting out corruption for the sake of your children's future. Corruption poses a grave threat to our

and undermines the prospects of our youth. I am steadfastly fighting to secure a better future for your children, despite attempts by corrupt elements to intimidate me. "Our mission is clear: to eradicate corruption from its roots. However, those vested interests are working to shield the corrupt. But let me assure you, Modi will not waver. The crackdown on corruption will persist—I guarantee it." Modi highlighted India's emergence as a global power, attributing it to the strength of 1.4 billion Indians. "BJP follows 'Rastraniti' (national policy), not 'Rajniti' (politics)," he added. Touching upon welfare measures, Modi emphasised, "Welfare of the poor is not merely a poll promise for the BJP; it is our mission. In just 10 years, the BJP has accomplished what the Congress couldn't achieve over several decades."

17 Indians, lured into unsafe work in Laos, on way back home

New Delhi, April 6: Seventeen Indian workers, who were lured into unsafe and illegal work in Laos, are on their way back home, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday. He also complimented the Indian embassy in Laos for its successful efforts in the case. In a post on X, he said, "Modi ki Guarantee works for all at home and abroad. Seventeen Indian workers, lured into unsafe and illegal work in Laos, are on their way back home." "Well done, @IndianEmbLaos. Thank Lao authorities for their support for the safe repatriation," he added. Modi ki Guarantee works for all at home and abroad. 17 Indian workers, lured into unsafe and illegal work in Laos, are on their way back home. Well done, @IndianEmbLaos. The external affairs ministry on Thursday cautioned Indian nationals against falling prey to human traffickers promising lucrative job opportunities in Cambodia. In an advisory, the ministry called upon Indians looking at job opportunities in the southeast Asian country to thoroughly check the background of the prospective employer. "It has come to attention that Indian nationals, lured by fake promises of lucrative job opportunities in Cambodia, are falling into the trap of human traffickers," it said. The ministry said these Indian nationals are "coerced" to undertake online financial scams and other illegal activities. "Indian nationals intending to visit Cambodia for employment are cautioned to do so only through authorised agents."

Day after EC notice, AAP leader Atishi asks ED to reveal action against BJP in 'money laundering' cases

New Delhi, April 6: A day after getting a notice from the Election Commission, Delhi minister Atishi on Saturday asked the ED to reveal the action taken against BJP leaders in connection with alleged money laundering cases. Addressing a press conference here, the senior AAP leader lashed out at the Election Commission accusing the poll body of working at the behest of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The notice was issued to Atishi by the EC over her claims that the BJP had approached her to either join the party or be prepared to be arrested by the Enforcement Directorate within a month. "On the basis of mere doubt, the ED arrested AAP leaders Sanjay Singh, Manish Sisodia, and even the national convener of our party Arvind Kejriwal ji, even as no money trail was found against them. "What action has the ED taken against the BJP leaders where the investigation agency has been able to establish a money trail," she asked. The AAP had last month asked the ED to file a case against the BJP, alleging that the saffron party received crores of rupees from an accused in the alleged Delhi excise policy scam through electoral bonds. The party also challenged the ED to file a case against the BJP, alleging that the money trail in the case had reached the saffron party. During the press conference, Atishi accused the BJP of using the Election Commission like other central agencies to target the opposition.

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Very serious situation, has to be dealt with all seriousness

Kolkata, April 6: Describing the attack on NIA officers as a "very serious issue", West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Saturday said the matter should be treated with the "all seriousness that it deserves". NIA officials attacked villagers in Bengal, not other way round, says CM Mamata Banerjee Bengal 2022 blast case: NIA team arrests 2 key conspirators amid attack by crowd; officer injured He also said such an "attempt to bully the investigating agencies does not bring credit to anyone down the line" and the matter has to be dealt with an iron hand. "This is a very serious situation which has to be dealt with all the seriousness that it deserves."

BRS leader K Kavitha moves court opposing CBI plea to quiz her in Tihar jail

New Delhi, April 6: BRS leader K Kavitha, arrested in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case, moved a court here on Saturday opposing a CBI plea that sought her interrogation in Tihar jail in a corruption case related to the alleged scam. The court on Friday allowed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to quiz Kavitha in Tihar. The order was passed on the plea filed by the CBI seeking the court's permission to interrogate Kavitha in judicial custody. Advocate Nitesh Rana, appearing for Kavitha, told the court that CBI thwarted the due process of law by filing the plea "behind her back". "I have grave apprehension that CBI may not have divulged true facts in order to obtain a favourable order from the court," he told the court and urged it to keep the order in abeyance until Kavitha's side is heard. The court is likely to hear her plea later in on Saturday. Kavitha was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam on March 15. On Thursday, the Telangana MLC urged the court to give her interim bail on account of her 16-year-old son's exams for which he needed his mother's "moral and emotional support".

NIA officials attacked villagers in Bengal, not other way round: CM Mamata Banerjee

Navdeep Singh Sahni Balurghat (WB), April 6: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday blamed NIA officials of attacking villagers at Bhupatinagar in East Midnapore district and not the other way round. Bengal 2022 blast case: NIA team arrests 2 key conspirators amid attack by crowd; officer injured Very serious situation, has to be dealt with all seriousness: West Bengal Governor on attack on NIA team She claimed that the probe agency team had gone to the houses of villagers in the early hours over an incident of "bursting of crackers in 2022". "The attack was not carried out by women of Bhupatinagar, it was by the National Investigation Agency (NIA)," she said at an election rally in South Dinajpur district's Balurghat. "Will the women sit back if they are attacked?" she said, adding that they had only protested after NIA officials went to some of their houses over the December 2022 incident. A vehicle carrying NIA officials was on Saturday attacked by villagers in Bhupatinagar, where they had gone to investigate a 2022 bomb blast case in which three persons were killed, police said. The investigation was later handed over to the NIA. The probe team arrested two persons in connection with the case and when they were on the way back to Kolkata, their vehicle came under attack. Later, the NIA team lodged a complaint at Bhupatinagar police station, an official said. The Trinamool Congress chief accused the BJP government at the Centre of trying to use the central agencies to win the elections. "We want the Election Commission to work impartially, not turn into a BJP-run commission," she said. Questioning transfer of state's police officers by the EC, she asked why the officers of ED, CBI and IT have not been changed. "NIA, CBI are brothers of BJP; the ED and IT are funding boxes of BJP," Banerjee said. "If you (BJP) have the power, win the election by fighting in a democratic manner. Don't arrest my booth-level workers and election agents," she said at the rally. She condemned the arrests of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren by central agencies over cases related to excise policy and an alleged land scam, respectively.



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CPI releases manifesto for Lok Sabha election

Tejinder Kaur Babbar New Delhi, April 6: The Communist Party of India (CPI) released its manifesto for the Lok Sabha election on Saturday, promising to scrap the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, remove the 50 per cent cap on reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs, and enhance the daily wage under MGNREGA to Rs 700. The Left party called for the defeat of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to save secular democracy. It said the 10-year BJP rule has proven to be a disaster for the country. If elected to power, the CPI promised to scrap the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, remove the 50 per cent cap on reservations, conduct a caste census, introduce taxation measures such as wealth tax and inheritance tax, increase corporate tax, introduce reservation in the private sector, and raise the daily wage under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

Rs 700. "General elections for the 18th Lok Sabha are going to be very crucial and critical for our secular democratic republic, its future and to our constitutional ethos," the CPI manifesto stated. After releasing the manifesto, CPI general secretary D Raja



said, "The elections are very critical for the country and its future. (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi's rule has been disastrous for the country." "The Constitution is under attack. BJP being political army of RSS is trying to change the Constitution and ultimately replace it," he alleged. The Left party said if voted to power, it will introduce measures to address the growing inequality. The CPI also said it aims to bring central investigative agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) under the purview of Parliament, and added it will "intensify its struggle for the abolition of Governor's Office to strengthen federalism by removing Union's interference." "Elected governments in states should be empowered to take major policy decisions..." the manifesto stated. The CPI said it will continue to fight politically and legally to remove the "arbitrary" cap of 50 per cent on reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs, and implement women's reservation immediately by removing the clause relating to delimitation and census. The party promised increasing the available work days under the MGNREGA to 200 in a calendar year as well as introducing an Urban Employment Guarantee Act and social security for gig-workers.

PM Modi doesn't know history, Syama Prasad Mookerjee himself was part of government with Muslim League

New Delhi, April 6: The Congress on Saturday hit back at Narendra Modi over his remarks that the party's manifesto bore a Muslim League imprint, saying the prime minister "does not know his history" as it was none other than Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee himself who was part of a coalition government in Bengal with the League in the early 1940s. Addressing an election rally in Saharanpur, Modi said the Congress manifesto bears a Muslim League imprint while a part of it is dominated by the leftists. Reacting to the prime minister's remarks, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "The prime minister does not know his history as it was, in fact, none other than Mookerjee, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha then, who was himself part of the coalition government in Bengal with the Muslim League." The Hindu Mahasabha was also in coalition with the Muslim League in Sindh and North-West Frontier Province. "It is the BJP, not the Congress, that believes in and practices the politics of divisiveness," Ramesh said.

Congress accuses PM Modi of tearing apart country's dignity, democracy

Naresh Malhotra Jaipur, April 6: The Congress on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of tearing apart the country's dignity and democracy and claimed that various tactics were being used to force opposition leaders to join the BJP. Addressing an election event of the party here, Sonia Gandhi claimed that for the last 10 years, the country has been in the hands of a government that left no stone unturned to promote unemployment, inflation, economic crisis and inequality. "Today our country's democracy is in danger. Democratic institutions are being destroyed and a conspiracy is being hatched to change our Constitution," she alleged, adding, "This is a dictatorship and we all will give a reply to this." "Considering himself great, Modi ji is tearing apart the dignity of the country and its democracy. Fear is being installed in the entire system" the former Congress chief said. Asserting that the country "is not the property of a few people and it belongs to everyone", she said, "Our ancestors have shed blood for it." Sonia Gandhi also alleged that various tactics were being used to intimidate

Opposition leaders and force them to join the BJP. In his address at the event, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge described PM Modi as a "leader of liars" and sought to know what steps he has taken to fulfil the guarantees given by him earlier. He questioned the country's foreign policy under the BJP government and claimed that China encroaching on Indian land and changing the names of Indian villages but PM Modi was not talking about it. Kharge said, "He (Modi) claims that he has a 56-inch chest... whether it is 56 inch, 55 or 54, (we) will call a tailor, measure it and see what it is." "PM Modi, his people and the RSS say that if you give two-thirds majority, we will change the constitution of this country," the Congress president said. Referring to the Prime Minister's public address in Churu on Friday, Kharge said Modi talked about Article 370 abrogation at a place where he should have talked about the works he did for farmers. In its rule

for 55 years, the Congress worked for the development of the country. It built infrastructure and created institutions such as the IITs and IIMs. But Modi is taking credit just by flagging off trains on tracks laid by Congress governments," he said. Kharge also accused the PM of stealing the word

'guarantee' and said that Congress governments fulfilled guarantees in states where it was in rule. Addressing the event earlier, the party's national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra referred to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren's arrest by federal agencies to claim that the Opposition was under attack under the BJP rule at the Centre. "They are taking corrupt people into their party fold. Such people become clean by joining the party and no one raises the matter anymore," she said. Priyanka claimed that the BJP Government was favouring a few industrialists and handing over the properties of the nation to them. However, many industrialists create jobs and favouring a few industrialists was an injustice to others, she claimed. "You see how big industrialists live... the country's property is handed over, their loans are waived while farmers commit suicide," she said. Addressing the event, Priyanka said, "You

are not getting correct information. The time has come to recognise what the reality is. All you hear is 'Abki baar 400 Paar' (This time, 400-plus seats), and you see Modi in the sea and travelling abroad. That is what is visible. It is not clear what the condition of the country is." She alleged that the Modi Government would give 5 kg ration to the poor but would not provide employment. "You have to become aware. Injustice is happening in your life, whether you are poor or weak or a labourer, you are not heard," she told the gathering. "Unemployment and inflation at peak and paper leaks are happening in every state. There no one to listen to the poor and the farmers," the national general secretary said. Priyanka also said, "We have named our manifesto 'Nyay Patra'. This manifesto is not just a list of announcements that we will forget after the elections. This is the voice of the nation that wants justice." She also highlighted the guarantees given by the party in its election manifesto. Former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot, the Congress' state unit chief Govind Singh Dotasra and former deputy CM Sachin Pilot also addressed the programme.





## Days get hotter across Telangana, respite in sight

HYDERABAD. Telangana, on Friday, experienced one of the hottest days since the onset of summer, with most districts recording maximum temperatures above 420 Celsius. According to the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), the day's highest temperature of 43.50 Celsius was recorded at Ibrahimpet in Nalgonda district, followed by 43.30 Celsius in Kumurambheem Asifabad district. The maximum average temperature in the state during the day was 40.50 Celsius against the 38.60 Celsius normal.

Within the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits, the highest temperature recorded on Friday was 420 Celsius at Langar Houz. The maximum average temperature within GHMC limits during the day is Celsius against 37.80 Celsius. As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), heatwave conditions are likely to prevail at isolated pockets in Khammam, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Mahabubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet, and Jogulamba Gadwal districts on Saturday. Due to the intense heat, NREGA workers and employees from various departments who work outdoors have been advised to limit or avoid work between 12 pm and 5 pm. The IMD has also forecasted thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kmph at isolated places in Adilabad, Kumurambheem Asifabad, Mancherla, Nirmal and Nizamabad districts on April 7.

Thunderstorms are expected at isolated places till April 9. In view of the heatwave alert issued by the IMD, the Director of Public Health for Telangana has issued a public advisory with precautionary measures to avoid any adverse health effects due to the rising temperatures.

## 13 escape unhurt as fire breaks out in office building in Bengaluru

BENGALURU. Thirteen employees of a private company escaped unhurt after a major fire broke out in the basement of their office building in the city on Friday, thanks to a fire safety training provided to them a few days ago. It was work as usual for the employees of Business Solution Ltd at the Miracle Drinks complex on 80ft Road in RT Nagar. Aravind, an employee of the company, noticed sparks in one of the generators in the basement of the building around 1.50pm. Soon, the generator caught fire. Aravind attempted to douse the fire with the help of an extinguisher, but could not. He rushed to the first floor and alerted other employees there. By then, the fire spread to other parts of the building. All 13 employees took the staircase to the second floor and were looking for ways to get out of the building.

Meanwhile, a ladder was reached out to them from an adjacent building. By the time personnel from the Fire and Emergency Services Department arrived at the spot, five employees reached the adjacent building safely through the ladder. The rest were rescued by the firefighters.

"We received fire safety training sometime ago and it helped us in escaping unhurt. Five of us could reach the adjacent building with the help of the ladder. Later, the firefighters rescued the remaining employees. Two employees faced breathing problems and were rushed to a nearby hospital," Aravind told TNIE. The company has 50 employees and only 13 were in office on Friday. The rest worked from home. Twenty-five motorcycles and some boxes containing ayurvedic products were destroyed in the fire that engulfed the basement, according to sources. Deputy Director (Fire Prevention) Dr Yunus Ali said six fire tenders took three hours to douse the fire. The reason for the fire is yet to be ascertained. "There were generators and two-wheelers in the basement," he added.

## A journey into the master's world

HYDERABAD. Imagine standing in a room enveloped by vibrant hues of blue and yellow, meticulously stroked to compose the renowned "Starry Night," a masterpiece that transcends its tangible form to evoke profound emotional resonance within viewers. Painted in 1889 during Vincent Van Gogh's residency at the Saint-Paul-de-Mausole asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France, this iconic piece serves as a testament to Van Gogh's unique vision and inner turmoil. The captivating depiction of the nocturnal sky over the village of Saint-Rémy, characterised by Van Gogh's distinctive style of bold brushstrokes and vibrant colours, imbues the scene with a sense of movement and intensity. The swirling patterns in the sky, dominated by deep blues and swirling yellows, convey a dynamic energy that holds the viewer's gaze, transporting them into the world of the Real Van Gogh Immersive Experience. While Dutch Post-Impressionist master Vincent Van Gogh's 2,100 artworks are dispersed across the globe in museums and private collections, immersive experiences that transform exhibition spaces into Van Gogh dreamscapes have emerged worldwide, from New York to New Delhi, and now journey to Hyderabad for the first time. Hyderabad is currently hosting its inaugural Van Gogh-themed immersive exhibition, the Real Van Gogh Immersive Experience, at the HITEC Exhibition Centre until April 10, with the possibility of an extension.

# Team of anti-terror agency NIA attacked in Bengal's East Medinipur, officer injured

← A team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) was attacked in the Bhupatinagar area in East Medinipur district of West Bengal on Saturday during a raid in a 2022 bomb blast case.

An officer was injured in the incident.

Kolkata. A team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) was attacked in Bengal's East Medinipur district on Saturday during a raid in connection with a 2022 bomb blast case. An officer of the anti-terror agency has been injured in the attack that happened in the Bhupatinagar area. During the raid, a mob suddenly attacked the team and vandalised the agency's car, resulting in the vehicle's windscreen being broken. A video showed several men and women blocking a police vehicle and shouting at the police, asking them to go back. The women were seen sitting on the street in front of security personnel with bamboo sticks in their hands. A team of NIA officials this morning arrested



two people pertaining to the bomb blast case, including main accused Monobroto Jana. The agency team was attacked when they were on their way back to Kolkata.

An FIR has been registered with the local police regarding the incident under Sections 341 (wrongful restraint), 332 (voluntary hurt to deter public servant of duty), 352 (assault or criminal force without any grave provocation), 186 (obstructing public

servant in discharge of public functions), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 427 (mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees or upwards), and 34 (criminal action committed by several persons with common intention) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 3 of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property (PDP) Act. The case has been lodged against Monobroto Jana, his family members and other unidentified

persons. An NIA source told India Today that the local police station was informed beforehand about the raid, and yet proper security arrangements were not put in place.

According to police sources, however, the NIA team went to Bhupatinagar at 5.30 am - much earlier than they were supposed to - and then called for reinforcements. The situation is under control now and the police have launched an investigation into the attack. The Bhupatinagar blast took place in December 2022 at a Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader's home in the Naryabila village under Bhupatinagar Police Station, killing three people. The NIA began probing the matter in June 2023. The attack on the NIA team came just two months after an attack on a team of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Bengal's Sandeshkhali on January 5. Expelled TMC leader Sheikh Shahjahan was arrested pertaining to the attack nearly two months after he was on the run. Some of his associates, including his security guard as well as his brother have also been arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with the January 5 attack on the ED team.

## Bengaluru firm workers hire goons to beat 'strict' colleague, arrested

Bengaluru The Bengaluru Police on Friday arrested five people for assaulting a man who works as an auditor with a private firm. Two of the five people arrested were colleagues of the auditor, and they had hired the goons to beat him up, the police said. The police took action after a video of the assault went viral on social media. The video, which was shot on the dash camera of a car, shows the accused men beating Suresh, the auditor, with an iron rod on the ring road near Kalyan Nagar. According to the police, Suresh works as an auditor with a milk product company in Bengaluru. Umashankar and Vineesh, among those arrested by the police, also worked with



him in the company. When questioned, the accused admitted to the crime, claiming that Suresh put a lot of pressure on them. The accused said Suresh had joined the

company a year ago and was a strict auditing officer. He allegedly harassed and demanded that all employees clear the stock balance promptly.

Before Suresh's arrival, these accused individuals were lax and delayed in clearing the balance, the police said.

Suresh brought this to the attention of the company's seniors and took strict action against Umashankar and Vineesh. Miffed over Suresh's action, Umashankar contacted a former employee who introduced him to Sandeep, another accused. Following Umashankar's direction, Sandeep hired a few goons from KR Puram. He followed Suresh and assaulted him using an iron rod, the police said.

## Kerala: One killed, 3 injured in blast while making bomb in Panur

KANNUR. A bomb went off while being made, killing a 35-year-old and seriously injuring three others in Panur, Kannur, on Friday. The deceased has been identified as Kattintavida Sheril. His friends, Vineesh and Vinod, remain in a critical condition. Another injured, Ashwanth, has also been hospitalised. They are reported to be CPM sympathisers. The explosion took place around 1.30am on the terrace of an under-construction building near the house of Vineesh, a native of Kaivelikkal Muliathode. Vineesh is the son of CPM local leader Nanu. According to the FIR registered by the Panur police, the blast took place during the making of explosives. Vineesh's palm was shattered in the explosion, while Sheril suffered severe burns on his face, chest and abdomen. Police officers, who rushed to the scene after the local residents reported about the blast, took the injured to the Panur Taluk Hospital. Later, they were shifted to a private hospital in Kannur and then to Kozhikode. However, Sheril's

death was confirmed by 12.30 pm. "The four people were taken to hospital by the police. Sheril succumbed to injuries while Vineesh, Vinod and Ashwanth were admitted to a private hospital in Kozhikode. Bomb squad searched the blast spot but we are not aware of more details. A probe is on to find out if there were more people associated with the blast," said Panur police. Multiple cases are pending against the blast victims at the Panur police station. There is unconfirmed information that around 10 people were present in the spot during the blast. However, CPM maintained that party workers were not involved in the blast. "Vineesh and Sheril, who were injured in the blast, are accused in a case of attacking CPM workers. They were dismissed from the party after that incident itself. However, the Opposition parties are deliberately spreading propaganda that those who were injured in the blast are CPM workers. They are trying to mislead the public," said CPM state secretary M V Govindan. The incident has

come as a shot in the arm for the UDF which has been relentlessly trying to make political violence by the CPM the main talking point during the election.

K K Shailaja's candidature in Vadakara had so far helped the CPM evade a direct hit. But the Panur blast seems to have changed all that.

CPM comes under fire

BJP leader Prakash Javadekar said the bomb blasts are part of the CPM's attempt to jeopardise the elections in the state. "The CPM is indulging in terrorist activities as it is afraid that it cannot win the election," he said. Comprehensive investigation needed into Panur blast, says K Sudhakaran. The UDF is taking up the issue vigorously. It will take out a peace rally in Panur on Saturday, and Congress candidate from Vadakara Shafi Parambil will attend it.

UDF candidate in Kannur Lok Sabha constituency K Sudhakaran, said a comprehensive investigation is needed into the blast. "Since this incident is taking place just before the elections.

## Poor awareness & tedious paperwork: Why only 8,467 transpersons have voter IDs in TN

CHENNAI. Out of the 6.23 crore voters enrolled in the state, the voting population of transgender people is a meagre 8,467 as per the data of the state election commission. The figure has triggered concerns among the community members who points out that the number is much lower than their actual population. As per the 2011 census, the number of transgender people in Tamil Nadu was 22,364 and in the last 12 years, the number would have doubled, at least. According to an estimate by activists, there are not less than 60,000 transgender people in the state but due to their minuscule representation in the voters' list, they feel left out in the electoral process.

Apart from social stigma, community members attribute lack of a proper survey and awareness by the state government and election commission as the main reasons behind the poor enrollment.

Grace Banu, a transgender rights activist, blamed the state government for not conducting a proper survey. "TN claims to be one of the first states in the country to introduce a transgender welfare policy, but what is its use if you don't have exact data on the community's population?" asked Banu, who has filed a petition in the Madras HC seeking reservation for trans people in job and education.

(Photo | Ashwin Prasath, EPS)

The activist claimed until three years ago, to get a transgender ID card, the community members had to undergo medical and psychiatric tests, due to which many refrained from getting it. And without a transgender ID card, it is difficult to get a voters' ID with the gender rightly mentioned. "As per my voter ID card, I'm a female. Due to the tedious paperwork, I never tried to update it as trans woman," she added. M Radha, a trans woman who contested in the 2019 general election and is currently a member of the transgender welfare board, said that trans people can easily get the ID cards using Aadhaar card. K Padma, another trans woman, said before every poll, the election commission runs campaigns to raise awareness on voting but they have not focused on educating transgender people about the process. "If we are not counted as voters, how will the political parties work for our welfare?" asked Padma. Jaya from Sahodaran, an LGBTQA+ organisation, said, "Due to a lack of awareness and burden of paperwork, many trans individuals vote by categorising themselves as male or female."

← TNIE spoke to a few north Indian labourers to know if they would be going to their native places to vote in the election.

COIMBATORE. Though the Election Commission of India (ECI) has been actively involved in awareness campaigns to boost poll percentages in the upcoming Lok Sabha election, many north Indian migrant workers in Coimbatore and Tiruppur districts are not keen on going to their native places to cast their votes. The migrants are mostly employed in industries or work as street vendors. Travel expenses and loss of salary or daily wages discourage them from going to home states ahead of the voting day. Shockingly, some workers are not even aware of the forthcoming election dates in their respective states. The seven-phase Lok Sabha election starts on April 19 and ends on June 1. TNIE spoke to a few north Indian labourers to know if they would be going to their native places to vote in the election. Several labourers replied that they are not



interested to go home and cited various reasons, though a few expressed intent to be there for voting. A labourer, A Ashokumar (22), hailing from Patna in Bihar, who has been working at a hotel in Gandhipuram bus stand told TNIE. "If I go to my hometown to cast a vote, I should spend around Rs 5,000 for travel, food, etc. I have to stay at least 15 days there. Thus I will lose about Rs 8,000 from my salary. This poses a financial burden on my family," he said, adding, he is not even aware of the polling date in his state. Swaraj (28), who is from Uttar Pradesh, runs a small

'beeda' shop at Saradha Mill road in the city for the last eight years. He said, "I go to my native place once a year. I returned from there only five months ago." When asked about casting his vote, he admitted he may incur about Rs 7,000 for travelling to home state and can't spend that much. C Ajith Kumar, who is working in a garment unit in Mangalam road in Tiruppur, told TNIE, "My friends will travel to Jharkhand and Bihar to vote, but some of them have decided to stay back. The cost of travelling and other expenses would come to Rs 2,000. So myself

and many of them have decided to stay put in Tiruppur this time." However, another migrant worker, Kulkanta Malik, based at a private coconut farm in Sethumadai in Pollachi said,

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## NEWS BOX

## No fire stations in new sectors: Residents want infra set up, write to DC

Gurgaon: Residents of new sectors along Dwarka Expressway have written to the deputy commissioner seeking to build proper fire infrastructure in highrises. These sectors, developed over the last 10 years, lack basic amenities such as a fire station in the area.

With over 50,000 families living in around 40 societies between sectors 99 and 115, absence of a fire station in the locality is not a promising situation.

The nearest fire station is in Sector 29 — around 20km from the societies along the expressway. Residents said this could lead to delayed response time in case of a fire, posing risks to both life and property.

Pravin Kaushal, a resident of Sobha City, highlighted the urgency for a fire station in sectors 108 and 109 due to the area's high population density. "We are struggling with basic government services, such as fire stations, which are essential for safety. At present, response time for a fire emergency is about one hour, which could result in significant losses," he added.

According to the Haryana Fire Services Act, urban areas should ideally have a response time of five minutes while rural areas can have 15 minutes.

Sunil Sareen, a resident of Imperial Gardens in Sector 102 pointed out, "While neighbouring Delhi boasts an advanced and modern firefighting infrastructure, the same cannot be said about Gurgaon," he said.

The city currently has seven fire stations with a fleet of 64 fire tenders. Fire stations have been proposed in sectors 9, 9A, 23, 43, 92, and 95. Gulshan Kalra, deputy director (technical) of Haryana fire services, said the proposals have been sent to state govt. "HSVP will build these fire stations and transfer them to the fire department," he said.

We also published the following articles recently  
Fire in Mumbra building, none injured  
Fire in electrical meter room of Prince Palace building, Kausa, Mumbra quickly controlled. No injuries, power supply cut. 4 meters damaged, investigation ongoing. 109043573

More than 20 fired American workers have sued TCS, why and IT giant's response. American professionals accuse TCS of discrimination by favoring Indian workers. TCS denies claims, emphasizing integrity and equal opportunity employment in the US.

## Will boycott polls if village near airport not developed

Noida: A group of farmers in Jewar's Ranhera village held a meeting on Friday and decided to abstain from voting in the Lok Sabha election. The farmers had given their land for development of the Noida airport. They were shifted to Jewar Bangar township. However, the township residents have claimed that govt has not put in place all the facilities that were promised before rehabilitation, including a community hall, a post office, a health centre and a crematorium.

Neeraj Kumar Singh, a Ranhera resident, said that Noida international airport was projected as one of the world's leading airport projects, and was meant to develop the area further. "However, the project has badly affected the original land owners, who have been displaced. The farmers' lands have been acquired and the local youth, earlier involved in farming, are now jobless. The development we expected has not been witnessed," he said. Another resident said that they had asked the govt to make a gaushala (cowshed) for the farmers to keep their cattle. However, this demand was also left unfulfilled. Bachchu Singh, ADM Land Acquisition, said that currently, officials are occupied with the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. "We have not received any information about protests in Ranhera. If there is any such issue, we will address it. We urge the farmers to participate in the electoral process," he said.

Noida international airport will be built on 6,000 hectares of land. The land acquisition process is being carried out in five phases. In the first phase, govt acquired 1334 hectares from eight villages — Ramner, Ranhera, Banwariwas, Mukempur Shiwara, Parohi, Kishorpur, Dayanapur, and Rohi. One runway and one terminal building will be built on these lands.

We also published the following articles recently  
Airport land: 3.5k cr paid to farmers, 1.4k cr remains  
Noida district admin distributed 70% compensation for airport phase two. Rs 3,556 crore disbursed of Rs 4,898 crore. NIAL, UP govt, Noida Auth have stakes in project. Commercial operations expected to start this Oct.

## Gzb to NIA in 37 mins: RRTS route plan ready

Noida: The NCR Transport Corporation has submitted its final report for the 72.3km RRTS-cum-metro corridor from Ghaziabad rapid rail station to Noida International Airport (NIA), which is likely to be operational by April 2030. Once ready, the total time needed to cover the distance from Ghaziabad to the airport will be 37 minutes for fast service and 50 minutes for normal service. Fliers can also reach Sarai Kale Khan from NIA in 56 minutes and IGI airport in 66 minutes. It will take commuters to Meerut in 72 minutes. According to the project report, the corridor will have two sections — one from Ghaziabad RRTS station to Ecotech VI near Kasna and another from Ecotech VI to the ground transport centre (GTC) of Noida airport. Initially, the corridor will have 22 stations, but 13 stations can be added later, the draft plan states. The first section will be 39.4 km and have seven RRTS and 11 metro stations with a provision to add three stations later. The second section, which will be 32.9 km long, will have four RRTS stations initially. Ten stations — one RRTS and nine metro — can be added later in this segment.

Officials said the rapid rail trains will halt only at RRTS stations but metro trains will halt at all the stations.

Work on the corridor is slated to start once it gets UP govt nod. Officials said both the sections will be built simultaneously and the Rs 20,043.6-crore corridor is expected to be constructed in five years. According to the DPR, section 1 will have an interchange with the proposed Aqua Line metro station at Greater Noida West's Sector 4 station and the existing station at Alpha 1. It will be an elevated corridor and start from Ghaziabad RRTS station. It will traverse along Vishwakarma Road (Siddharth Vihar/Pratap Vihar in Ghaziabad), Taj Highway, Char Murti Chowk, Greater Noida Link Road (Knowledge Park-V) and then turn to Surajpur-Kasna road. The route will pass through Pari Chowk to end at EcoTech VI in the Kasna area. The alignment of the second leg will start from EcoTech VI and cross the Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE) to connect nearby areas, such as Dankaur, Kanarsi, Dhanauri Khurd, Bhatta, Parsaul, Rabupura, Dayanapur, and Kishorpur. It will conclude at the GTC near NIA's Terminal 1.

# A boy died, but missing manhole covers threaten more tragedies

Gurgaon: Days after a two-year-old boy died after slipping into an open manhole in Sector 37, there are still several drains and manholes lying uncovered in some of the city's most densely populated areas such as Basai and Harsaru. On Friday, hundreds of vehicles were seen crossing by an open manhole on Pataudi road in Harsaru. Residents of the village said they have raised multiple complaints with MCG. The corporation's staff even brought a cover two months ago, but when that didn't fit, they took it back, leaving the manhole open since, they said. "We have raised the complaint a number of times, but MCG does not resolve the issue. This manhole is right in the middle of a road. It is a potential threat to the lives of commuters. There have been various accidents on this road due to this open manhole. Authorities are waiting for a major mishap before they act," said Kulwant Sabharwal, a resident of Harsaru. Sube Singh, who runs a shop nearby, said some MCG staffers had visited the spot months ago. "They got the cover, but it was too big, and made the road surface uneven. So the manhole was left open. It will be even more dangerous during the monsoon as the road tends to



get waterlogged and it already has a lot of potholes," Singh said. At Basai Chowk, one of the busiest intersections in the city, is a 7-foot-deep drain that was left open after some workers came with an earthmover two months ago and lifted the slab on it. "We requested them not to take the cover of the drain as it is deep and anyone can slip into it. But it was taken away. A tape has been put to highlight the danger that the drain is uncovered. But it has been this way for months now," said Suhail Ahmed, a juice shop owner in

Basai. MCG had started a campaign to replace damaged manhole covers and install new ones across the city in Sept last year. But the drive fizzled out soon after. Residents of Ardee City and Sushant Lok-3, which were taken over by MCG in June 2022, said they have also complained to the corporation about the risk of open manholes in the colonies. "There are several open manholes in Ardee City, but one of them is on a main road within the colony. Most people have to use that road. It can't be avoided. We

have raised the issue with MCG a few times, but nothing has been done till now," said Chaitali Mandhotra, a resident. Drain covers were also spotted missing along the Old Delhi-Gurgaon road in Dundahera, and near bus stops on the route. Residents said a part of the drain is covered, so many pedestrians may not notice if a portion is open, and can easily fall into it. MCG chief engineer Vishal Bansal said that the corporation will look into the issue. "We will also relaunch the campaign for replacing damaged manholes and installing new covers," he added. On Wednesday night, a 2-year-old boy who was playing near his father's tea stall in Sector 37 fell into a 12-feet uncovered manhole and died. MCG has initiated a probe to act against the official who was responsible for maintaining manholes in the area. Such incidents aren't uncommon. A 10-month-old girl died after falling into an open manhole while playing near her family's makeshift laundry shop close to the community centre in Sector 31 in July 2019. The toddler was playing with her two-year-old brother when she slipped into the manhole. Her body was later found floating on the surface of the water.

## Brace for hotter days, strong winds likely for next 2 days

Gurgaon: The city got a slight relief from the heat on Friday with cloudy skies and gusty winds. Strong winds are likely in the next two days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. Friday's minimum temperature increased by a notch to 19.6 degrees Celsius from 18.6 degrees the day before. The daytime temperature was not recorded in the city on Friday due to technical issues in the monitoring equipment. The wind speed was 25kmph. "A fresh western disturbance is likely to affect western Himalayan region from April 10," an IMD official said. However, the days will continue to be hotter, as per IMD's forecast.

The department said the minimum and maximum temperatures are not expected to change drastically in the next four days, with the minimum temperature likely to stay in the 21-22 degrees range and the maximum to remain around 36 to 37 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, air quality in the city continued to be in the 'poor' category, with an AQI of 248, compared to Thursday's AQI of 237.



In Delhi, the maximum temperature is likely to reach 39 degrees Celsius over the next few days, IMD has predicted. The capital experienced a hot day on Friday, which by late afternoon became a bit soothing due to an overcast sky. Delhi's maximum temperature on Friday was 36.4 degrees Celsius while the minimum temperature was 20.2 degrees Celsius.

The Anagar area saw some trace of rain and gusty winds. The capital's air quality was in the 'moderate' range with an AQI of 173. We also published the following articles recently  
Delhi weather: With mean minimum temperature of 14.3 degrees Celsius,

March nights coolest in 5 years  
March experienced cooler nights with a mean minimum temperature of 14.3 degrees Celsius, lower than the past five years. Days were cooler too, with an average maximum temperature of 30.3 degrees Celsius, the lowest in four years. Bengaluru weather: At 36.4C, Friday temperature highest for March in 5 years  
Bengaluru's record 36.4C linked to global warming, El Nino. A Prasad warned of heatwave in multiple districts. IMD predicts temperatures above normal with declining El Nino. IMD says above normal maximum temp expected in the summer. IMD forecasts above normal temperatures for the hot weather season, with specific regions expecting normal to below normal temperatures. Measures are being taken by various ministries to mitigate heat wave effects, including providing access to cooling centers and issuing heat advisories.

## 2 arrested after bail, cop to face action

Gurgaon: A city court has ordered departmental action against an investigation officer (IO) for arresting two people, who have been accused in a cheque bounce case, even after they were granted bail by it.

The duo had surrendered in the court and were granted bail on Feb 12. The court termed their arrest and custody "illegal" and directed the police commissioner to take action against head constable Naveen, who is posted at Sector 5 police station, for "not following mandatory procedures".

Om Prakash and Nathu Singh, accused in a Rs 7.4-lakh cheque bounce case filed in 2020, had secured bail by surrendering in court. Manish Shandilya, the petitioner's counsel, alleged the head constable illegally arrested Prakash and Singh despite being informed about the bail granted to them by the court. "Naveen continuously called the petitioners,

saying a warrant has been issued against them, and they will be arrested. Around 1.15pm on March 30, I called Naveen to apprise him about the bail granted to Prakash and Singh and they could not be arrested again. To my utter shock, Naveen started misbehaving with me on the call," said Shandilya. Judicial magistrate first class Amitendra Singh in his April 1 order observed that the accused were summoned vide order dated July 7, 2020, and were granted bail on Feb 12, 2024. Termining their custody as "illegal detention", the court observed that "the accused were illegally arrested and detained by the head constable against settled principles of law as they were already out on bail.

Also, he has not followed the procedures while arresting the accused." We also published the following articles recently  
Mere delay in trial not enough to grant bail to Ramchandani in 2019

Gadchiroli case bail: High court  
Bombay HC denies bail to Kailash Ramchandani for his involvement in the 2019 naxal attack. The court emphasizes the need for an expedited trial process, highlighting his connection with the naxals and lack of parity with a co-accused. Supreme Court grants bail to activist Shoma Kanti Sen in Elgar Parishad case  
Former Nagpur University professor Shoma Sen granted bail by Supreme Court in Elgar-Parishad case. Bail conditions include GPS tracking, surrendering passport, informing NIA of residence. Case involves inflammatory speeches, investigation transferred to NIA. 2020 Delhi riots: Court rejects Tahir Hussain's bail  
Former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain's bail plea, linked to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots conspiracy, was rejected by a Delhi court citing the UAPA provisions.

# 13 units shut for discharging chemicals into Yamuna in Sonapat, city factories on radar

Gurgaon: As many as 13 dyeing units in Sonapat have been shut down after they were found discharging untreated effluents into open areas and drains, which ultimately flow into the Yamuna.

This was submitted to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Friday by a joint committee comprising representatives from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB), and district magistrates from Sonapat. In Jan, the tribunal directed four districts of Haryana — Gurgaon, Sonapat, Faridabad and Jhajjar — to carry out a ground survey and inspect dyeing units falling in the 'red category', which have high pollution levels. The districts requested eight weeks' time on Friday to complete the task. NGT's directions came while hearing a petition stating that residential areas in the four Haryana districts are grappling with severe water contamination due to the presence of 'red category' units. "During a survey of the area, 13 jeans dyeing and washing units were found operating illegally and discharging untreated effluent directly/indirectly into drain No. 6. All

the 13 units have been closed by the board and electricity connections of all units have also been disconnected on the spot," the report by HSPCB Sonapat stated. "The complete survey of the areas mentioned in the case will be carried out by a joint committee and action shall be taken against all illegal industries found operating in violation of the provisions of law. It is requested to kindly provide eight weeks' time for completion of the survey and action against illegal industries," the report further stated.

Meanwhile, reports from Gurgaon, Faridabad and Jhajjar are still pending. The NGT bench of chairperson Prakash Shrivastava, judicial magistrate Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member Dr Afroz Ahmad had issued the directions in Jan when it was hearing a petition that stated residential areas in the four districts are grappling with severe water contamination due to the presence of 'red category' dyeing units. Petitioner Varun Gulati alleged that these units "have not installed effluent treatment plants or any



other anti-pollution devices and are discharging untreated effluents into the open area or in the drains, which ultimately flow into the Yamuna." Meanwhile, HSPCB officials said that they are working on the issue. "We are working as per NGT's direction and will submit an action-taken report soon," a senior pollution board member said. We also published the following articles recently  
HSPCB says landfill leachate polluting groundwater, MCG trashes its claim  
Water samples near Bandhwari landfill show high toxic

substances, exceeding limits. MCG denies contamination, HSPCB reports to NGT. Urgent leachate treatment needed. NGT inspects leachate spill in Aravalis. Petitioners raise concerns on contamination. GPS mandate for transporting minerals: NGTs new move to fight illegal miners  
NGT mandates GPS-equipped vehicles for transporting minerals in Gurgaon, Faridabad, and Nuh to combat rampant illegal mining in the Aravalis. Seizure of vehicles without GPS from 15 April. Emphasis on new report submission and environmental compensation enforcement. Another illegal arms unit busted ahead of polls in UP's Muzaffarnagar  
Muzaffarnagar police busted an illegal arms manufacturing unit before Lok Sabha elections. Waseem and three others were arrested for illegal arms trade. SSP Abhishek Singh led the raid, seizing 22 illegal weapons. Legal actions have been taken.



NEWS BOX

**Bird flu alert in US after Texas man gets infected with virus**

Washington DC. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday (local time) issued a health alert to inform clinicians, state health departments and the public of a case of avian influenza in a person who had contact with dairy cows presumed to be infected with the virus. The farm worker from Texas was reported to be infected on April 1, making it the second case of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, commonly known as bird flu, identified in a person in the US. It follows a 2022 case in Colorado and comes as the virus is spreading to new mammals, including dairy cattle, for the first time.

To prevent infection from the virus, the CDC recommends the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), testing, antiviral treatment, patient investigations and monitoring of persons exposed to sick or dead, wild and domesticated animals and livestock that may have been infected with the virus. Earlier this week, the CDC said the infection does not change the risk assessment for the US general public from H5N1 bird flu, which it considers to be low. The Texas patient's only symptom was eye inflammation, according to the state's health department.

**Donald Trump demands new judge ahead of hush money criminal trial**

New York. Former US President Donald Trump is demanding a new judge just days before his hush money criminal trial is set to begin, reshaping longstanding grievances with the current judge in a long-shot, eleventh-hour bid to disrupt and delay the case.

Trump's lawyers, echoing his recent social media complaints, urged Manhattan Judge Juan M Merchan to step aside from the case, alleging bias and a conflict of interest because his daughter is a Democratic political consultant. The judge rejected a similar request last August. In court papers made public on Friday, Trump's lawyers said it was improper for Merchan "to preside over these proceedings while Ms Merchan benefits, financially and reputationally, from the manner in which this case is interfering" with Trump's campaign as the presumptive Republican presidential nominee. The trial is scheduled to begin April 15. It is the first of Trump's four criminal cases scheduled to go to trial and would be the first-ever criminal trial of a former president.

Merchan didn't immediately rule. The decision is entirely up to him. If he were to exit, it would throw the trial schedule into disarray, giving Trump a long-sought postponement while a new judge gets up to speed.

Messages seeking comment were left for a court spokesperson and Merchan's daughter, Loren Merchan. The Manhattan district attorney's office said it saw no reason for Merchan to step aside. The defence's claims that Loren Merchan was profiting from her father's decisions require "multiple attenuated factual leaps here that undercut any direct connection" between her firm and this case, prosecutor Matthew Colangelo wrote in a letter to the judge.

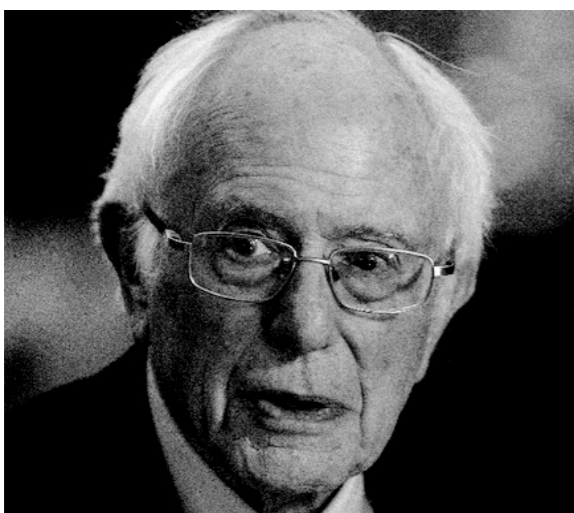
"This daisy chain of innuendos is a far cry from evidence" that Judge Merchan has a direct, personal or financial interest in reaching a particular conclusion, Colangelo wrote. Loren Merchan is president of Authentic Campaigns, which has collected at least \$70 million in payments from Democratic candidates and causes since she helped found the company in 2018, records show. The firm's past clients include President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and Senate Majority PAC, a big-spending political committee affiliated with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. Senate Majority PAC has paid Authentic Campaigns \$15.2 million, according to campaign finance disclosures. In a separate development on Friday, Merchan blocked Trump's lawyers from forcing NBC to provide them with materials related to its recent documentary about porn actor Stormy Daniels, a key prosecution witness. He ruled that the defence's subpoena was "the very definition of a fishing expedition" and didn't meet a legal burden for requiring a news organisation to provide access to its notes and documents.

**Fire outside US senator's office in Vermont, arson suspected**

**A fire broke out outside US Senator Bernie Sanders' office in Burlington, Vermont, by an unknown suspect who remains at large. The fire caused minor damages, while no injuries were reported.**

Burlington Police in Vermont are seeking a suspect who allegedly started a fire Friday outside the office of US Sen. Bernie Sanders. The small blaze caused minor damages but no injuries, authorities say an unknown male suspect sprayed what they described as a possible accelerant on the office door, set it on fire and fled. They said the suspect remained at large and no motive had been established. "The sprinkler system then engaged and largely extinguished the fire."

Earlier in the day, the Burlington Fire Department said it responded to a call on Friday morning and found a fire



between the vestibule, the elevator and the entrance door of Sanders' third-floor office in Burlington. The office door suffered moderate fire damage and much of the third floor sustained significant water damage. The offices of Sanders and those nearby were evacuated. A spokesperson for Sanders did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Sanders was not at the office.

**France: Schoolboy dies after attack as Macron warns of teenage violence**

world. A teenage schoolboy died on Friday after he was badly beaten near his school in a town south of Paris as President Emmanuel Macron warned schools should be protected from "uninhibited violence" among some youths. The 15-year-old boy suffered cardiorespiratory arrest after he was attacked by three people wearing balaclavas on Thursday, according to a police source, leading to his death the following day. Thursday's attack comes at a time of heightened tensions in French schools. Jean-Marie Vilain, the mayor of Viry-Chatillon, said the boy was walking home after a music class when he was set upon by "the worst kind of thugs". "This extreme violence is becoming commonplace," he added. Government spokeswoman Prisca Thevenot denounced what she called a "barbaric crime." Till now five people, including a 17-year-old, and 20 year old, linked to the attack have been arrested.

An anonymous student said that the



schoolboy, identified as Shamseddine, "got on well with everyone." This was the second assault this week. Earlier a teen girl was left temporarily

attacked by three people. The police had already arrested three people including a 14-year-old girl from the same school in the city's low-income area of La Mosson-La Paillade, and two boys. "Each of them admits to having hit the victim," prosecutor Fabrice Belargent said on Friday, adding the oldest of the three would remain in temporary detention. The 13 year old victim was attacked because Samara posted a picture of the attacker with an insult on social media, according to fellow student. Looking at the growing number of physical assault cases in the country, President Macron said, "We have a form of uninhibited violence among our teenagers and sometimes among increasingly younger ones." "Schools need to be shielded from this," he said, adding they should "remain a sanctuary for our children, for their families, for our teachers... We will be intransigent against all forms of violence," he added.

**Maldives thanks India for allowing limited essential exports amid tensions**

world. Maldivian Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer on Saturday thanked India for its decision to increase the export of essential supplies to the island nation for the fiscal year 2024-25, despite diplomatic tensions between both countries. In a post on X, Zameer said the gesture signified a "longstanding friendship" and a strong commitment to expanding bilateral trade between India and the Maldives. "I sincerely thank EAM @DrSJaishankar and the Government of India for the renewal of the quota to enable Maldives to import essential commodities from India during the years 2024 and 2025," he wrote. "This is truly a gesture which signifies the longstanding friendship, and the strong commitment to further expand bilateral trade and commerce between our two countries," he said.

The Indian government lifted the restriction on the export of essential items to the Maldives despite growing tensions, underscoring its 'Neighbourhood First' policy. This decision comes against the backdrop of rising geopolitical tensions in the

Indian Ocean region, particularly concerning China's growing influence and the 'India Out' campaign led by the Mohamed Muizzu administration in



the Maldives. A statement released by the Indian High Commission in the Maldives detailing the Centre's decision to increase the export of crucial goods said, "Upon the request of the Government of Maldives, the Government of India has allowed for export of certain quantities of essential commodities for the year 2024-25 under a unique bilateral mechanism, wherein, the quotas for each of these items have been revised upwards. The approved quantities are the highest since this arrangement came into effect

in 1981." Responding to Zameer's tweet, External Affairs S Jaishankar said India stood firmly committed to its 'Neighbourhood First' and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) policies.

"You are welcome FM @MoosaZameer. India stands firmly committed to its Neighbourhood First and SAGAR policies," he wrote on X on Saturday. The revised export quotas mark a notable increase in the supply of critical commodities such as river sand and stone aggregates — which are vital for the Maldives' construction sector — by 25 per cent to 10 lakh metric tonnes. Additionally, there's a 5 per cent increase in the export limits for essential food items like eggs, potatoes, onions, sugar, rice, wheat flour and pulses. The move also comes amid a diplomatic row which began after three Maldivian ministers were suspended for their derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he posted pictures of his visit to Lakshadweep and promoted it as a tourist destination.

**New York to pay \$17.5 million for forcing women to remove hijabs for mugshots**

New York. New York City agreed to pay \$17.5 million to settle a lawsuit by two Muslim-American women who said the police violated their rights after arresting them by forcing them to remove their hijabs before being photographed. The preliminary class action settlement covers men and women required to remove religious attire before being photographed. It was filed on Friday (local time) in Manhattan federal court and required approval by US District Judge Analisa Torres. Payouts will total about \$13.1 million after legal fees and costs are deducted, and could increase if enough of the more than 3,600 eligible class members submit claims. Each recipient will be paid between \$7,824 and \$13,125. The settlement resolves a lawsuit filed in 2018 by Jamilla Clark and Arwa Aziz, who said they felt



shame and trauma when police forced them to remove their hijabs for their mugshots the prior year in Manhattan and Brooklyn, respectively. Both had been arrested for violating orders of protection that they called bogus. Their lawyers likened removing the hijabs to being strip-searched. "When they forced me to take off my hijab, I felt as

if I were naked," Clark said in a statement provided by her lawyers. "I'm not sure if words can capture how exposed and violated I felt." In response to the lawsuit, New York's police department agreed in 2020 to let men and women wear head coverings during mugshots, so long as their faces could be seen.

"This settlement resulted in a positive reform for the NYPD," said Nicholas Paolucci, a spokesman for the city's law department.

"The agreement carefully balances the department's respect for firmly held religious beliefs with the important law enforcement need to take arrest photos." The new policy extended to other religious headwear, including wigs and yarmulkes worn by Jews and turbans worn by Sikhs.

**Joe Biden visits Baltimore bridge collapse site, meets families of victims**

Dundalk. President Joe Biden got a firsthand look Friday at efforts to clear away the "mangled mess" of remains of the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, as cranes, ships and diving crews work to reopen one of the nation's main shipping lanes.

Aboard Marine One, circling the warped metal remains and the mass of construction and salvage equipment trying to clear the wreckage of last week's collapse, which killed six workers, Biden got an up-close view of the devastation.

On the ground later, he received a briefing from local officials, the US Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers on the situation in the water and its impact on the region. The President also greeted police officers who helped block traffic to the bridge in the moments before it was hit by a ship — which helped avert an even larger loss of life. "I'm here to say your nation has your back and I mean it," Biden said from the shoreline overlooking the collapsed bridge in Dundalk, just outside Baltimore. "Your nation has your back." Eight workers — immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador — were filling potholes on the bridge when it was hit by

a huge cargo ship and collapsed in the middle of the night of March 26. Two men were rescued and the bodies of two others were recovered in subsequent days. Authorities announced Friday evening that salvage divers had recovered, in the hours before Biden arrived, a third body from the water, that of Maynor Yasir Suazo-Sandoval, 38, one of the missing workers. They said the search for the other victims will continue. The President also met for more than an hour with the families of those killed. "The damage is devastating and our hearts are still breaking," Biden said. Officials have established a temporary, alternate channel for vessels involved in clearing debris. The Army Corps of Engineers hopes to open a limited-access channel for barge container ships and some vessels moving cars and farm equipment by the end of this month, and to restore normal capacity to Baltimore's port by May 31, the White House says.

That's important since longer delays in reopening shipping lanes could send shockwaves through the economy. As



much as \$200 million in cargo normally moves through Baltimore's port per day, and it is the leading hub for importing and exporting vehicles. More than 50 salvage divers and 12 cranes are on site to help cut out sections of the bridge and remove them from the key waterway. Officials told Biden they had all the resources they needed to meet the targets for opening the channel into the Baltimore port. The President announced that some of the largest employers affected by the collapse, including Amazon, Home Depot and Domino Sugar, have committed to keeping their employees on payroll until the port is reopened. That followed days

of outreach by state and federal officials to try to mitigate the economic impact.

"From the air, I saw the bridge that has been ripped apart," Biden said, "but here on the ground, I see a community that's pulled together." It is still unclear, though, how the costs of cleanup and building a new bridge will be covered. The Federal Highway Administration has provided \$60 million in "quick release" emergency relief funds to get started. Exactly how much the collapse will ultimately cost is unclear, though some experts estimate recovery will take at least \$400 million and 18 months. Biden said within hours of the collapse that "the federal government will pay for the entire cost of reconstructing that bridge, and I expect the Congress to support my effort."

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell likened the bridge collapse to assistance that flows after natural disasters and said "The federal government will step up and do the lion's share" of funding. But the authorisation could cause some squabbles in Congress.

**New Jersey earthquake strongest in over 240 years, 11 aftershocks follow**

World As many as 11 aftershocks jolted parts of New York City and surrounding areas after the region was rattled by a magnitude 4.8 earthquake on Friday, shaking buildings up and down the East Coast and surprising residents in an area that rarely experiences notable seismic activity.

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the 4.8 magnitude earthquake was the third-largest earthquake recorded in the area in the last five decades and the strongest in New Jersey in more than 240 years. The initial tremor was felt just after 10.20 am (US local time), at a depth of 4.7 kilometres (2.9 miles). An hour after the initial impact, a 2.0 aftershock struck west of Bedminster, New Jersey. At around 12.30 pm, there was a 1.8 magnitude aftershock, another 2.0 aftershock at 1.14 pm, and another 2.0 aftershock shortly before 3 pm, the USGS said.

Though no major damage was reported, engineering teams were inspecting roads and bridges. People from Baltimore to Boston reported feeling rumbling and shaking, with some running outside to try to detect the source.

A video shared by EarthCam on X showed the moment the 4.8-magnitude earthquake struck New Jersey and surrounding states. Addressing a news conference post the tremors, New York Governor Kathy Hochul said, "This is one of the largest earthquakes on the East Coast in the last century." Later, James Pittinger, mayor of Lebanon, New Jersey, termed the earthquake a "crazy experience" and said, "I was sitting in my home office when things started to fall off the walls and shelves." Charita Walcott, a 38-year-old resident in the Bronx borough of New York, told CNN the quake felt "like a violent rumble that lasted about 30 seconds or so. It was kind of like being in a drum circle, that vibration."

At the United Nations in midtown Manhattan, the Save the Children CEO abruptly stopped addressing the Security Council on the Israel-Gaza conflict as cameras began shuddering.

"You're making the ground shake," Palestinian UN envoy Riyad Mansour quipped. Flights were held at area airports in the aftermath of the earthquake but had resumed by 12.30 pm, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). WHY WAS THE EARTHQUAKE RARE?

Earthquakes in the eastern US are felt across a far broader area because the bedrock is much older and harder, transferring seismic energy more easily, according to the USGS.

The rocks in the western US are younger and contain more faults that absorb earthquake energy. Friday's tremor was the largest felt in the city since a 5.8-magnitude earthquake in 2011 in Virginia prompted evacuations of City Hall and other buildings, thus causing damage in Washington. The quake comes just a few months after the USGS warned nearly 75 per cent of the United States could face damaging quakes in the next 100 years.



## Das kicks off Sambalpur campaign from Deogarh dist, faces BJP barb

**DEOGARH.** BJD's organisational secretary and candidate for Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat Pranab Prakash Das kicked off his campaigning from Deogarh district on Friday. Das participated in a huge rally of local BJD leaders and workers which started from the new bus stand in Deogarh town. The BJD procession culminated at Badbagicha near Pradhanpat where a public meeting was organised. Addressing the gathering, Das said women have an important role in realising the dream of Chief Minister Naven Patnaik to develop Odisha. "We want you to remember who stood by you in your tough times and helped you live with dignity. It's time for you to give an answer to those who are making false promises to come to power. Five (BJP) candidates were voted to the Parliament in the last election, but none of them voiced your concerns. It is now up to you to remove the double engine," he said. Das also appealed to the gathering to vote for candidates fielded by BJD in the Assembly seats. Thousands of people including BJD workers from Deogarh town and three blocks attended the meet. On the other hand, sitting BJP MLA of Deogarh Subash Panigrahi criticised Das and said people are aware of those who are making false promises and exploiting them. "It would be better if the corrupt BJD kept its false propaganda away from here. Despite being in power for 25 years in the state, the BJD has failed to build roads, provide basic amenities like water, healthcare and primary education to people in many rural areas. The ruling party has also left the farmers in a lurch with its token system," he claimed. Panigrahi alleged that Odisha government has embezzled funds sanctioned by the Centre under PMAY scheme. He also questioned the CM about his promise of providing '100 per quintal of paddy as bonus during his visit to Sohela in 2016.

# Civic issues may influence Kovai residents' choice on voting day

**Kolkata** Amrita Roy, the 62-year-old 'Rajmata' (Queen Mother) of the Krishnanagar Palace has been fielded by the BJP against the incumbent MP and Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The wife of Saumish Chandra Roy, ninth heir of Raja Krishnachandra Roy, Amrita Roy has been vocal about her family history and the allegations of being "traitors".

Raja Krishnachandra remains a key figure in Bengal's history. He is prominently remembered for his pact with the East India Company and Mir Jafar to defeat Nawab of Bengal Siraj ud-Daulah in the Battle of Plassey, which paved the way for two centuries of British rule in the Indian subcontinent. In an exclusive interview with India Today TV, the erstwhile royal queen spoke over a range of subjects, including her family history, her plunge into politics, and her challenger Mahua Moitra. She also spoke about the Sandeshkhali incident and equated suspended Trinamool Congress leader Sheikh Shahjahan to Siraj ud-Daulah over alleged harassment of women. Here are the excerpts from her interview:

**Q:** Were you ever interested in politics? Your entry seems quite unexpected.

**Amrita Roy:** I had never been interested in politics, nor was my family. However, 10 years ago, the BJP approached me through Tathagata Roy, but I declined as I wasn't confident about entering politics at the time. Recently, I was approached again and decided to join the party after considering the

corruption scams and the impact on society. **Q:** Can you tell us about your conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he first called you? **Amrita Roy:** It was divine and overwhelming. He made me feel comfortable, as if we had known each other for a long time. He bestowed a significant responsibility upon me, emphasising that I must not be deterred by what people say.

**Q:** You have a big challenge ahead of you in restoring control of the Krishnanagar seat. How are you preparing for this?

**Amrita Roy:** Modiji has given me guidance and advice, emphasising the importance of utilising recovered corruption funds to benefit Bengal's poor people. I aim to contribute to society's betterment and fight corruption. **Q:** How did your entry into BJP and politics come about? Were you in touch with the party leadership? **Amrita Roy:** I wasn't in touch with them initially. They approached me within 48 hours, stating that I had a clean image and a non-scandalous background. I saw this as an opportunity to bring about positive changes.

**Q:** Has your family ever been in touch with any other political party or the present West Bengal dispensation, considering your illustrious family history?

**Amrita Roy:** Apart from having Doctor Bidhan Ch Roy as a family friend in the past, we kept away from politics due to personal reasons. **Q:** What triggered you to join politics after seeing West Bengal's situation in the last



decade? **Amrita Roy:** After being approached ten years ago, I focused on preserving the legacy and heritage of the Rajbari, which faced challenges due to local goons and authorities. Keeping the property intact has been a significant challenge.

**Q:** What kind of disturbances do you face from local authorities and the TMC government?

**Amrita Roy:** I'm not referring to any particular party or government. However, dealing with locals in power can be challenging, as they sometimes misuse their authority, expecting favours or resorting to threats.

**Q:** Your opponent, Mahua Moitra, is also a first-time MP from Krishnanagar and has been expelled from Parliament due to serious charges. What are your thoughts on her and the challenge she poses?

**Amrita Roy:** She doesn't pose any challenge because her expulsion from Parliament indicates serious issues. Instead of clearing her name, she should address the allegations against her. **Q:** Mahua Moitra claims that

central agencies like CBI and ED are hounding her out of a political vendetta. How do you respond to this? **Amrita Roy:** If there's no proof of corruption, why would these agencies pursue her? Her expulsion suggests that something must be amiss.

**Q:** She also mentioned that both local MPs and the central government should secure jobs for people. What are your thoughts on job creation? **Amrita Roy:** Job creation is essential, especially in West Bengal, where many people seek employment opportunities. We need to focus on reviving industries and creating jobs locally.

**Q:** Your opponent, Mahua Moitra, has raised concerns about your title and alleged detachment from local issues. How do you address these criticisms?

**Amrita Roy:** My title of Rani Ma stems from the respect and love of the people, not from any feudal notion. I've actively engaged with the community and worked to promote cultural events like Durga Puja. My commitment to the people of Krishnanagar is unwavering. **Q:** The historical context of Krishnanagar has become a focal point in this campaign. How do you view your family's role in history, particularly regarding Raja Krishnachandra Roy? **Amrita Roy:** At the time of Maharaja Krishnachandra Roy, there was no concept of nationhood or country. His actions were driven by the need to protect his subjects and uphold Sanatan Dharma, not by allegiance to any colonial power.

## Missing Signature" Leads To Exit Of INDIA Bloc's Madhya Pradesh Candidate

**Bhopal.** In a tactical setback to the opposition INDIA bloc in Madhya Pradesh, the nomination of the alliance candidate from the Samajwadi Party has been rejected over not giving the mandatory documents to the Election Commission of India.

Former MLA Meera Yadav, who won from Niwari assembly seat in the district with the same name on a Samajwadi Party ticket, had also lost three consecutive elections from the same constituency. The Samajwadi Party had nominated Manoj Yadav, but later changed the candidate to Ms Yadav. She filed her papers as a Samajwadi Party candidate from Khajuraho on Thursday - the last date of filing nominations for the second phase i.e. April 26. Ms Yadav is from an influential and wealthy Samajwadi Party family from Uttar Pradesh's Jhansi district. She was the only Samajwadi Party candidate in Madhya Pradesh.

The BJP has fielded state unit chief and MP VD Sharma from the seat where Ms Yadav tried to contest. Ms Yadav's husband Deep Narayan



Yadav, a two-time Samajwadi Party MLA from UP, said the returning officer had accepted her papers after verifying them. "On Thursday, it was okayed, but today two gaps have been informed to us, including non-submission of certified copy of the updated voter list and that the signature of the candidate was missing at one place in the form," Narayan Yadav said. "We will go to the high court and if necessary, the Supreme Court after getting the written copy of the rejection order from the

Panna district election officer," he said.

The last date of filing nomination for the second phase was April 4; the scrutiny of the forms happened on Friday. The Khajuraho seat is politically significant, as the state BJP chief and the current MP is the ruling party's candidate there. He won the seat in 2019 by 4.92 lakh votes against his nearest rival. Listen to the latest songs, only on JioSaavn.com

Samajwadi Party chief and former UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav called the rejection of Ms Yadav's papers "murder of democracy".

"It's being said the form wasn't duly signed. If it was the matter, then why was that form accepted in the first place by poll officers on Thursday? The BJP is guilty of turning the entire administrative machinery corrupt. Rejecting anyone's nomination form is a democratic crime, we demand a judicial probe," Akhilesh Yadav posted on the microblogging website X. VD Sharma said as far as Khajuraho is concerned, the BJP enjoys contesting elections. "I don't understand what happened with the Opposition candidate. I enjoy electoral battles," VD Sharma said.

## Special focus on problematic areas to curb ID liquor sale in Vijayawada, says district Collector

**VIJAYAWADA.** Stating that the NTR district administration and police department has laid their undiverted focus on eradication of illicit distilled liquor, District Collector Senapati Dilli Rao said that they are continuously monitoring the activities of such identified manufacturing units and other problematic villages in the district.

The officials informed the Collector that more than 25 villages in the district, mostly located in G Kondur, A Kondur, Paritala and Kanchikacherla mandals, are prone to manufacture the illicit distilled liquor and also transporting to other places. Speaking to TNIE, the Collector said that special teams comprising revenue and police department were formed and strengthened all the border checkpoints to control the flow of money and liquor.

Stating that the teams will collect information pertaining to the manufacturing units and will raid the places, Delhi Rao said that concerned police station house officers were instructed to act tough on such illegal activities. The Collector also said the incidents of operating belt shops in remote villages came to his notice. "As many as 369 cases were registered and seized 4,300 litres of illicit distilled

liquor in the district during various enforcement drives conducted from the commencement of election code," informed the Collector. He further went on to say around '5 crore worth unaccounted cash, gold and liquor was seized so far during the checks.

On the other hand, NTR district



commissioner of police Kanthi Rana Tata also carried out sudden inspections at Jaggayyapet, A Kondur and G Kondur mandals and warned ID liquor manufacturers of stringent action would be initiated against those for violating ECI directions. He also said special branch and special party police are visiting all the identified problematic locations and villages and creating awareness on the evil effects of consuming illicit distilled liquor.

## Election brings a dilemma for seasonal migrant workers in Odisha

**BHUBANESWAR.** For migrant labourers of Odisha, voting is both a celebration of democracy and a dilemma. Every election, those who head out of the southern districts are able to return home to exercise their franchise but their counterparts from western Odisha find it difficult to participate in the biggest festival of democracy. Odisha, despite being one of the states registering a high percentage of both traditional and seasonal labour migration, faces a huge challenge in ensuring voting by migrant workers. Political party candidates arrange for their return to their native land prior to polling but their efforts bear fruit in southern Odisha only. In western districts, the number of labourers who return is just 20 per cent of the total migrant population. As per the report, "Migration in India" based on

Periodic Labour Force Survey 2020-21, released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, there are 8.51 lakh labourers who migrate for jobs from the state. There are 10 migration prone districts in the state - Bargarh, Balangir, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Rayagada. Labourers from these districts migrate to Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Kerala for work.

The Labour department mandates registration of all labourers at the source point following which they are issued 'movement slips' to head to the destination states. But the number of migrant labourer registrations is minuscule compared to the migration that happens at the grassroots, sources in the Labour department acknowledge. In reply to a query

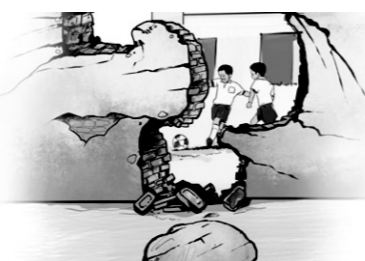
in the Assembly in March last year, the then Labour minister Srikant Sahu had produced a report which stated that in 2022, 362 labour sardars were issued licences to take 26,700 registered labourers to other states for work. In 2021, as many as 271 labour agents were permitted to take 31,785 labourers and in 2020, 117 sardars were allowed to take 11,177 migrant labourers. This year 4,800 registered labourers have been taken to different states by 82 licensed sardars. While traditional migration from Ganjam and other southern Odisha districts take place round the year, September to June is when western Odisha witnesses seasonal migration as people head to brick kilns in neighbouring Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Traditional migrants from southern Odisha return home once a year but seasonal migrants of western

districts cannot, before completion of 10 months (brick-making period before monsoon). "The trend of migration in southern districts is entirely different from western districts. In southern Odisha, only male members of a family migrate while in western Odisha, migration is family-based as an entire unit is required to contribute towards making bricks," said Loknath Mishra, a migrant rights activist from Berhampur. In the election year, politicians and their supporters in Ganjam and other southern districts facilitate movement of the male members who are eligible voters. "But this election, the pressure on political leaders for getting the workers back from other states is a lot less. Because, a majority of them have already returned owing to the wedding season and the ongoing Danda

Nacha which sees participation of many migrant youths," Mishra said. With Berhampur, Koraput, Nabarangpur going to polls on May 13, supporters of candidates have already approached them to stay back, he added. However, in western Odisha, most of the labourers are likely to give voting a miss. Election in Kalahandi is on May 13 while in Bargarh, Sundargarh and Balangir, it is scheduled on May 20. "Politicians in western Odisha are not interested in getting these seasonal labourers back as they cannot leave the worksite before June. In the past elections, some political workers had approached kiln owners to take back the workers for voting but the latter allowed just male members of the family to go and held back their elderly parents, wives and children," said activist Sushant Panigrahi.

## TN govt schools to outsource security, sanitation

**CHENNAI.** To address issues concerning sanitation and security facilities in government schools, the Tamil Nadu school education department has decided to outsource housekeeping, sanitation, open area maintenance and security work in 1,954 government schools across the state at a cost of Rs 130 crore. About 8,000 workers may be deployed in July to implement this first-ever outsourcing project in Tamil Nadu government schools, sources said. The school education department has divided the state into four zones for selecting the schools for the project based on their student count. "High schools and higher secondary schools with more than 475 students have been selected for implementing the project. The scheme will be extended to other schools over the next three years," a top official in the school education department said. Although the department tried to issue a tender in 2021 to roll out a similar project, it was halted due to legal challenges from some bidders. The education department, however, has now successfully floated tenders following court directives, sources said.



At present, there are less than 500 workers employed in these schools and they would be allowed to continue their work till retirement. The state government has planned the system based on Andhra Pradesh model where external agencies maintain clean and safe environment in government schools. Under the proposed system, security personnel will work in shifts round the clock while the housekeeping and sanitation staff will work from 7am to 3pm. Their duties will include opening and locking of school gates, classrooms, toilets, staff rooms, and other areas. More children will enrol if school premises is kept clean, says parent

They will maintain registers for vehicles and visitors and ensure the safety of children on campus. Additionally, they will also report on maintenance requirement and oversee aspects such as water management, ground maintenance, and storage areas. Zonal heads, area managers and supervisors will provide oversight, with periodic inspections conducted by school headmasters, Block Resource Teacher Educators (BRTEs), Chief Educational Officers (CEOs), and Joint Directors. While the monitoring process will ensure safety, training will be provided to employees regarding responsibilities. A web-based mobile application monitoring system should be developed by successful bidders for the project. The application will display the pre and post cleaning status with images and videos. The same has to be uploaded on a daily basis. It will also incorporate AI tools to check the pre and post cleaning status. "One of the major concerns of parents while enrolling their children in government schools is the unhygienic condition on premises, especially bathrooms.

## FDA suspends south Mumbai bakery licence over hygiene deficiency

**MUMBAI.** The state Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has suspended the licence of popular bakery Suleman Usman Mithaiwala on Mohammed Ali Road due to hygiene shortcomings, improper waste food disposal and inadequate health checks for staff, among other violations. The food regulatory body has instructed it to cease operations from April 2 to April 10. However, when TOI visited the restaurant on Friday, it was operational. The restaurant claimed it is yet to receive any orders. FDA officials said they initially identified violations in Jan through online images uploaded by the restaurant on the Food Safety Compliance System (FosCos). This web portal, managed by FSSAI, serves as a platform for food licensing and registration. It was followed by a physical inspection in Feb where FDA pointed out several violations. Dr Shailesh Adhao, joint commissioner (food), highlighted areas of partial compliance, including the cleaning of equipment and premises as per the scheduled requirements. Additionally, officials noted partial adherence to the periodic removal

of food waste. They also identified insufficient lighting. Of significant concern was the absence of annual medical examinations and vaccinations for food handlers against enteric diseases. Further, there was partial compliance



in providing food handlers with essential protective gear such as aprons, gloves, headgear and shoe covers. Adhao said a food safety officer will inspect the premises on Saturday, and if found open despite the order, further action will be initiated. When TOI contacted the bakery, it confirmed it was being inspected.



## Concerns abound over social media data collection

A bipartisan Bill that would force Chinese tech giant ByteDance, the parent company of TikTok, to sell the social media app or face a ban for all US devices was approved by the US House in March, reflecting the growing multidimensional unease that US lawmakers feel about Big Tech. While President Biden said he would sign the proposed legislation to ban TikTok if the Congress passed it, it's uncertain what will happen to the Bill in the Senate, and its ramifications are neither simple nor straightforward. With nearly 170 million TikTok users in the US, a ban on the app will undoubtedly hurt millions of businesses, deny artists a platform and ruin the livelihoods of countless creators across the country. Furthermore, as Donald Trump anticipates, it will undoubtedly increase Facebook's dominance. However, national security (or at least a concern on that count) is much more important.

In 2020, then President Trump moved to outlaw TikTok and another popular app, WeChat; later, President Biden reversed that decision. Governments in various countries have banned TikTok on official devices due to concerns about cybersecurity and privacy, perhaps primarily for its Chinese connections. For instance, due to privacy and security concerns, India banned TikTok and dozens of other Chinese apps, including WeChat, in 2020. Several other countries have also enforced a ban on TikTok.

In March 2023, Shou Zi Chew, TikTok's CEO, gave testimony before a US congressional committee. Security experts believe that the US government's current concerns seem to be based primarily on the 'potential' for TikTok to be used for foreign intelligence. US lawmakers continue to perceive that TikTok poses a serious threat to national security because of its ties to China. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that TikTok should be "ended one way or another."

Working with a privacy researcher, The Washington Post came to the conclusion in 2020 that TikTok didn't seem to gather any more data than the average major social media platform. A 2022 study by the mobile marketing company URL Genius, however, found that out of all social media apps, consumers' personal data was tracked more by YouTube and TikTok.

But even if TikTok gathers data comparable to that of other major social media platforms like Facebook or X, that's still a significant amount of information. It includes details about the videos users watch, the comments they make, the private messages they send, and, if they consent to this degree of access, their precise geolocation and contact lists. In addition, according to TikTok's privacy statement, the company gathers user data such as email addresses, phone numbers, age, search and browsing histories, details about the images and videos users upload, and, if consented to, the contents of their device's clipboard, allowing them to copy and paste information into the app. As per several studies, TikTok follows users online even when they aren't using the app. TikTok said the information is used to bolster its advertising business. And TikTok is not unusual in this regard; many tech giants employ the same tool on a far greater scale. TikTok is, therefore, merely a product of the broader surveillance capitalism economy, which frequently directs users into rabbit holes of uncertainty. Yes, many of the apps we use collect too much information about us. Typically, they gather users' personal data primarily for their own use to show consumers relevant advertisements. Companies can impact our behaviour in ways we are frequently unaware of by getting more information about our preferences, shortcomings and areas of interest. The Cambridge Analytica incident, however, demonstrated how successfully personal information can be exploited to even sway major elections. However, more than the app itself, TikTok's ownership and governance policies may be the main cause for concern. TikTok doesn't operate in China, but it's apprehended that ByteDance and, by extension, TikTok, may be forced to cooperate with a wide range of security activities, including perhaps the transfer of data, since the Chinese government enjoys significant leverage over businesses under its jurisdiction.

## We need to vote wisely for the sake of participative democracy

Freedom during the pre-election phase is an essential precondition for democracy because it prioritises choice.

THERE was a time, not so long ago, when theorists of substantive democracy scoffed at the two presuppositions of minimalist theories of democracies. One, democracy is a method of choosing leaders who will rule the country for the next five years. Two, democracy is valuable because it enables a peaceful transfer of power from one set of political elites to another. For defenders of substantive democracy, this interpretation is simply unpersuasive. Democracy as a form of rule is valuable not only because it grants all eligible citizens the right to exercise their franchise, but also because it enables the realisation of the foundational principles of a good life: liberty, equality, distributive justice, political participation, the rule of law and the accountability of the elected. These are realisable because substantive democracies possess a vibrant civil society, an independent media and an impartial judiciary to defend the rights of citizens. With the onslaught of 'elected authoritarians' — a phrase that is an oxymoron at best — most committed democrats have been compelled to put aside their dreams of substantive democracy and focus their attention on free and fair elections. Ahead of the General Election, it is worthwhile to recollect that the electoral process consists of three phases: the pre-election period, voting and the outcome. No one should be able to tamper with the result. This violates the basic right of individuals to choose their leaders, however fractured the outcome of the election might be. We certainly have to ensure that the pre-election process is free and fair. Think of elections as a gigantic marketplace in which the voter has the choice to cast his vote in favour of candidate X, Y or Z. Freedom during the pre-election phase is an essential precondition for democracy because it prioritises choice. A citizen can only choose if he has options. Without options, the right to choose is completely hollowed out, much like a shopping mall where only one brand is on offer. This is a violation of the basic right to franchise. The right to vote is a basic right, not only because the voter can opt for a candidate or a political party that will rule over him, but also because voting enables him to transition from a subject to a citizen. Members of a society in which one political party dominates like a veritable colossus over the others, either because it has got Opposition leaders imprisoned or has allegedly given directions to freeze an Opposition party's bank accounts, are not citizens who have inviolable rights. They are subjects, much as Indians were subjects of the British Empire. Millions of Indians bravely fought for the independence of their country from British colonialism. What were they fighting for, if not democracy? The shift from substantive democracy to minimal democracy, at least for the moment, is largely due to huge disappointment with the way political parties have misused this form of government. For



democrats of this genre, democracy is a 'hurrah' word, simply because it helps realise many things that are of value: from warding off war to ensuring economic growth and wellbeing to making the world a better place to live in. The most persuasive argument for substantive democracy is the right to participate in processes of decision-making protected by a vibrant civil society and the media. This realises the political competence of every individual. Participative or deliberative democracy is a perfect form of modern democracy because it gives each citizen a voice and the right to be heard. Every citizen has the right to be treated with dignity, and the best way to ensure this is to protect a deliberative arena of equals, or at least an arena fired by enthusiasm for equality. A society of equals is a just society. Today, priorities are bound to be different. We always knew that money power ruled. Now we know for certain that politics is bolstered by big businesses, as the data on electoral bonds reveals. Political parties and their agendas are up for sale to the highest bidder. Processes of

decision-making are shrouded in secrecy. A section of the media has become servile; appalling poverty and unbelievably vulgar spectacles mounted by the affluent exist cheek by jowl. Social prejudice against minorities is fomented by cynical politicians to cause a divide in public opinion, and unthinkable discrimination continues to dog the disadvantaged.

Our faith in democracy has not been shaken, but our confidence in the party system that throws up politicians who are power-hungry and contemptuous of the fundamental rights granted by the Constitution has been eroded. Indian citizens stand at a crossroads ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. We will vote, but in a society where the advantages of democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and an independent media have been steadily whittled away, we are left with only elections.

We have to choose wisely, not to facilitate power-hungry candidates to acquire power, but because we want more. We want the candidates we vote for to contribute to the making of the good society we yearn for.

## Progressive guidelines

Catholic body attempts to break down barriers

CITING 'emerging challenges due to the current socio-cultural, religious and political situation' in the country, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) has issued a set of guidelines for all educational institutions under its jurisdiction. These include recitation of the Preamble to the Constitution by students during the daily morning assembly, showing respect for all faiths and traditions, not forcing Christian traditions on students of other religions, and setting up an inter-religious prayer room on the campus. The CBCI, the apex decision-making body of the Catholic community in India, has about 14,000 schools, 650 colleges, seven universities, five medical colleges and 450 technical and vocational institutions under its aegis. It is commendable that this influential association has taken the initiative to promote religious and cultural sensitivity and encourage respect for diversity among students as well as staff



members. The Preamble, which is regarded as the soul of the Constitution, showcases the core constitutional values of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity. Displaying it at the

entrance to the school building and making students recite it in the assembly will go a long way in inculcating these values in them. Giving utmost importance to the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation can help the children grow into mature and responsible citizens with a secular outlook. This is imperative in view of the all-pervasive polarisation in the country. The CBCI guidelines can serve as a model to be emulated by all educational institutions with religious affiliations. The Supreme Court had shown the way in January this year by observing that the right of minorities to establish and administer any educational institution under Article 30(1) of the Constitution was not meant to ghettoise any community. A welcoming and harmonious environment on every campus would be an apt tribute to the framers of the Constitution and a key step towards building a truly developed India.

## A below-the-belt blow on poll eve

### Kejriwal's arrest has shaken the conscience of the nation's right-thinking citizens

I have met Arvind Kejriwal only once. It was sometime in 2005 or 2006 at a meeting of trustees of the Public Concern for Governance Trust (PCGT). BG Deshmukh, former Cabinet Secretary and former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, was the trust chairman at that time. Kejriwal had been invited to meet the trustees and explain to them the work he was doing to combat corruption in the Income Tax (I-T) Department in New Delhi. Kejriwal was a regular recruit to the Indian Revenue Service through the UPSC's civil services examination, the one in which Deshmukh and I had appeared years earlier — Deshmukh got into the IAS and I into the IPS. Kejriwal used to arrive for work an hour before the official time and set up a small table with a chair outside the central I-T office. Applicants for I-T refunds or PAN cards could take his help to get their work completed expeditiously without payment of 'speed money'. It worked, but not without ruffling feathers. He displeased many of his colleagues. How many of them are in the Enforcement Directorate (ED) today? Are any of them handling the investigation against him? Since the PCGT had been established for the express purpose of improving the quality of life of the common resident of Mumbai by monitoring governance, Kejriwal told us of an NGO in the national capital that he was mentoring so that people's woes could be addressed. The trustees of the PCGT were impressed with his commitment to the cause of integrity and justice. Would, nay could, a man so devoted to values of good governance transform overnight into an ogre bent on fattening himself on filthy lucre? To those who have had a glimpse of his personality, his thinking and his attitude of mind and heart, it seems impossible. Like in the case of AAP MP Sanjay Singh, no money has been traced to him. The next time Kejriwal came to my attention was when he rode on the back of that great exponent of good conduct and honest, simple living — Anna Hazare. Now, Anna was an institution in my state, Maharashtra. Like many people

there, I know most things about Anna. I interacted with him on more than a couple of occasions. Anna is a simple man, but since he has been lionised and feted by so many individuals so many times, the adulation has affected his capacity to weigh possibilities and probabilities calmly. The combination of Anna and Kejriwal had the promise of becoming a game-changer. But Kejriwal had other ideas. These ideas were not anticipated by Anna or by most citizens who applauded the two for raising the banner of revolt against one of the two biggest impediments to India's progress — corruption (the other is communalism). Just as the battle was taking a winning turn, Kejriwal announced his intent to enter the political arena by forming the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

This decision dismayed Anna and sundry other admirers like me. He saw in this move a betrayal by a man in whom he had placed his trust. Anna had always dreamed of himself as a moral force who kept away from the spoils that politics engenders. But that is a different story. Today, we are concerned with the BJP's intricate plan of extinguishing all credible opposition to its political hegemony.

Kejriwal is accused of unfairly tweaking the Delhi Government's excise policy for the sale of liquor in the Capital. If he had a hand in shaping or changing that policy, I would not be surprised. All political parties need money to operate. They have no means of financing their activities, except kickbacks from contracts and dispensation of favours to business houses. Turnkey deals like the purchase of the Bofors guns or the Rafale



jet fighters are the most obvious temptations. Every citizen knows that this is routinely done by governments and condemned by Opposition parties. But the Indian citizen is impervious to such peccadilloes. She/he has accepted it as inevitable. What the citizen is not accustomed to is the single-minded hounding of Opposition parties and their leaders by unleashing the ED and the I-T authorities relentlessly on their opponents to ensure an Opposition-mukt Bharat. Kejriwal's arrest has shaken the conscience of the nation's right-thinking citizens even more than the I-T Department's initial order freezing the Congress' bank accounts for the recovery of I-T dues (coercive action has now been put on hold). These are below-the-belt blows delivered by a

boxer who viciously pulverises his opponent even though the latter is losing! The BJP conceived of electoral bonds for financing the costs of fighting elections. Its pickings would hurtle it to victory because Opposition parties would be left with the crumbs. In a country where money is used to buy votes and bring down governments formed on the basis of the people's mandate, it is not surprising that an up-and-coming party like AAP would formulate a scheme to add substance to its piggy bank. Kejriwal has certainly not used any of the money his party has raised via the alleged kickbacks from liquor dealers, whether they hailed from the South or the North, for his personal expenses. If that is the allegation against him, no one will believe that such a thought could even enter his mind. It is equivalent to accusing the chowkidar of being a thief!

Among the witnesses the ED has stacked up to prove Kejriwal's guilt, the main culprit is a co-accused who has turned approver on the promise of a pardon. That same approver bought electoral bonds worth crores of rupees days after he turned approver and was set free on bail. The approver's father, Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy, has been given the ticket by the Telugu Desam Party, a BJP ally, from the Ongole Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh.

The old man who delivers my newspapers is my sounding board for what the poorer citizens think of political events. "Poor Kejriwal," he said, "he had done much for the jhuggi-jhopri dwellers of Delhi in the fields of education and health and given them free electricity. Now, he will languish in jail unless he joins the BJP."



• Personal Interview is the foremost tool to judge the abilities of a person.  
 • In the face-to-face contact between the interviewer & interviewee, it is possible to record more than only verbal responses; which are often superficial.



# Tips for a Personal Interview

Personal Interview is the foremost tool to judge the abilities of a person. In the face-to-face contact between the interviewer & interviewee, it is possible to record more than only verbal responses; which are often superficial. When human beings communicate directly with each other, much more information is communicated. The nature of words used, facial expressions & body language- together contribute in judging a person. According to Meha Bhargava, an Image Management professional, you must keep the following in mind while going for an interview.

**Do the Research**

Extensively research not just about the profile you are interviewed for, but the company profile, their achievements, their story of success, their products&services, their targetmarket etc.. All this will make you confident enough to answer every question diligently.

**Look sharp**

Being smartly and elegantly dressed not only makes you feel good but also has a strong impact on the interviewer. Like the mantra "The way you dress, defines the way you think, act and how other's react"

**Listen carefully**

Giving full attention to not only what is said but also to what is not said will make you know about what they have in store

for you. Sometimes important things are left unsaid between the lines, make sure you catch up to every bit.

**Show enthusiasm with body language**

A firm handshake, smile, eye contact and positive responses ensure that the interviewer feels confident in you and your abilities to be hired. What you feel reflects by your body language. Even if you are nervous, don't let it show. Sit in a correct, firm and comfortable posture avoid fidgeting with your legs, or hands. This distracts the interviewer and gives an

impression of a feeble personality.

**Answer only what is asked**

Do listen carefully what you are being asked, if you don't understand confirm it again and while answering do not deviate from one thing to another. Straightforward and to the point answers are only what they love to hear.

**Ask questions**

Don't be blank at the end of the interview, ask questions, be it on your profile, about the company, pay working hours etc. No questions give an impression of disinterest in the company and the job. But make sure your questions are appropriate.

## Skill vs degree



**What works for you?**

In India, we place too much emphasis on what is often just a piece of paper, instead of the knowledge or skills one should acquire to earn it. If a student is looking for higher education, a degree is the normal study route. There are numerous careers and fields of work that require advanced knowledge and skills training.

However, all students may not and sometimes cannot take advanced courses and prefer to develop skills that do not necessarily require the rigour of a degree curriculum. In other words, every person with skills may not receive a degree. Similarly, there are many graduates who have theoretical knowledge but no practical experience. A number of jobs and

careers require various skills -for example, in the computer and IT sector. So, without worrying if it is a degree or not, many students can study a course that would help them find work. The government's skill development programme is attempting to change students' attitude towards skills that can earn them jobs. However, there needs to



be greater synergy between prospective employers and the skills training centre so that students are well-placed with salaries that can attract other youngsters. Also, often, employers ask for a degree irrespective of how adequately trained such a candidate may be. Therefore, students prefer to pursue a degree without a job in sight, rather than skill themselves through training that can better provide a job. The solution is to analyse what a student is made for -a degree or a skill-based programme -and which one would work best for him/her. Usha Albuquerque, Career Counsellor, Delhi

**College prepares you**

When students decide on a career path, it is essential for them to understand the importance of a degree and how it contributes to their future. A degree programme makes a student's 'generalised' approach more focused. At the college level, applicants pick a stream and then study a specific field such as engineering, medicine, commerce, science, humanities, law, architecture, etc. The student learns about things ranging from the finer points of a particular discipline to communication and people skills.

Students must opt for a degree course since it trains them to understand - through guest lectures, industry visits, etc -how industry functions. They, thus, know what employers expect. They develop a world view of the field they would work in, explore it in-depth and be ready to face challenges in their professional lives.

## Why you need a 'disconnected' break

Taking your laptop along on your upcoming holiday? Do a rethink, for you might be committing a huge mistake, which might actually add more stress that you imagines. Experts warn how one should not cart along work and stay rooted to any social networking sites and microblogs, while on a getaway. The 'digital detox break' is being considered as the ideal 'me time'. The idea has taken root so much so that packages are being tailor-made to force stressed folk to wean away from all their gadgets. Here's how it benefits you:

"What we're doing here is providing evidence that how people relate to God matters for their commitment and satisfaction at work," Kent noted.

**You see the world differently**

You might throw fleeting glances to what's going around you if you're stuck to your smartphone screen. But being away from it allows you to view the world minus distraction.

**It builds better interpersonal relations**

How many people actually remember a good old-fashioned conversation? With no gadget around you can communicate face-to-face better.

**You become less aggressive**

Being answerable to someone on the opposite end means that you are having to answer to a demand all the time, which causes a sense of hostility and repressed anger in you. Take away such feeling by simply unplugging.





# India abstains on UN resolution on Gaza truce, accountability for 'war crimes'

India on Friday abstained on a UN resolution against Israel calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and urging an obligation to ensure accountability and justice for war crimes.

New Delhi. India on Friday abstained from voting in favour of a resolution by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and demanding the cease of the sale, transfer and diversion of arms, munitions and other military equipment to Israel. The resolution also called upon an obligation to ensure accountability and justice for war crimes (violations of human rights) in Palestine, including East Jerusalem. India was among 13 countries who abstained on the resolution, along with Japan, The Netherlands, France and Romania. As many as 28 countries voted in favour of the resolution, including China, Brazil, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Maldives, UAE, Qatar, and South Africa, among others. The draft resolution titled 'Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice' was adopted by the Geneva-based

UNHRC. It also demanded that Israel "end its occupation of the Palestinian territory", including East Jerusalem since 1967. The Council also demanded that Israel immediately lift its blockade on the Gaza Strip and all other forms of collective punishment, and called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The Council called upon all States to take immediate action to prevent the continued forcible transfer of Palestinians within or from Gaza," a statement by the UNHRC read. The resolution condemned Israeli actions that may amount to ethnic cleansing in Palestine, and called upon all states to take immediate action to prevent the continued forcible transfer of Palestinians within or from Gaza. It further urged an urgent "restoration of basic necessities to the Palestinian population in Gaza" and urged all states to continue providing emergency assistance to the Palestinian people. The UNHRC resolution also condemned the targeted killing of civilians in Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack in Israel and

demanding the immediate release of remaining hostages as well as ensuring immediate humanitarian access to them in line with international law. **INDIA'S VOTE IN FAVOUR OF UN RESOLUTIONS** The UNHRC adopted five resolutions, of which India voted in favour of three. The country was among 42 who voted in favour of a resolution on the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination. India also voted in favour of a resolution, along with 28 countries, demanding Israel to immediately cease all settlement-related plans and activities in the occupied Syrian Golan. Another resolution calling for Israel to immediately "end without delay" its occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, occupied since 1967, was also voted in favour by India. A resolution titled 'Rights of the child: realising the rights of the child and inclusive social protection' was adopted by the UNHRC without a vote.



## 5 Lakh Per Newborn: How Delhi's Child-Trafficking Racket Unravalled

New Delhi. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) raided several locations across Delhi in connection with child trafficking. Two newborn babies were rescued from a house located in Keshavpuram, shedding light on a sinister underworld of infant trade. According to CBI sources, newborns were being bought and sold as commodities in the black market. The CBI is currently in the midst of interrogating all parties



involved, including both the woman who sold the children and the buyers themselves. The scope of this operation extends far beyond the borders of Delhi, with the CBI making arrests of individuals involved in trafficking seven to eight children across the National Capital Region (NCR).

Among those arrested are a hospital ward boy and several other women. According to CBI sources, approximately 10 children have been sold within the past month alone. The CBI investigation has now spread its reach across multiple states, with several major hospitals coming under intense scrutiny. Newborns were being sold for exorbitant sums ranging from ₹4 to 5 lakh, the sources said.

## Another Indian Student Dies In US, 10th Incident This Year

New Delhi. An Indian student has died in the US state of Ohio, the Indian Consulate in New York said on Friday, adding that an investigation is underway to ascertain the cause of death.

The student, identified as Uma Satya Sai Gadde, was pursuing his education in Ohio's Cleveland. The Indian Consulate expressed deep sorrow over the loss and extended condolences to the bereaved family. They assured that every possible support, including facilitating the transportation of his body to India, is being provided to the family during this distressing time. "Deeply saddened by the unfortunate demise of Mr. Uma Satya Sai Gadde, an Indian student in Cleveland, Ohio," the Indian Consulate in New York wrote in a post on X. "Police investigation is underway. @IndianNewYork continues to remain in touch with



the family in India. All possible assistance is being extended, including to transport Mr Uma Gadde's mortal remains to India at the earliest."

This incident marks yet another episode in a concerning trend of deaths involving Indian-origin students in the United States. In March, another Indian student, Mohammed Abdul Arafat, went missing from the Cleveland area under mysterious circumstances. His family then received a ransom call demanding payment for his release.

Earlier this year, Syed Mazahir Ali, a student from Hyderabad, was brutally attacked in Chicago, leaving him severely injured. The Indian Consulate in Chicago promptly intervened, offering support to Mr Ali and his family. The death of Neel Acharya, a student at Indiana's Purdue University, and the brutal killing of Vivek Saini in Georgia, sent shockwaves among the Indian community in the US.

## Anti-Terror Agency Identifies Key Accused Who Carried Out Bengaluru Café Blast

Several people were injured in the blast at the Rameshwaram Cafe.

New Delhi. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has identified Mussavir Hussain Shazib as the key accused who carried out the blast at a cafe in Bengaluru on March 1 and Abdul Matheen Taahaa as the co-conspirator. As part of the efforts to locate and arrest the accused who are on the run, the NIA has conducted searches at 18 locations in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, an NIA spokesperson said.

In the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case, the NIA has identified the accused person who carried out the IED blast as Mussavir Hussain Shazib and the co-conspirator as Abdul Matheen Taahaa, both residents of Thirthahalli in Shivamogga district of Karnataka. Several people were injured in the blast at the cafe located



at ITPL Road, Brookefield, Bengaluru. Further, as part of the investigation, Muzammil Shareef, a resident of Khalsa, Chikkamagaluru, who extended logistics support to the main accused persons, was arrested on March 26 and was examined in police custody, the spokesperson said. The agency had declared

rewards of ₹10 lakh on information leading to the arrest of each person on the run on March 29. The NIA has been summoning and examining all acquaintances, including college and school friends, of the accused who are on the run and those who have been arrested to gather evidence and information in the case, the spokesperson said. It being a terror incident, any information on the identity of the witnesses may put them at risk in addition to hampering the investigation. Also, unverified news items hamper effective investigation in the case, the agency said. The NIA has sought the cooperation of all for the arrest of the accused who are on the run, the spokesperson said.

## "Loyalty Should Be With...": Chief Justice To Judges Ahead Of Lok Sabha Polls



New Delhi. While every Indian is likely to harbor a political ideology or inclination, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud emphasized today that the loyalty of lawyers and judges should be directed towards the Constitution. Making the remarks just days before the Lok Sabha elections begin, the Chief Justice stressed the need for judges to be non-partisan.

"In a vibrant and argumentative democracy like ours, most individuals have a political ideology or inclination. Aristotle said human beings are political animals, and lawyers are no exception. However, for members of the bar one's highest loyalty should not lie with partisan interests but with the court and the constitution," DY Chandrachud said at the centenary year celebration of the High Court Bar Association of Nagpur. He reiterated that the judiciary has consistently risen to the occasion to "assert its independence and non-partisanship, ensuring the separation of powers from the executive, the legislature, and vested political interests."

We must not forget, however, that there is a close link between the independence of the judiciary and the independence of the bar," the CJI emphasized. He underscored that an independent bar serves as a "moral bulwark to safeguard the rule of law and constitutional governance." The CJI said the judgments of the Supreme Court's constitutional benches represent the culmination of rigorous proceedings, thorough legal analysis, and a commitment to constitutional principles.

"Once a judgment is pronounced, it becomes public property. As an institution, we have broad shoulders. We are prepared to receive both praise and criticism... commendations and critiques, whether through journalistic pieces, political commentary, or on social media," he asserted. However, as members and office-bearers of bar associations, lawyers must maintain a distinction from laypersons when reacting to court judgments, he added.

## Kamal Nath Aide And Ex-Congress Minister Joins BJP Ahead Of Polls

MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav welcomed Dipak Saxena, a close aide of senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, into the ruling party.

Bhopal. Former Madhya Pradesh minister and four-time Congress MLA from Chhindwara Dipak Saxena and his supporters joined the BJP on Friday night. MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav welcomed Mr Saxena, a close aide of senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, into the ruling party.

Mr Saxena, who quit the Congress on March 22, said he was joining the BJP as he was influenced by the works of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, CM Yadav and state BJP chief VD Sharma. Earlier, his son Ajay Saxena had joined the BJP. "The Congress has become aimless under Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath, sitting MP from Chhindwara. My father was being marginalized and the workers too were being ignored in Chhindwara for the last six years. That is why my father took the decision to part ways with the Congress," Ajay Saxena said. Dipak Saxena had quit his Assembly seat when Kamal Nath became CM in 2018 so that latter could



become an MLA. On March 29, Kamal Nath loyalist and Amarwara MLA Kamlesh Pratap Shah crossed over to the BJP. Mr Shah has won the Amarwara seat thrice in a row. In the November 2023 MP assembly polls,

the Congress had won all the seven assembly seats of Chhindwara district. The BJP is making all efforts to ensure it wrests Chhindwara, the only seat the Congress had won in MP in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

## In Poll Manifesto, Congress Vows Law For Civil Unions Of LGBTQIA+ Couples

The assertion by the Congress on reforms of personal laws but with the consent of the communities concerned comes amid a push by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to bring in a Uniform Civil Code.

New Delhi. The Congress on Friday said if it comes to power at the Centre, after wide consultations, it will bring a law to recognise civil unions between couples belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community.

In its manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the opposition party also said it will encourage reforms of personal laws but asserted that such reforms must be undertaken with the participation and consent of the communities concerned. The assertion by the Congress on reforms of personal laws but with the consent of the communities concerned comes amid a push by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to bring in a Uniform Civil Code.

The Congress also said it will respect and uphold the fundamental right to practise one's faith and the rights guaranteed to religious minorities under articles 15, 16, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 30 of the Constitution. "After wide consultation, Congress will bring a law to recognise civil unions between couples belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community," the manifesto said. LGBTQIA stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender,



Queer, Intersex and Asexual. The additional "+" stands for all of the other identities not encompassed in the short acronym. "We will also respect and uphold the rights of linguistic minorities guaranteed under Articles 15, 16, 29 and 30 of the Constitution," the Congress said. The party also promised to encourage and assist students and youngsters belonging to the minority communities to take full advantage of the growing opportunities in

education, employment, business, services, sports, arts and other fields. "We will restore the Maulana Azad Scholarships for study abroad and increase the number of scholarships," the manifesto said. Noting that the economic empowerment of the minorities is a necessary step for India to realise its full potential, the Congress said it will ensure that banks provide institutional credit to minorities without discrimination. "We

will ensure that the minorities receive their fair share of opportunities in education, healthcare, public employment, public work contracts, skill development, sports and cultural activities without discrimination," the party said.

The Congress said it will ensure that like every citizen of the country, the minorities too have the freedom of choice of dress, food, language and personal laws. "We will encourage reform of personal laws. Such reform must be undertaken with the participation and consent of the communities concerned," it said.

The Congress promised to meet the long-standing demands for the inclusion of more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution. The manifesto, focusing on five "pillars of justice" and 25 guarantees under those, was released at the AICC headquarters on Friday in the presence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. The Lok Sabha polls are scheduled to be held in seven phases starting April 19 and the counting of votes will be taken up on June 4.



# Tips for Appraisal Time

It's appraisal time for a lot of us, and with it, comes the race to getting to the highest bonus bracket. Except, there's one big hurdle. Has Human Resources already shot you an email with the link to fill up your self-assessment? Has that left you staring at the screen twiddling your thumbs muttering to yourself that this is your manager's job? Well, we're going to make the job easier for you today.

Many organisations ask employees to assess themselves as the first step of the evaluation process in the appraisal. This is done to give employees a 'voice' rather than simply be a recipient of feedback from their manager. Such participation helps make employees more engaged in their performance as well as the review process.

But, as we all know, that is easier said than done. Don't worry, though. With these nuggets of advice pooled from HR experts around the globe, you'll be writing your self-assessment in no time!

## START WITH THE TECHNICAL GOALS

Vedant Kantharia, Director at Unify Search Solutions, an HR Consultancy firm, suggests that you first identify the technical and non-technical goals. "Technical goals include those that are directly related to the specific skillsets needed for your job," says Kantharia. "For example, sales targets for a salesperson or increasing website traffic for a digital marketing executive - these are technical goals. Such goals are usually quantifiable and easier to assess. Evaluate yourself against these targets first. Then, move on to non-technical goals, which are mainly soft skills. For example, communication skills or people management - these are non-technical goals."

## TALK TO PEOPLE

So how do you judge yourself on non-technical skills such as whether you are "contributing to the entire department's knowledge growth"? If your organization doesn't quantify this, you need to talk to people within your department. What have others done to contribute? Have you done anything similar? Talk to people you have helped in the past. Sometimes we forget the assistance we have given others that they can recall. Note all these points to write in your self-assessment.

## START POSITIVE

Always emphasise your accomplishments and achievements first. This creates a first impression that sets the tone for your evaluator. If possible, align your achievements with the overall goals of the organisation. A summary like "I, along with the team, created the sales strategies that led to a 10X growth in customers and a greater than 70% retention rate" showcases how the results of your effort helped

the company achieve its customer-focused goals.

## OFFER EXPLANATIONS

Acknowledge your mistakes carefully. You want to use a tone that shows that you have learnt from your mistakes instead of regretted making them. So instead of writing "I was unable to complete a project on time" and leaving it at that, you would rather explain by saying, "Due to resource constraints, I was unable to complete a project on time. However, I have already discussed a solution with my manager and HR so that this situation does not repeat itself."

## USE SELF-EVALUATION TO ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED

If you think your people skills really suck and you can't get any of your peers to like you, this is the best time to ask for enrolment to a training course! Timothy Butler, a senior fellow and the director of Career Development Programs at Harvard Business School, thinks that smart employees use self-assessment to look for career development opportunities. "Because if you don't ask, it's not going to happen," says Butler. Telling your manager what you need not only exhibits your capability to reflect and self-assess seriously but also shows that you are a solution-oriented person. Also, this is the best way to ensure that you have a more positive assessment in the people skills section during the next appraisal cycle.

## CATER TO LAZY BOSSES

Some managers are too lazy or simply too busy to spend time in articulating their evaluation of you. Instead of writing something fresh, they would rather copy-paste what you give them. "Many lazy bosses see it as an easy way to shuffle off the difficult task of writing a review," says Dick Grote, author of How to be Good

at Performance Appraisals. Cater to this by writing your appraisal in a way that all your boss needs to do is replace 'I' with 'he' and 'my' with 'his'.

## TALK TO YOUR BOSS

Finally, talk to your boss before submitting, especially if you have questions or nagging doubts. If you feel like a certain evaluation parameter is unfair, discuss your concerns with your manager to understand how you can self-assess. Rajeev Mehta (name changed), a marketing professional, found it disconcerting that the appraisal required him to target high financial goals as well as business delivery goals. "My profile was under Digital Marketing," says Mehta, "yet I had marketing as well as finance goals, with both having the same weightage, even though there was a separate team handling the latter. On the other hand, I had given a lot to support various team members which wasn't even being evaluated."

Therefore, it is important to build a rapport with your boss so that when you explain these things, he can find a way to balance out your appraisal."



# Tips to win office Politics

Be it the need for power, position, money or simply greed, office politics can crop in any form and can create havoc in your life if not dealt well.



Let's face it office politics is everywhere and no one can escape for its vicious clutches. But that doesn't mean that you

can't fight it or stand up against it. One has to deal these things calmly and diplomatically. So here are few tips that

will help you stand against these office politics and still be loved by all.

1. Acceptance: A war is half won when you accept and acknowledge it. If you are being involved or dragged in office politics, firstly accept and acknowledge it. Then start analyzing who are the root cause for them and how can they be dealt with. Be aware that after this point too, you have a chance to either face it and fight against it or simply leave it.

2. Don't take sides: We fall in major problems when we start taking sides. It's good to have opinions but never under any circumstances take sides as it will ruin everything. When you find yourself caught in a situation like this then focus on your business objectives and don't take side with either of them. Place them on a common communication platform and ensure open communications among all parties so that no one can claim that they didn't utter those words.

3. Don't get personal: There will be times when a colleague messes up with your happiness and you just want to give them a piece of your mind. Do not do that. This will not only make you look bad in front of your boss's eyes but will also make space for more rivalry. People tend to remember about the insults and arguments meted against them even though for you it was just a matter that you chose not to give enough importance.

4. No angry mails: Before sending any correspondences via email think through it a hundred times. Though in anger you might feel you are doing the right thing but to never known when the same mail might be used against you to demean you or make you the bad person in front of all. Same goes for social media posts too. Be extremely careful.

5. Know the real culprit: Know who the trouble maker is and always maintain a safe distance from that person and if you can make peace with that person nothing better than that.

# How to deal with frenemies at work

A frenemy is one of the most dangerous workplace friends you can come across," says US-based executive coach and corporate author Ellen Lubin-Sherman.

This is the kind of colleague who pretends to be your well-meaning friend but doesn't miss a chance to back-stab you. According to Donna Flagg, the author of Surviving Dreaded Conversations, frenemies range from harmless ones to workplace bullies who revel in mind games. "However, once they are put in place, they are less likely to repeat their behaviour," she says. Dealing

with an office frenemy is like walking on tightrope. You can't sever ties with the colleague in question, especially if you work in the same team, neither can you afford to have heated arguments for the sake of professional appearance.

## KNOW YOUR OFFICE FRENEMIES THE SURFER

This frenemy uses charm to get her work done by transferring her own responsibilities onto colleagues. Tip: Chalk out your personal duties and deadlines to avoid being taken advantage of.

## THE IDEATHIEF

This is the person who seconds your original ideas at brainstorming sessions, and passes them off as his own. Tip: When you find someone taking credit for your idea, verbally discuss it with the colleague. If it doesn't work, talk to your boss after informing the person about it.

## THE EAGER UPSTART

This ambitious young newbie doesn't stop raving about your productivity and work

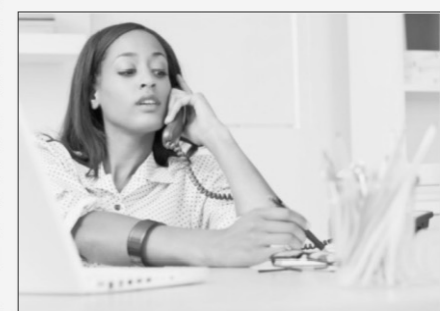
ethics, but has a hidden agenda - to take over your position through scheming. Tip: Don't get swayed by the compliments. Remind your subordinate that your take on her performance counts.

## THE PESSIMIST

He/she thrives on negativity. She draws you into conversations about how everything about your workplace is terrible. Tip: When you find yourself being pulled into complaint mode, focus on the positive steps you can take to resolve problems.

## Dos & don'ts

Treat your colleague cautiously if you continue to have major problems. When handed joint projects, draw clear lines of separation of labour. Write down the facts of your complaint before bringing the



matter to your boss. Leave out any personal opinions in the note. If it reads like something your boss should be aware of, then state your case as objectively as possible.

Don't retaliate. If you find that a colleague has bad-mouthed you or taken credit for your ideas, don't respond immediately even though you might be tempted to. Don't shut down lines of communication, especially via email. Having a record of your correspondence will prevent your frenemy from faking facts. Don't overreact. Let minor matters slide. If the issue is significant, ask your colleague about it directly to avoid any misunderstandings. Significant matters slide. If the issue is significant, ask your colleague about it directly to avoid any misunderstandings. Don't complain at the outset of your tiff. Give your colleague the benefit of the doubt until the matter escalates.



## Strides Pharma gets two US FDA observations after Chennai plant inspection

New Delhi. Strides Pharma Science Limited, a leading pharmaceutical company, announced today that its wholly-owned subsidiary, Strides Alathur Private Limited, received two observations during a routine current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMP) inspection conducted by the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA). The inspection took place at the company's formulations facility in Alathur, Chennai, from April 1 to April 5, 2024. The USFDA conducts regular inspections of pharmaceutical



manufacturing facilities to ensure compliance with cGMP regulations. Observations made during these inspections are common and do not necessarily imply any significant non-compliance issues. Companies are required to address these observations and provide a detailed response to the regulatory agency. The agency then takes a final decision before closing the matter. Strides Pharma Science stated that the company would comprehensively respond to the observations within the stipulated time and will keep investors updated. Strides Pharma Science Limited is a global pharmaceutical company headquartered in Bangalore, India, with a focus on developing and manufacturing a wide range of IP-led niche pharmaceutical products. The company has a strong presence in the regulated markets of the United States, Europe, and Australia, as well as in emerging markets.

## Sanlam raises stake in Shriram insurance arms to over 50%

MUMBAI. South African financial services major Sanlam Group, which has a joint venture with Chennai-based Shriram group for its insurance ventures, has bought out the stake held by PE major TPG in both general and life insurance entities for an undisclosed sum. With this, the group increased its holding in these companies to over 50%. In a statement on Friday, Sanlam said its wholly-owned subsidiary Sanlam Emerging Markets Mauritius, has agreed to buy the stakes that TPG India Investments has been holding in the insurance verticals of the Shriram group. TPG held 6.29% in Shriram General Insurance and 7.04% in Shriram Life. TPG entered the Shriram Group holding firm Shriram Capital in 2011 by investing Rs 795 crore. But after the merger of the finance verticals of the group, the PE got these stake being sold now in these two entities, a company source told this newspaper. said raising stakes in these JV recognises India as a core market and strategic pillar to achieving long term earnings growth and sustainable shareholder value creation for them.

## Forex Update: India's Foreign Exchange Reserves Hit Fresh All-Time High of \$645.58 Billion

NEW DELHI. India's foreign exchange reserves increased \$2.951 billion to \$645.583 billion for the week ended March 29, according to the latest RBI report. This is the sixth consecutive week of a jump in overall reserves. The kitty had increased \$140 million to \$642.631 billion in the previous reporting week. Earlier, the country's forex kitty had in September 2021 reached an all-time high of \$642.453 billion. The reserves took a hit as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments since last year. For the week ended March 29, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased \$2.354 billion to \$570.618 billion, data released on Friday showed.



Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound, and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased \$673 million to \$52.16 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down \$73 million to \$18.145 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was also down \$2 million to \$4.66 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

The rupee currently stands at 83.31 against the US dollar. Anil Kumar Bhansali, head of treasury and executive director of Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP, said, "The domestic currency Rupee is expected to be in a broad range of 83-83.50 as RBI supports the upside and down side of the currency pair. Exporters to sell for near term at 83.40 and above and importers to buy dips."

# ZEEL Begins Process To Lay Off 15% Of Its Workforce; Check Details

NEW DELHI. ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) has started a process of rationalisation of the workforce by 15 per cent to prune staff strength across the company. In a regulatory filing, ZEEL said its MD & CEO Punit Goenka has proposed a lean organisation structure to the board with a lateral structure while identifying broadcast, digital, movies and music as core business units. "In line with his overall strategic approach, the MD & CEO has initiated the process of rationalisation of the workforce by 15 per cent, that will prune the staff strength across the company to arrive at a streamlined team that is sharply focused on the set goals for the future," the company said. As per ZEEL's annual report for 2022-23, the number of permanent employees on the roll of the company is 3,437. ZEEL said the proposed structure is aimed towards arriving at a cost-effective operational model with speed and agility as the core areas of focus. "It will further enable the company to chart higher growth

by maintaining a keen eye on performance and profitability, thereby seamlessly executing its strategic priorities as required for a content creation company," the filing said. The proposed team structure will foster a more collaborative performance-oriented culture, it added. "In the lateral structure, the MD & CEO has also proposed the elevation of certain team members across businesses, in order to provide them a higher level of responsibilities; besides him assuming direct charge of the critical business verticals leading to cross-functional collaboration, quick decision making and higher productivity levels," the company said. ZEEL, however, said the detailed composition of the new operating structure will be announced after seeking the required approvals and guidance from the board. "Building a simplified, lateral structure for the company, will ensure that we maintain a sharp focus on performance and profitability as the key growth drivers, and the structure proposed to the board is in



ZEE Entertainment Enterprises Ltd

line with this core thought. The streamlined team at ZEE will maintain a sharper focus on targeting higher levels of productivity to drive growth in order to generate value for all our stakeholders going forward," Goenka said.

ZEEL Chairman R Gopalan said the board

has noted Goenka's steps taken to streamline the organisation and the proposed lean structure. "While the board is in the process of discussing the same, the proposed structure certainly is in line with the strategic guidance provided to the management. The board appreciates the steps taken by the management to enhance the overall performance of the company, reaffirming our faith in the team's ability to drive the company towards its set targets for the future," he added. ZEEL said the core business units of the proposed structure will include broadcast, digital, movies and music. The linear business will continue to be a strong growth driver for the company with a vast portfolio of channels across genres, catering to the consumers' every entertainment need, it said, adding the digital business will be a core area of focus combining the best of content and technology to deliver a compelling value proposition for the consumers.

## Apple lays off more than 600 employees in the US

NEW DELHI. Apple Inc recently laid off more than 600 employees in California, the US, a move linked to the company's decision to discontinue its car project and in-house efforts to build Apple Watch displays. Both projects were shelved in February 2024. The car project's cancellation stemmed from executive indecision regarding its direction and mounting cost concerns. Similarly, the smartwatch display programme faced engineering hurdles, supplier challenges, and ultimately proved too expensive to continue. This information comes from WARN notices, or worker adjustment and retraining notification filings, submitted by Apple to the California Employment Development Department. These filings are required by law when a company conducts mass layoffs. To comply with the regulations,



Apple filed eight separate reports, each detailing layoffs at a specific California location. Nearly 87 of the affected employees worked at a facility dedicated to Apple's next-generation screen development, while others were located for the car project. The brunt of the layoffs impacted Apple's main car-related office in Santa Clara, California, where 371 employees were let go.

Dozens more working in satellite offices also lost their jobs. However, some members of the car team were reportedly reassigned to other areas within Apple, including artificial intelligence and personal robotics. It's important to note that the WARN notices might not capture the full scope of job reductions. Apple likely had engineers working on these projects in other locations, such as Arizona. Historically, layoffs haven't been a common occurrence at Apple, unlike other tech giants like Alphabet, Amazon, and Microsoft.

### Car, watch display units impacted

The brunt of the layoffs impacted Apple's main car-related office in Santa Clara, California, where 371 employees were let go. Dozens more working in satellite offices also lost their jobs.

## India prepares for 'One Airspace': Unified air traffic control plans set in motion - what it means

NEW DELHI. India is soon to have 'One Airspace': India is moving forward with a plan to streamline its airspace management to enhance efficiency and reduce emissions. The initiative aims to consolidate control over the airspace spanning 2.8 million square nautical miles, currently divided into four regions, under a unified command center in Nagpur. The aim is to 'unify' the airspace. Officials told ET that this strategic move is expected to optimize air traffic management, benefiting airlines through cost savings and improved safety measures. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has initiated the process by inviting bids from consultants to obtain technology from global companies and implement advanced technology solutions for a single air traffic management system. The comprehensive program, projected to span over eight years, includes infrastructure development, controller training, and migration to the new system. Once fully operational, the unified airspace strategy will enable

airlines to identify more efficient flight routes, resulting in reduced travel time and fuel consumption. By facilitating consistent flight patterns at higher altitudes and smoother descents for landing, the initiative aims to enhance operational efficiency. Senior air traffic control officials emphasized the current challenges of coordinating flights across different regions and the anticipated simplification with the centralized control in Nagpur. "Currently, when an aircraft passes over the Indian region, the controllers have to hand it over to the other region, which includes a lot of coordination especially over busier air routes," an official was quoted as saying. "Once a single unified sky is achieved, almost 75-80% of controllers will be based in Nagpur, reducing the need for coordination, leading to less stress and fatigue. Single coordination also allows restructuring of air routes, opening up more fuel-efficient routes for airlines," the official said. This shift is expected to significantly reduce coordination efforts, alleviate stress, and

enhance operational fluidity for pilots as well. Pilots welcomed the initiative, noting that it would streamline communication processes and reduce cockpit workload. The unified airspace management system will provide pilots with advance information on altitude and routing, enabling smoother transitions across regions and minimizing the need for frequent radio frequency changes. "You get to know your altitude, routing well in advance and if you are flying above 25,000 feet, you can overfly with complete radio silence without seeking multiple clearances and reducing communication with the ATC (air traffic control)," a senior commander was quoted as saying. The decision to enhance airspace efficiency aligns with the growing demand for air travel in India, as seen by the substantial increase in aircraft orders by domestic carriers. Civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has in the past highlighted the significant growth in the Indian aviation sector, with projections indicating a doubling.

## Reserve Bank leads surge in gold reserves amid global central bank slowdown

NEW DELHI. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) stood out with its continued accumulation of gold reserves. Weekly data from the RBI revealed a 6-tonne increase in gold holdings in February alone. This brings the total year-to-date buying by the RBI to over 13 tonnes, with total gold reserves now reaching 817 tonnes. India's consistent efforts to bolster its gold reserves reflect a strategy aimed at diversifying its foreign exchange reserves and mitigating risks associated with currency fluctuations and economic uncertainties. While India remains a significant player in the global gold market, other central banks also contributed to the accumulation in February. Central banks around the globe continued their steady accumulation of gold reserves, albeit at a slower pace compared to the previous month, in February. This trend has been predominantly driven by emerging market banks, particularly those of India and China, as reported by the World Gold Council. According to a report published in the World Gold Council by Senior Analyst, EMEA World Gold Council,



Krishna Gopal, global central banks increased their gold reserves by a net of 19 tonnes in February.

While this marks the ninth consecutive month of growth, it represents a significant slowdown from January, with a 58 per cent decrease in net

purchases. Despite the deceleration, the broader trend of central bank buying remains intact. Year-to-date data for January and February shows an addition of 64 tonnes, indicating a fourfold increase compared to the same period in 2022, although it's notably 43 per cent

lower than the corresponding period in 2023.

The People's Bank of China (PBoC) emerged as the largest buyer during the month, increasing its gold reserves by 12 tonnes. However, amid the overall trend of accumulation, there were notable instances of selling as well. Despite the slower pace of accumulation witnessed in February, analysts remain optimistic about the outlook for central bank demand for gold. The broader trend indicates a continued interest among central banks in diversifying their reserve assets, particularly amidst geopolitical uncertainties and economic volatility. Looking ahead, market observers anticipate the release of the next Gold Demand Trends report in late April, which will provide comprehensive insights into central bank demand for the entire first quarter of the year. Overall, while the pace may have moderated in February, the underlying trend suggests that central banks, including India's RBI, remain committed to bolstering their gold reserves as a strategic hedge against global economic uncertainties.

## War of Words! Now, former CEA Krishnamurthy Subramanian says IMF GDP forecasts for India

NEW DELHI. War of Words! Krishnamurthy Subramanian, the Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund has said that the IMF's GDP growth forecasts for India have been consistently 'INACCURATE'. In contrast, he claimed that his predictions of India's GDP growth have been accurate. The issue stems from IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack recently stating that Krishnamurthy Subramanian's 8% GDP growth forecast for the Indian economy does not represent that of the International Monetary Fund. Krishnamurthy Subramanian has previously served as a Chief Economic Advisor for the government of India.

IMF had clarified that the recent growth projections made by Krishnamurthy Subramanian, the Executive Director representing India at the IMF, do not reflect the official views of the organization.

In response to Subramanian's remarks predicting an 8 percent growth rate for India, IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack stated that his comments were made in his capacity as India's representative. "The views conveyed... by Mr. Subramanian were in his role as India's representative at the IMF," she said according to a PTI report. Kozack highlighted the distinction between the views of individual representatives like Subramanian and the IMF's official projections. Post IMF's clarification, Subramanian in a post on Twitter (formerly X) said, "During my tenure at @IMFNews (since Nov-22), IMF staff's estimate of India's growth rate has been consistently INACCURATE. While India's growth has been >7%, IMF staff estimates have all been <7%. In contrast, I've made accurate predictions. See my Sep-21 prediction - Expect more than 7% growth for India this decade: CEA Subramanian."

And actual growth FY21-22=9.7%; FY22-23=7.0%; FY23-24 (estimate)=7.6%. The Data speaks!" In contrast, check IMF staff predictions. For FY 23-24, in Nov-22 and Jan-23, IMF staff predicted growth=6.1%. In Apr-23, they lowered it to 5.9%. In Nov-23, they predicted 6.3%. And actual growth estimate (NSSO) for FY23-24 =7.6%; IMO, will be revised to ~8%," he wrote. "So, IMF staff's error margins are HUGE: 1.9% in Nov-22 & Jan-23 estimates, 2.1% in Apr-23 estimate, and 1.7% in Nov-23 estimates. Similarly, even FY23-24 growth estimates of IMF staff <7%. Data clearly shows whose prediction is more accurate! Need I say more?," he added. Subramanian had recently expressed optimism about India achieving an 8 percent growth rate until 2047 if the country continues its current policies and accelerates reforms. So, the basic idea is that with the kind.



## NEWS BOX

## IPL 2024: Yuzvendra Chahal wants to dismiss 'GOAT' Virat Kohli early in RR vs RCB

Jaipur. Rajasthan spinner Yuzvendra Chahal feels that dismissing Virat Kohli early will put RCB under a heap of pressure in their upcoming clash in the Indian Premier League. Speaking in the pre-match press conference, Chahal was asked about the team's plans against the legendary India batter, and the spinner had some high praise about his former RCB teammate. Chahal called Virat Kohli as the greatest batter of all time and said that Kohli's wicket will have RCB reeling under pressure. Rajasthan play Bengaluru in their third home game of the season. RR have won three back to back games in the tournament and a fourth win will see them go to the top of the IPL 2024 points table. Rajasthan have impressed with both bat and ball so far. Trent Boult, Nandre Burger and Riyan Parag are some of the players from Rajasthan who have impressed massively so far and are expected to do well



in the match against RCB.

"In the match, RCB will be under pressure if we can get the greatest ever Virat Kohli out early," Chahal said in the pre-match press conference. Asked about the trend of home fans supporting away teams due to the presence of legendary figures like MS Dhoni and Virat Kohli, Chahal said that the players had garnered that respect due to their years of service. Chahal stressed that fans buy their own tickets and had the right to show love to whoever they wanted.

"Virat Kohli, MS Dhoni, Rohit Sharma, they are big players and they attract support from all stadiums. The fans buy their own tickets, we don't give them," Chahal said on fans' mentality of supporting away players in home games. Bengaluru on the other hand, have not had a good time in the Indian Premier League so far. The Faf du Plessis-led franchise have lost three out of their first four games and totter at the No. 8 position in the points table. Barring Virat Kohli, Dinesh Karthik, Anuj Rawat and Mahipal Lomror, the RCB batting unit has not quite clicked yet and the bowling attack has also been criticised for their lack of firepower.

RR and RCB will play their match at the Saiwari Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on April 6.

## Pat Cummins is a bit like MS Dhoni: Tom Moody hails SRH skipper after CSK demolition

New Delhi. Tom Moody heaped praise on Pat Cummins after SRH beat CSK by 6 wickets on Friday, April 5 in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 match at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium. With the win, Hyderabad moved to fifth in the table with 4 points and a net run rate of +0.409 thanks to wins in both their home matches. SRH delivered another batting masterclass in front of their home crowd, which blew away the CSK bowling attack. Moody said that Cummins tries to go away from the conventional moves and chips in tactics, which one may not think in the first place. Prior to IPL 2024, Cummins had no experience of captaining a T20 team across any level. But as per Moody, the Australian Test and ODI skipper has found a way to shine in the shortest format as well.

## 'It was quite an odd decision'

After the Sunrisers opted to bowl first, Cummins handed the ball to Abhishek Sharma instead of veteran Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who is known to swing the ball both ways. On the very strategy, Moody said that



Cummins thinks outside of the box as a captain. "The one thing I like about Cummins is he is a bit like MS Dhoni. He is prepared to make a decision that most people don't think about, but makes you feel like 'Why didn't I think about that?' Like the Abhishek Sharma over. It was quite an odd decision when you look at the other options they could have gone with," Moody told ESPNcricinfo. You have arguably the best new ball bowler in IPL history in Bhuvneshwar Kumar. You have got an off spinner against left-handers. You think Markram would be another one. There was plenty of other ways he could have gone. But he committed to that and it looked like from the get go, he convinced himself that it was the right decision," he added.

## SRH vs CSK: Report

The Sunrisers will lock horns with Punjab Kings (PBKS) on Tuesday, April 9 at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium at Mullanpur, Chandigarh.

## 'Was it to keep Dhoni indoors': Former India batter after Cummins withdrew 'obstructing the field' appeal against Jadeja

NEW DELHI. Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins withdrew an appeal for obstructing the field against Chennai Super Kings' Ravindra Jadeja in a dramatic turn of events during the Indian Premier League match at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Friday, sparking a debate among cricket pundits.

The incident happened in the 19th over of the CSK innings, when SRH pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar bowled a yorker to Jadeja, who jammed it out towards the bowler. With Jadeja well outside his crease after playing the delivery, Bhuvni threw the ball back towards the stumps and it hit Jadeja on the back. Jadeja was looking like trying to get out of the way of the throw, rather than getting in the way to obstruct it. But the on-field umpires decided to refer it upstairs. SRH captain Cummins then came forward and withdrew the appeal. Sent in to bat first, CSK struggled to set a formidable total, managing only 165/5 in their 20 overs. Shivam Dube's brisk 45 off 24 balls and Ajinkya Rahane's 35 off 30 balls were the main contributions, but the team faltered in the final five overs, adding just 37 runs.

Former Indian cricketer Mohammad Kaif raised questions about Cummins' decision, stating, "Two questions to Pat Cummins on withdrawing the obstructing the field appeal against Jadeja. Was it a tactical call to let a



struggling Jadeja be at the crease and keep Dhoni indoors? Would he have done the same if it was Virat Kohli at World T20?"

Despite the debate, Jadeja played a handy knock, remaining unbeaten with 31 off 23 balls, but the total was not competitive enough in the end.

In response to CSK's total, SRH openers had a

course of the run chase. The hosts then completed the chase with 11 balls to spare and registered a commanding six wickets victory. With two wins from four games, SRH jumped to fifth in the IPL standings, whereas CSK, who also have a similar record of two wins in four games, remain at third spot.

After the initial onslaught, Aiden Markram (50 off 36) and Travis Head (31 off 24) added 60 runs for the second wicket to put SRH on

## MS Dhoni showered with love in Hyderabad: SRH stars Klaassen, Markram pay tribute

MS Dhoni was showered with love from the crowd during the SRH vs CSK clash on April 5. 'Dhoni, Dhoni' chants echoed throughout the stadium on Friday, as SRH stars Heinrich Klaassen, Aiden Markram and Jaydev Unadkat paid their tribute to the CSK



New Delhi. CSK star MS Dhoni was showered with love during the clash against SRH in Hyderabad, with the fans in the stadium showing their appreciation for the legendary wicketkeeper-batter throughout the game. Dhoni didn't have a lot to do with the bat on the day as he came in late on in the innings, but his presence was enough to get the fans up on their feet and chanting his name.

The support from the Hyderabad crowd

towards Dhoni even left the SRH skipper Pat Cummins stunned as he had revealed during the post-match presentation. IPL has now released a video on their official X account, which captured the best moments of the CSK star in Hyderabad. The crowd reaction of him stepping into bat was incredible as the whole stadium started to echo with "Dhoni, Dhoni" chants. SRH stars Heinrich Klaassen, Aiden Markram and Jaydev Unadkat would pay their tributes to Dhoni in the video. Klaassen said he had no doubt the CSK star will go down as a legend

of the sport, while Markram said that he had still got it. "He is going down as a legend. Especially in this country, as well," said Klaassen.

"Yeah, he's still got it. He is still the legend," said Markram. Unadkat said that everyone is a fan of Dhoni and he has got a great aura behind him. "There is no point denying the fact that everyone is a MS Dhoni fan. He has got a great aura behind him," said Unadkat. How

has MS Dhoni performed in the IPL so far? After handing over the captaincy of CSK to Rituraj Gaikwad, Dhoni has been more focused on his work behind the stumps and has pulled off some great efforts from the very start of the tournament. His batting role has been limited so far, but Dhoni pulled off a blinder in the loss to DC, scoring 37 off 16 balls. On Friday, he faced just one ball as SRH would win the match by 6 wickets. Dhoni and CSK will next be in action against KKR on April 8.

## CSK coach Stephen Fleming rues missing Mustafizur, Pathirana in SRH loss: Part of IPL

CSK coach Stephen Fleming admitted that his side missed the services of both Mustafizur Rahman and Matheesha Pathirana during their loss to SRH on April 5, Friday in Hyderabad. Chennai were notably light in the bowling front with the duo missing out.



New Delhi. CSK coach Stephen Fleming rued the fact his side were missing the services of Mustafizur Rahman and Matheesha Pathirana for their match against SRH, but admitted that it was part of the IPL process. CSK were handed their second consecutive loss in Hyderabad after the home side made quick work of the chase of 166, thanks to a whirlwind knock by Abhishek Sharma at the start.

A fifty from Aiden Markram and 31 from Travis Head set up the 6-wicket win in the end. However, CSK were notably a bit light on the bowling front on Friday with Mustafizur back home in Bangladesh due to visa issues and Pathirana having a niggles. Speaking at the press conference after the match, Fleming said that there was no doubt that Mustafizur was a big miss. The CSK coach also said that Mukesh Choudhary, who was making his IPL return, didn't have the best of days after conceding 27 in his only over. "Without a doubt, it's his part of the IPL. He's not here, so we can't use him. But having injuries and losing players in an

IPL is part of the process." "We had a chance to introduce Mukesh Choudhary today. He was good for us a while back. It wasn't his day. But that's part of the IPL. It's managing players, and when you do find yourself a little bit short on firepower, it's finding the new hero," said Fleming. We were maybe 15 runs short in the end; Fleming Fleming also felt that his side were 15 runs short in the end and weren't accurate enough in the powerplay overs. "And, it didn't happen today, but we put trust in the players that we introduced and they've been training well and doing the job. Tough baptism. The first five or six overs were the best to bat, and the aggressive way in which they played showed that. So, being able to get a wicket first over and maybe shut down the second, it could have been a competitive score, but maybe 15 short and, not quite accurate enough for first six overs with the ball," said Fleming. Mustafizur is second in the Purple Cap standings at the moment with 7 wickets, while Pathirana has 4 wickets to his name from 2 matches.



clear he wasn't pleased with Abhishek's shot selection at the end of the day.

In a tweet, Yuvraj posted a GIF that showed a man chasing another person in a hilarious fashion. "I'm right behind you boy @aewell played again - but bad shot to get out on @IamAbhiSharma4," said Yuvraj Singh.

How well did Abhishek perform against CSK?

Following CSK's competitive total of 165 for 5, Abhishek, alongside Travis Head, gave SRH a blazing start. Their partnership quickly amassed 46 runs in just 2.3 overs, with the Punjab batter taking the lead in this aggressive pursuit. His most remarkable moment came when he faced Mukesh Choudhary, against whom he unleashed a torrent of runs, scoring 27 in a single over through a combination of three sixes and two boundaries.

IPL 2024 Full Coverage | IPL 2024 Points Table and Standings

SRH moved to fifth in the IPL points table with the win and will now face PBKS in their next match on

## IPL 2024: Abhishek Sharma's innings key for SRH to win vs CSK, says Irfan Pathan

New Delhi. Former India cricketer, Irfan Pathan credited Abhishek Sharma for his blazing knock which propelled SRH to an emphatic win by 6 wickets against CSK at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Hyderabad on April 5, Friday. Abhishek played a blistering knock of 37 runs from 12 balls that had a crucial role in SRH registering their 2nd win of the season. He was also adjudged as the Player of the Match for his quick fire innings. SRH bounced back from their defeat to GT in Ahmedabad as they won their 2nd match at their home ground. Pathan, while speaking on Star Sports, lauded Abhishek for his impactful knock and mentioned that it could have been a difficult chase for SRH, had it not been for the young batter. Abhishek boasted the best batting strike rate in IPL 2024 so far, with 217.56. Abhishek Sharma's innings of 37 runs was of a big impact," Pathan said on Star Sports.



"If that inning would not have come with such a solid strike rate, in the end, it would have been a bit tighter than what it was, because there was a phase around the 15th and the 16th over, where SRH were panicking

unnecessarily," Pathan added. HOW ABHISHEK'S KNOCK WAS CRUCIAL IN SRH'S WIN? Abhishek provided SRH a flying start as he started hammering the ball from the word go.

He took the CSK bowlers for cleaners on a sluggish pitch. SRH came blazing in the power play as they raced away in the chase by scoring 79 runs in the first 6 overs itself.

After Maheesh Theekshana broke the 60-run stand between Travis Head and Aiden Markram, CSK tried to pull things back courtesy of a fine spell by Moeen Ali in the middle overs. However, it turned out to be too late as SRH needed only a run-a-ball. Despite a big dip in their scoring rate, SRH managed a comfortable win with 11 balls to spare. Pathan pointed out the SRH panicked unnecessarily during the middle of the chase. "They didn't need to send Shahbaz Ahmed on top, they didn't need to play those big shots. It was well under 6 runs per over, it was an easy chase. But then Abhishek Sharma's innings in the end was so crucial. He is playing more than a strike rate of 200 for a youngster, that is outstanding," said Pathan.





# Taapsee Pannu

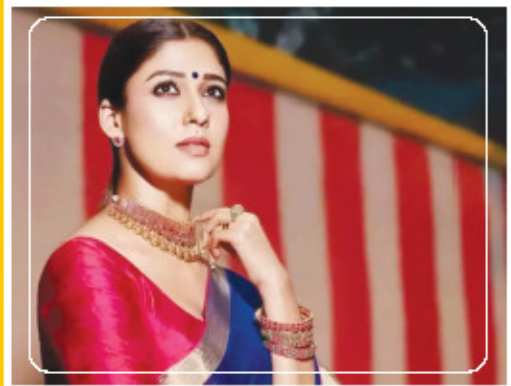
Flaunts Her Hot Curves in Plunging Bralette, Check Out Her Hot Photos



Taapsee Pannu is setting Instagram on fire and how! The actress took to her social media handle and shared a photo from her recent sexy photoshoot. In the photos, Taapsee was seen wearing a white corset top with a plunging neckline, flaunting her curves. The actress teamed up the corset with a pair of black pants, adding the needed oomph to the already hot look. Taapsee was seen sitting on the floor and posing against a couch. He tied her glorious curls in a neat bun and wore statement diamond and ruby jewellery to elevate her look. Taapsee wore black heels and painted her nails red to finish off the look. As Taapsee gave a sultry expression to the camera, her photo left her fans gasping for breath.

Taapsee Pannu recently got married to her long-time boyfriend Mathias Boe in an intimate ceremony. News18 Showsha was the first to report this. Later, a video of Taapsee making her bridal entry went viral across social media. As per our report, the wedding took place at the end of March 2024. In the video which went viral, Taapsee could be seen making her bridal entry with her bridesmaids. She looked radiant in a red suit with gold detailing and danced her way to the mandap. She then joined Mathias on the mandap and greeted him with a warm hug. Taapsee Pannu and Danish badminton coach Mathias Boe met at the inaugural Indian Badminton League in 2013. Love blossomed between the two and soon the families met. While Taapsee largely managed to keep details about her love life under wraps, she once stated in an interview that they began chatting on X (formerly Twitter) and then proceeded to meet one another.

## Guess This Actress From Her Childhood Pic With Her Father



It has recently been a trend for childhood photos of many celebrities to end up online and then the guessing game begins as fans are asked to identify them. One such photo of a celebrity as a toddler with her father is going viral at present. It was shared by the actress herself on her Instagram Stories on the occasion of her father's birthday. Can you recognise the actress? Let us tell you that she is one of the top actresses in the South industry. After primarily appearing in Tamil films, she made her Hindi debut in a Shah Rukh Khan film last year. If that is not a dead giveaway as of yet, she is also called the Lady Superstar of the South. You must have guessed it by now. The baby in the picture is none other than Nayanthara Nayanthara, known for her commitment to her profession and her privacy preference, caused a stir recently by making an unexpected debut on social media. This unforeseen step occurred shortly before the release of her Bollywood debut, Jawan.

Nayanthara recently shared a rare childhood photo of herself with her father, which touched many of her fans' hearts and attracted attention. She expressed her love for her father, calling him her hero, in a touching caption that went along with it. According to reports, Nayanthara's assets are worth around Rs 183 crore. She has luxurious buildings in places like Hyderabad, Chennai and Kerala. She is also the only lead actress who owns her private jet. Apart from acting, she earns money through brand endorsements, film productions, promotions on social media, and investments in skincare brand 9Skin. She is one of the richest actresses in the South industry. She fell in love with director Vignesh Sivan and got married to him in a grand affair in 2022. While her fans were accustomed to her reserved nature off-screen, Nayanthara's sudden online presence, where she shared glimpses of her personal life, pleasantly surprised many.

## Sonakshi Sinha 'Can't Stop Smiling' As Her Heeramandi Song Tilasmi Bahein Is Out



Sonakshi Sinha has a little confession to make. The actress "can't stop smiling". After all, her "first Bhansali song", Tilasmi Bahein from Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar is finally out and it is pure gold. Just a day after the release of Tilasmi Bahein, Sonakshi Sinha dropped a series of pictures of herself, while expressing gratitude in the caption. The stunning click shows the actress dressed in a purple sharara set, which she wore during the song launch event on Wednesday. The beautiful ensemble boasts an overall tie-dye print and she teamed it with an oxidised jewellery set. Sharing the pictures, Sonakshi wrote, "Can't stop smiling with all the coming in for Tilasmi Bahein... grateful."

Before this, Sonakshi Sinha dropped a montage video, showing glimpses of the Tilasmi Bahein launch event. In the clip, the actress can be seen getting dressed for the event. The video also shows the actress excitedly saying "My first Bhansali song guys," with the crowd bursting into cheers and hooting. Along with the clip, the actress wrote, "The BIG launch!! My first Bhansali Production song is out... Tilasmi Bahein aap sab ke shukraguzaar hai... Special props to my fabulous team who make sure I shine on and off screen. Teamwork makes the dream work." Tilasmi Bahein is the second song of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar. Last month, the makers unveiled the series' first track Sakal Ban. Tilasmi Bahein features Sonakshi Sinha, draped in a gleaming gold saree, dancing her heart out. The music video of Tilasmi Bahein shows Sonakshi Sinha as the life of a party and she is surrounded by a sea of people. The text on the music video reads "Get ready for the spell of Tilasmi Bahein." The clip ends with a glimpse of Aditi Rao Hydari, who appears to be visibly disappointed with Sonakshi Sinha. Tilasmi Bahein is composed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, while it is crooned by Sharmistha Chatterjee.

# Alia Bhatt

Teams Up With Gurinder Chadha For Disney's Indian Princess Musical

Alia Bhatt has been on a roll with back to back commercial as well as critical success. From Gangubai Kathiawadi to Darlings, Brahmastra to Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani, the actress has also managed to create a space for herself amid the international audience with 'Heart Of Stone'. The actress who is also enjoying motherhood with her daughter Raha might have scored her second international project, an Indian princess musical with Disney that will be helmed by Gurinder Chadha. Renowned filmmaker Gurinder Chadha, known for her directorial successes like Bend It Like Beckham and Bride and Prejudice, is currently immersed in the creation of a musical film centered around an Indian princess, a project in collaboration with Disney. Recent revelations have come to light regarding the primary cast members of this highly anticipated cinematic endeavor. As per a recent report from Mid-Day, Gurinder Chadha has been engaged in ongoing discussions with Alia Bhatt regarding a role in this project. A source from the portal revealed, "The two have been in talks for a while. The final casting will happen only after the script is developed, but Alia is among the top casting choices. The source from the portal also noted that leading an exciting international project like this would signify a major step for Alia in cementing her position on a global scale, especially following her debut in Hollywood with Heart of Stone last year. Should these plans come to fruition, Alia is said to kick off work with Chadha in the latter half of 2025. In 2022, Deadline had announced that Disney had given the green light to an original musical inspired by a 'dynamic princess from Indian history.' The screenplay for this project will be crafted by Gurinder Chadha and Paul Mayeda Berges, with Chadha also taking on the roles of director and producer. However, details regarding the storyline are currently undisclosed.



On the work front, Alia is preparing for the upcoming release of the action thriller 'Jigra,' directed by

Vasan Bala and co-produced by Alia's Eternal Sunshine Productions and Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. This film, centered around a sibling relationship, features The Archies actor Vedang Raina. Furthermore, Alia is set to commence filming for a standalone project within Aditya Chopra's spy universe. Additionally, she will collaborate once again with her director from Gangubai Kathiawadi, Sanjay Leela Bhansali, for the grand saga Love & War, sharing the screen with her husband Ranbir Kapoor and Katrina Kaif, Vicky Kaushal.

