

INDIAN CHRONICLE

Infosys Science Foundation transforms prize to elevate early-career achievements and foster global collaboration

Hyderabad: The Infosys Science Foundation (ISF) has announced that it is steering the Infosys Prize in a new direction by transitioning from a mid-career prize to an early-career prize, with the objective of rewarding potential and recognizing the promise of future achievement. The fundamental objective of the Infosys Prize continues to be to recognize the best research that benefits humanity and creates role models for young scholars and aspiring scientists in India. The ISF now requires all winners who are based outside India at the time of winning the prize to spend time at Indian institutes of their choice.

TSPSC, UPSC Prelims grand tests to be conducted at BC Study Circles

Hyderabad: Off-line Grand Tests will be conducted for TSPSC Group-I (Prelims) at all 12 TS BC Study Circles hqrs., functioning in the State and for UPSC Civil Service (Prelims) Examination, 2024, at Hyderabad for the interested aspirants, said D.Srinivas Reddy, Director, TS BC Study Circle, Hyderabad.

In a press release issued here on Wednesday, he said the Grand Test will be held for TSPSC Group-I on May 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31 and June 1 and 3. Similarly, the Grand Test for UPSC Civil Service Examination will be held on May 23, 26, 28, 30 and June 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12.

'Lackadaisical approach': SC pulls up Uttarakhand govt over forest fires, summons chief secy



GNS News Agency, May 15

Uttarakhand forest fire An NDRF personnel tries to control a fire that broke out in the forest of Pauri Garhwal district in Uttarakhand. Coming down heavily on the Uttarakhand government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said it was "at pains to say that the state's approach in controlling forest fires was lackadaisical," adding that though action plans were prepared and finalised, no steps have been taken for their implementation. A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai, which was hearing a plea raising issue of raging forest fires in the state, also directed the Chief Secretary to be present personally before it on May 17. The bench, also comprising Justices SVN Bhatti and Sandeep Mehta further flagged huge vacancy in the state's forest department, and said the issue needs to be addressed.

The fire, in the upper reaches of a hill in the Dhumakot area of Uttarakhand's Pauri Garhwal district, is among the latest of 998 incidents of forest fires recorded by the state's forest department since November 2023 - 68 of those between May 6 and 7 alone. Last season, the state recorded 773 such fires. The fires have so far affected 1,196 hectares of forest land, led to reports of wild animals encroaching into residential areas, and claimed four lives. The once lush hillsides of Pauri now stand scarred with charred, blackened patches.

Congress most dishonest, misleading party in country: JP Nadda



GNS News Agency, May 15

Patna: BJP National President JP Nadda on Wednesday slammed the Congress at a public meeting in Bihar's Sheohar Lok Sabha constituency and called it the 'most dishonest' political party in the country. "I want to give two examples of how Congress leaders misled the country," BJP chief Nadda said while addressing the rally. "When the Corona vaccine was being made, the Congress leaders misled the people and said it was not a good one. They (Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi) themselves went and got the vaccine secretly and kept telling you that this is Modi's vaccine, don't get it. There is no bigger dishonest, deceitful and misleading political party than the Congress in the country," he alleged.

"The Congress leaders had said that India is a country of illiterate people. What is the need for internet and Wi-Fi here? How will digital transactions take place here?" he continued. "I want to tell you that today optical fiber has been laid in two lakh panchayats under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. Common Service Centres have opened in two lakh villages. Understand the power of the people of India today that even a vegetable seller is doing digital transactions," Nadda said.

Taking a swipe at the RJD and Lalu Prasad Yadav, he claimed, "R stands for Rishwat Khori (Graft) J stands for Jungle Raj and D stands for Daldal (Swamp)." "The RJD is known for appeasement and casteism in politics and PM Narendra Modi finished them in the last 10 years. For him, all castes are equal. 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', 'Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas' is our basic Mantra," he said. He said that under the leadership of PM Modi, 4 crore houses equipped with all basic facilities had been constructed across the country. "We have an extensive plan to connect every house with Piped Natural Gas (PNG) in the country. After five years, LPG cylinders will not come to your house, cheap PNG will be provided to every house," Nadda said. "I want to appeal to the voters of Sheohar to vote for JD(U) candidate Lovely Anand and make the hands of Prime Minister Modi strong," he said.

SC rejects plea for termination of over 27-week pregnancy, says foetus has fundamental right to live

GNS News Agency, May 15

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain the plea of a 20-year-old unmarried woman seeking termination of her over 27-week pregnancy, saying the foetus in the womb also has a fundamental right to live. A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai passed the order while hearing the woman's plea challenging the Delhi High Court's May 3 order refusing to allow termination of her pregnancy. "We can't pass any order contrary to the statute," the bench, also comprising justices S V N Bhatti and Sandeep Mehta, told her counsel. "The child in womb also has a fundamental right to live. What do you say about that?" the bench asked. The woman's counsel said the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act talks about the mother only. "It is made for mother,"



he said. The bench said the duration of pregnancy was over seven months now. "What about the right of the child to survive? How do you address that?" the bench asked. The counsel said the foetus is in the womb and till the child is delivered, it is the right of the mother. "The petitioner at this stage is under severe traumatic condition. She can't come outside also. She is taking classes for NEET exam. She is under highly traumatic condition. She can't face the society at this stage," he said. The lawyer argued that her mental and physical well-being should be considered. "Sorry," the bench said. In its May 3 order, the high court had noted that on April 25, the court had directed the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to constitute a medical board to ascertain the condition of the foetus and the petitioner. "A perusal of the report (of medical board) shows that there is no congenital abnormality in the foetus nor is there any danger to the

mother to carry on with the pregnancy which will mandate termination of the foetus," the high court had said.

"Since the foetus is viable and normal, and there is no danger to the petitioner to carry on with the pregnancy, foeticide would neither be ethical nor legally permissible," it had said. Before the high court, the petitioner had said that on April 16, she felt discomfort in the abdomen and got an ultrasound scan done and it showed she was 27 weeks pregnant, which was beyond the legally permissible limit of 24 weeks. Under the MTP Act, termination of pregnancy of a duration exceeding 24 weeks can be allowed in case of substantial foetal abnormality as diagnosed by a medical board or if an opinion is formed in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the pregnant woman.

Centre issues first set of citizenship certificates under CAA to 14 applicants



GNS News Agency, May 15

Over two months after notifying rules for the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday issued the first set of citizenship certificates under the law to 14 persons. Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla handed over the certificates to the applicants. The Centre on March 11 notified Rules for The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), paving the way for the implementation of the controversial law more than

four years after it was passed by Parliament in December 2019. "The Empowered Committee, Delhi headed by Director (Census Operation), Delhi, after due scrutiny, have decided to grant citizenship to 14 applicants. Accordingly, Director (Census operation) granted certificates to these applicants," an MHA spokesperson said in a statement. "The first set of citizenship certificates after notification of Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 were issued today. Bhalla handed over citizenship certificates to some applicants in New Delhi and also congratulated the applicants and highlighted salient features of the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024," the spokesperson said. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, which sought to fast-track the process of granting Indian citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians—but not Muslims—who migrated to India owing to religious persecution in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, was passed by the Lok Sabha on December 9, 2019, and the Rajya Sabha two days later. It received the President's assent on December 12, 2019. Soon after the passage of the law, widespread protests broke out across the country.

'SC verdict not routine, many believe special treatment': Amit Shah on Arvind Kejriwal bail



GNS News Agency, May 15

Amit Shah When asked about Kejriwal's campaigning for the INDIA alliance and his claim that he would not need to go back to jail if enough votes were cast in the party's favour, Amit Shah said it is a "clear contempt of the Supreme Court." Days after the Supreme Court granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the excise policy case, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said he "does not see the top court's decision as a routine or normal judgement" and that "a lot of people in the country believe that special treatment has been given to him." In an interview with news agency ANI, when asked about Kejriwal's campaigning for the INDIA alliance and his claim that he would not need to go back to jail if enough votes were cast in the party's favour, Shah said it is a "clear contempt of the Supreme Court." He added that it is for the judges who granted him bail to think how their judgment is being used or misused. Further, on being asked about Kejriwal's release from jail and campaigning for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the home minister said, "Right now he is stuck in another issue (Swati Malhi assault)... let him get free from that then let's see what happens." Kejriwal was granted interim bail till June 1 by the apex court on May 10. He was arrested on March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), mak-

ing him the first sitting chief minister in India to be put behind bars.

EC is a puppet acting at the behest of the ruling party: Mamata Banerjee

GNS News Agency, May 15

Kolkata: In a strongly-worded statement, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Wednesday that she will "cease to exist" if the BJP retains power at the Centre after the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing an election meeting in Hooghly in support of Trinamool Congress candidate and actress-turned-politician Rachana Banerjee, the Chief Minister said: "If the BJP returns to power, I will cease to exist. You will cease to exist. The common people will cease to exist."

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will cease to exist. The farmers and workers will cease to exist. That is why defeating the BJP in every single seat is important for us." In 2019, BJP's actress-turned-politician Locket Chatterjee got elected from Hooghly by over 83,000 votes. She has been re-nominated by the party this time as well. Calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "propaganda-oriented PM", the Chief Minister said, "

KTR Slams Telangana Govt. over grain procurement, demands to purchase crop



GNS News Agency, May 15

BRS Working President KTR has criticized the state government for allegedly neglecting farmers and focusing more on politics. The criticism comes as farmers in Telangana are protesting against the government's neglect of grain procurement. Farmers have raised concerns about the government's procurement of grain, claiming that they are being unfairly compensated. KTR said that if farmers continue to be treated unfairly, the BRS will take to the streets in protest. He emphasized that farmers should not be overlooked or mistreated by the government. In addition, KTR highlighted the BRS's track record of success in the graduate elections, having won four times in the past. He called on cadre to work for victory of Rakesh Reddy in upcoming graduate election.

BJP wants to scrap Constitution: Rahul Gandhi



GNS News Agency, May 15

Bolangir: The Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, on Wednesday alleged that the BJP wants to scrap the Constitution and also the reservation provided to tribals, Dalits and backward class. Addressing an election rally in Bolangir, Rahul said if the BJP wins this election, it will privatise the public sector. He said if the Constitution ends, then the rights of common people, their land, the reservation system and public sector firms will also come to an end. Rahul warned the people that the country would be controlled by 22 billionaires following the "destruction" of the Constitution. "BJP wants to tear this book, but we in Congress and the people of India will not allow it," he said, pointing to the Constitution in his hand.

EC summons Andhra Pradesh DGP, chief secretary to Delhi over post-poll violence



GNS News Agency, May 15

The Election Commission of India (EC) Wednesday summoned Andhra Pradesh Chief Secretary K.S. Jawahar Reddy and Director General of Police Harish Kumar Gupta to Delhi on Thursday to explain why post-poll violence in the state could not be stopped, EC sources said. After simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the state on Monday, violence broke out on Tuesday and Wednesday. The commission took cognisance of the incidents and directed the CS and DGP to make sure the violence is curbed, the sources said. The top officers will be asked to explain the reasons for the failure of the administrative machinery to prevent the violence and inform the commission of what preemptive steps are being taken to prevent such incidents in the future, they said.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

India-Iran deal

THE spectre of US sanctions has failed to deter India from signing a 10-year contract with Iran to develop and operate the Iranian port of Chabahar. The deal is expected to enhance regional connectivity and facilitate trade involving India, Iran, Afghanistan and other nations. The long-term contract was signed by Indian Ports Global Limited and the Port & Maritime Organisation of Iran. Located in the restive Sistan-Balochistan province on Iran's southern coast, the Chabahar port will offer Indian goods a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia through a road and rail project known as the International North-South Transport Corridor. Importantly, the route will bypass Pakistan, whose relations with Iran have deteriorated in recent months and whose ties with India have been in deep freeze for several years. US sanctions on Iran over its purported nuclear programme have restricted the operations of this port, which New Delhi had proposed to develop back in 2003. In one fell swoop, India has cocked a snook at Pakistan as well as the US. Reacting to the Chabahar deal, US State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said: 'US sanctions on Iran remain in place and we will continue to enforce them.' Sounding a note of caution, Patel said anyone considering business deals with Iran needed to be aware of the potential risk, especially in terms of sanctions. However, like in the case of the purchase of Russian oil at discounted prices, India has chosen to prioritise its own interests and not allowed existing geopolitical alignments to become an impediment. Last year, India had used the Chabahar port to send 20,000 tonnes of wheat to aid-starved Afghanistan. It is evident that New Delhi is going all out to make its presence felt in the neighbourhood, even if this ruffles a few feathers. Inevitably, the US will have no option but to let an assertive India have its way.

No allotment, no rent paid: BJP Lok Sabha pick Ravneet Singh Bittu lived for 8 years in govt house that never was his

GNS News Agency, May 15

Hours before he was to file his nomination papers from Ludhiana for the Lok Sabha polls, BJP candidate Ravneet Singh Bittu was served with a notice by Ludhiana Municipal Corporation asking him pay up Rs 1.82 crore in rent, pending against the government accommodation that he had been occupying in the district since 2016. The notice, served Thursday midnight via WhatsApp, made it clear that he must pay the amount to get the mandatory No Dues Certificate (NDC) issued for filing nomination. The civic body, in its latest notice to Bittu, also said that the house was never allotted to him and that he should vacate it. This led to a row with Bittu claiming that he had been paying monthly electricity and water bills of the house but never got any notice regarding pending rent. More so, the civic body had issued an NDC certificate when Bittu contested 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Bittu, who spent the night at BJP's election office, accused the ruling Aam Aadmi Party of trying to stop him from filing nomination, and claimed he had to pledge his ancestral land to arrange the amount within hours.

Was the government house in question ever allotted to MP Bittu?

No, according to the records available with the deputy commissioner's office and Ludhiana Municipal Corporation, the house in question (Kothi number 6, Officers Colony, Rose Garden) was never allotted to Bittu. In a letter dated October 28, 2015 (copy with The Indian Express), then Ludhiana deputy commissioner wrote to Punjab government's department of general administration that a request has been received from Bittu for the allotment of a government residence on the basis that "he was Z+ protectee, is a local MP who needs to spend time in his constituency and does not own any house in Ludhiana". The DC's letter also mentioned that MC commissioner had informed that a government house which was kept aside for usage at the disposal of DC office under general pool, was lying vacant. The letter recommended the allotment of that house to Bittu. However, the recommendation was rejected. In a reply dated November 10, 2015, (copy with The Indian Express), the general administration department wrote to the DC: "There is no provision of allotting a house to MPs as per the Punjab Government Houses (General Pool) Allotment Rules, 1983".

So, what happened after the DC's recommendation was rejected? When did Bittu still move into the house?

On November 23, 2015, then Ludhiana DC shot another letter to the department of general administration (copy with The Indian Express), again recommending that a government house be allotted to Bittu keeping in view the "security reasons as he was a Z+ protectee and local MP who does not have own house in the city."

But according to the records, no reply was received on the second recommendation. The current Ludhiana DC, Sakshi Sawhney, told The Indian Express: "The said Kothi does not reflect in our list of allotted houses under the House Allotment Committee. Neither was it ever allotted through DC office, nor is it maintained by the Public Works Department (PWD). It is owned and maintained by Ludhiana Municipal Corporation and they also carried repair works in the property from time to time. My predecessor had written to the government recommending allotment of a house to the MP but it was rejected. The matter was never taken up again apparently by this office". Ludhiana MC commissioner Sandeep Rishi, however, says that in a letter dated December 17, 2015, the MC had shifted the said house to the DC-led house allotment committee for usage under general pool. "It was also duly written in the letter that the district administration has to recover rent/water/sewage charges from the occupant and send them to MC," says Rishi.

The officer added that it has been found that Bittu had moved into the house in January 2016 but now the DC office has denied allotting the house to the MP. "According to our records, the MC had already shifted the house to district administration on their request. He (Bittu) even moved into the house in January 2016," says Rishi. However, Sawhney says: "There's no record of any allotment of this property with us." Ravneet Singh Bittu The house of Ravneet Singh Bittu that remains shut.

Within a month of launch, Namma Yatri fetches Rs 5.4 crore for cab drivers in Bengaluru

GNS News Agency, May 15

NY, which is built on the common network standards defined by Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) and built on the Beckn protocol (open source), has recorded over 1.7 lakh trips and onboarded 38,000 cab drivers, a jump from over 13,000 since its launch last month. According to the NY team, the platform can facilitate increased earnings for the drivers because of its optimal operations. The app is working to reduce its overall cost through cloud optimisation and plans to use open-source maps to increase driver earnings. The product's software, data, and roadmap are open for public review and collaboration, and the platform calls for citizen participation and volunteering to help develop the product.

NY currently offers cab services in non-AC mini, AC mini, sedan, and XL cab categories, catering to diverse customer needs. The non-AC mini Cab is a unique addition that addresses frequent misunderstandings between drivers and customers regarding AC usage. Interestingly, despite the scorching summer in the IT city, many customers preferred non-AC minicabs because they were affordable. The NY team, in its response to The Indian Express, stated that even drivers have the flexibility to offer rides in non-AC cabs, potentially reducing their operational expenses, including fuel costs. According to NY's data, 1.75 lakh trips have been completed on cabs so far, with 6,500-7,500 daily transacting users. NY operates on the 'zero commission model' in line with direct-to-driver services to improve drivers' income, vehicle maintenance, and customer experience. With the zero commission model, the cab drivers' earnings have witnessed a significant boost, with a NY cab driver earning an additional Rs 800 per day compared to other platforms.

A spokesperson of NY said, "Cab drivers experience a significant boost in income under the zero commission model, earning an additional Rs 800 per day compared to the other platforms where they pay 25-30% commission. This notable increase in daily earnings mirrors the earning potential of auto drivers who make Rs 300 to Rs 400 more by completing 10 to 12 daily trips. Further, the straightforward payment structure of this model promotes a clear understanding among drivers regarding their earnings. This fosters trust and reduces the stress associated with financial transactions, contributing to a more positive working experience for cab drivers." Yogesh Kumar, a cab driver for the past five years, said, "The zero commission model has definitely reduced the financial burden on drivers. Compared to other apps, I can earn around Rs 700-Rs 900 extra per day using NY. With this, I can manage my overall monthly savings effectively. Commission on other apps alone would cost around Rs 10,000 every month. As a result, it was challenging to manage fuel, household, EMI, among other expenses after shelling out so much for just commission." Another cab driver, Manjunath, said, "I be-



lieve cab drivers are switching between different aggregator apps and can boost their income manifold. I still get most of my bookings from Ola and Uber. I have installed NY, but I get two to three rides a day. I think people are still gradually learning about NY offering cab services." NY has fixed a rate of Rs 100 up to 4 km for AC mini and Rs 18 for every kilometre above minimum fare, Rs 115 up to 4 km for sedan and Rs 21 for every kilometre above minimum fare, Rs 130 up to 4 km for XL cabs and Rs 24 for every kilometre above minimum fare. The pickup charges for XL cabs are Rs 30, while they are fixed at Rs 20 for other services. NY will also impose 1.5 times the daytime charges at night between 10 pm and 5 am. Explaining the reason for earning a whopping Rs 5.4 crore for its cab drivers, Magizhan Selvan, chief executive officer (CEO) at Namma Yatri, said, "Namma Yatri represents a transformative approach to addressing mobility challenges on a large scale. We are dedicated to empowering drivers through cutting-edge technology at an optimal cost, fostering satisfaction among drivers and commuters. We have received strong support from the cab driver community. Our driver wellness programs and initiatives for safety and efficient service have been adapted for the cab driver community. Ensuring driver satisfaction translates directly into providing the best service to valued customers."

NY, which has set its cab fares in line with the Karnataka government's new cab fares, also ensures transparent pricing by including exact toll charges for airports or other toll roads, benefiting both customers and drivers. Further, NY also allows trusted family members or friends to follow rides in real time to communicate and take emergency response actions on behalf of the commuter. Additionally, in collaboration with the city police of Bengaluru, NY, thorough background checks on drivers are conducted to ensure safe transportation. In October, NY cab drivers will be charged a subscription fee of Rs 25 per day for unlimited rides. The app will soon introduce inter-city, rentals, and scheduled rides and open up across Karnataka. It will also accommodate special requests like disability-friendly rides, extra luggage, travelling with pets, and trips to public transport hubs.

'Govt change in Bengal possible only if BJP remains in power in Delhi... Poll a semi-final for 2026': Dilip Ghosh



GNS News Agency, May 15

Dilip Ghosh, Dilip Ghosh interview, Sandeshkhali issue, false rape cases against TMC leaders, 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Bengal Govt change, Indian Express news, BJP candidate from Bardhaman -Durgapur constituency Dilip Ghosh during an interview with Indian Express in Burdwan town on the 2019 Lok Sabha elections when the BJP won 18 of the 42 seats in West Bengal, Dilip Ghosh was the state unit chief of the party. In this election, he is contesting from Bardhaman-Durgapur constituency, which will vote on May 13. Ghosh speaks with Santanu Chowdhury about the task cut out for him this time. Excerpts:

In 2019, you won from Medinipur. This time you are contesting from Bardhaman-Durgapur. How challenging is this seat?

In the last one-and-a-half months, I have become familiar with Bardhaman-Durgapur constituency. When I was the state unit president, I had visited every mandal in this constituency. Therefore, any constituency across West Bengal is not an unknown territory for me. This time, I am visiting more villages and connecting with voters. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have already campaigned here. The campaigning is almost over. We have done our part. Now, waiting for the votes to be cast.

What is the feedback you are getting from the people?

After interacting with the voters, I have understood that they want peace. They don't want to see any more corruption or political violence in Bengal. People are fed up with the TMC government and want relief from the ruling party's atrocities. They want a change in the state government. This can only happen if the BJP remains in power at the Centre. Even people within the TMC will vote for the BJP as they too are tired of the reign of terror. This Lok Sabha election is going to be the semi-final and the 2026 West Bengal Assembly election will be the final.

The central leadership of your party says they are targeting to win 30 to 35 seats from West Bengal. As a former state unit president of the BJP, what is your assessment?

Five years ago, the BJP was at the nascent stage in terms of organisational strength in Bengal. Yet, we won 18 seats from here. Over the years, the party has gained more ground and organisational strength. Today, we have over 70 MLAs and so many MPs. We have their support. This was not available last time. (Before the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, BJP had only three MPs and three MLAs in West Bengal). We hardly had any prominent leaders except one or two. Therefore, there is a possibility that we will win more seats than last time.

JJB directs minor to serve water at railway station for month for assaulting scheduled caste person

GNS News Agency, May 15

Juvenile Justice Board, JJB According to the public prosecutor, the incident dates back to 2020 when the boy was booked for forcibly entering his neighbour's residence and assaulting him. The Juvenile Justice Board in Jalaun recently directed a minor to serve water at a local railway station for a month as part of its ruling in a 2020 case involving the forcible entry into a house to assault a victim belonging to a scheduled caste.

The court has assigned the Inspector of the Reserve Police Lines (RPF), Jalaun to supervise the minor at the railway station and submit a report. Assistant Public Prosecutor Himanshu Singh said, "The Board passed the judgment two days back after the minor confessed to the crime. The board directed the boy to undertake community service by serving water to people at the Orai railway station in Jalaun during working hours. Additionally, the board imposed a fine of Rs 7,600." He further said, "The boy has also been directed to report daily at the RPF office at Jalaun. According to the public prosecutor, the incident dates back to 2020 when the boy was booked for forcibly entering his neighbour's residence and assaulting him. Further, he is alleged to have made casteist remarks against the victim. The police conducted an investigation and found the allegations to be true. As the boy was found to be a minor, the police submitted their report to the Juvenile Justice Board, which has been presiding over the case since then.

Why TMC infighting, BJP candidate switch can upset Birbhum poll math

GNS News Agency, May 15

In the minority-dominated Birbhum Lok Sabha constituency, while the Trinamool Congress (TMC) is confident of a fourth term for sitting MP Satabdi Roy, the infighting within its ranks might cast a shadow on the ruling party's ambition. Incidentally, it's not just the TMC which is struggling to pacify a disgruntled cadre, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has also been having a tough time getting different factions to work together, according to the party's leaders. The party had fielded initially fielded former IPS officer Debashish Dhar from Birbhum seat, which falls in the Burdwan division. A 2010-batch IPS officer, Dhar was appointed the Superintendent of Police of Cooch Behar during the 2021 Assembly elections. He was suspended by the West Bengal government after the polls during which four people were killed at Sitalkuchi in the district by alleged firing by central forces. Even after his suspension was lifted, he was in compulsory wait for three years until he resigned on March 20.

In a rally in Cooch Behar district in April ahead of the first phase of elections, West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee had hit out at Dhar and said, "This (Sitalkuchi incident) was carried out under the instruction of someone who still has cases registered against him but has now been given clearance by the Centre. He (Dhar) is now contesting from Birbhum (on BJP ticket)." Dhar had, however, claimed in an interview to a Bengali channel that his suspension letter did not mention the Sitalkuchi incident. "I was not suspended over the Sitalkuchi incident. In my suspension letter, the reason for my suspension was mentioned that I didn't act properly during the post-poll violence. There was no mention of the Sitalkuchi incident in my suspension letter," he had said. What nobody saw coming was Dhar's nomination being cancelled due to the non-submission of a 'no dues' certificate. A 'no dues' certificate is issued to certify that a government employee does not owe any dues to the state. Within a day, the BJP announced that it would field Debbanu Bhattacharya, a former pracharak and cluster in-charge of Rarh region in the state, from the seat instead. Incidentally, a few days before Dhar's nomination was rejected, Banerjee had held a rally in Birbhum where she had claimed, "The BJP gave a ticket to the murderer of Sitalkuchi here but we did not give his clearance." Dhar had later approached the Supreme Court to challenge the cancellation. The top court had refused to entertain his plea. Talking about whether the candidate switch would affect the BJP's chances in Birbhum, Bhattacharya said, "Who is the candidate and who failed to be candidate is not a factor in a parliamentary election. People will not vote for me. People will vote for Modiji and the huge success of his government. People will also reject the misuse of the TMC in this state." "I am getting the support of common people. I saw that people are drawn towards the BJP," he added. At the same time, a section of party leaders feel that Bengal BJP's inner squabbles may cost them in the election. A senior leader of BJP's Birbhum unit said, "Here in Birbhum seat, the party has many groups. Dhar sat with every group and convinced them to work unitedly but all his efforts went to waste when his nomination was cancelled and Bhattacharya was named the candidate." "While being posted in the district as an SP, Dhar knew the district well but Bhattacharya is not such an equipped candidate. Hence, the infighting within different groups has once again become a problem in this seat," the leader added. Birbhum has traditionally been a TMC stronghold. Apart from the Birbhum Lok Sabha seat, the party also holds six out of the seven assembly constituencies in Birbhum district. The lone assembly seat in the district with a BJP MLA is Dubrajpur. After the arrest of TMC's former Birbhum unit president Anubrata Mondal in the cattle smuggling case, infighting has been a recurrent problem for the party, according to leaders. Considered close to TMC chief, Mondal's involvement in the case is by both the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The party is yet to find a replacement for Mondal. In January, Banerjee had removed Roy and four other leaders from TMC's district core committee. According to Roy, who has been an MP from Birbhum since 2009, infighting is a problem that every party faces. "Every party faces this (infighting) problem but during the election all our leaders are fighting for Mamata Banerjee. There is no debate on that," said the former Tollywood actor. Talking about her chances of retaining the seat, Roy said, "I am 200 per cent sure that I will win because the people know what I have done in these 15 years. The people of Birbhum know that Shatabdi Roy will never flee after winning. They are also aware of Mamata Banerjee's development model. She has kept her word and fulfilled every promise." The Congress, which is contesting the Lok Sabha election in alliance with the Left Front, said the people in Birbhum now want change.

Focus on innovative procurement practices: Civil Supplies Commissioner

GNS News Agency, May 15

Hyderabad: Besides ensuring provision of necessary infrastructure including adequate storage facility, the Civil Supplies Corporation has initiated the process for adopting efficient procurement practices to help prevent rain ravage in purchase centres and market yards so that farmers receive a fair deal, Civil Supplies Commissioner D S Chowhan said. As part of the special initiative, he said the corporation has taken up simultaneous weighing and stacking of the stocks. "We started implementing it with immediate effect at Aithupally IKP centre and Pathagudur Paddy purchase centre in Jagtial district and it would be extended to the rest of the State soon," he said. Paddy was exposed to rains in harvest centres as well as purchase centres in a big way last year. All precautions were being taken to avoid such losses this year while providing adequate number of auction platforms, drying platforms, paddy cleaners, moisture meters, weighing scales, tarpaulins, winnowing machines and other equipment. He said procurement had crossed 26 lakh metric tonne mark as on Thursday as against the 15.28 lakh tonnes the same day last year. The number of the purchase centres in operation are 7166.

Arvind Kejriwal announces 10 guarantees amid ongoing LS polls

GNS News Agency, May 15



he said.He said that the AAP government has fulfilled all its guarantees while PM Modi's guarantees are not worthy of trusting."And now, next year, PM Modi will retire, then who will fulfil the guarantees?" the Delhi Chief Minister asked.

While divulging the details of guarantees, he said that Kejriwal's first guarantee is 24-hour electricity and free electricity for the poor within the country."We have calculated it. With an expenditure of Rs 1.25 lakh crore, the poor of the country will receive free electricity. The second guarantee is education. We will build excellent schools in the country, and every child will receive free education in government schools in every corner of villages and cities," said Kejriwal.He added that the third is health and its infrastructure. "We will arrange good treatment for everyone. Throughout the country, clinics will be opened in every village, city, and neighbourhood. District government hospitals will be turned into multi-specialty hospitals. Treatment will be free," said Kejriwal.He said that the fourth is the nation. "China has occupied our land. Everyone knows it and there are satellite images. We will reclaim the land that China has captured through diplomatic means and give full freedom to the army to take whatever steps necessary," the Delhi Chief Minister said.He added that the Agriwee scheme is harmful and will be discontinued."For farmers, the guarantee is to provide them with prices as per the Swaminathan report. Two crore jobs will be created. Corruption will be eradicated. The BJP's washing machine will be broken. For the business community, the guarantee is to abolish the GST. It will be removed from the PMLA," he said.

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced 10 'Kejriwal ki guarantee' amid the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, saying that these guarantees will alleviate the country from inflation and unemployment."Today we are going to announce 10 Kejriwal guarantees. We are late in doing so, it got delayed due to my arrest. I have not yet discussed this with the INDIA alliance but I am confident that the INDIA alliance will not face any difficulties with these guarantees," Arvind Kejriwal said while addressing a press conference at the AAP headquarters along with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, AAP MP Sanjay Singh, and Delhi ministers Saurabh Bharadwaj and Atishi."After the formation of the INDIA alliance government, I will ensure that all these guarantees are fulfilled by all our colleagues," said Kejriwal, adding that these 10 guarantees are the vision of a new India.He said that many of these tasks should have been done in the past 75 years but now on a war scale, these tasks will be completed in five years."Among these guarantees is one that will alleviate the country from inflation and unemployment," said the AAP National Convenor.

Taking a dig at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Kejriwal said that recently, there has been talk about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantee in the country."The public will decide whether to trust PM Modi's guarantee or Kejriwal's guarantee. PM Modi had guaranteed that Rs 15 lakh would be deposited in everyone's account, which he did not fulfil. PM Modi guaranteed that two crore jobs would be created every year, which he did not fulfil. PM Modi guaranteed the implementation of the Swaminathan report to ensure fair prices for farmers' produce, which he shelved after becoming PM. He also guaranteed that every household in the country would have 24-hour electricity by 2022, but many cities still face electricity issues with prolonged power cuts," the Delhi Chief Minister said.He said that PM Modi failed to fulfil any of his promised guarantees.

"Kejriwal guaranteed free electricity, and we have provided it in Delhi and Punjab. We have ensured 24-hour electricity. We guaranteed the establishment of good schools, and we have built excellent schools for children,"

Will declare UP a 'mafia-free' state after June 4: Yogi Adityanath

GNS News Agency, May 15



administration.Addressing another inquiry, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath underlined the transformative impact of the government's measures in instilling a climate of security and confidence.He illustrated how the perpetrators now find themselves compelled to publicly implore for clemency, symbolic of the fear-free environment established within the state.In response to assertions made by certain Islamic "fundamentalists" regarding Ghazwa-e-Hind, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath unequivocally dismissed the notion, affirming India's enduring identity.He emphasised that Ghazwa-e-Hind, a purported prophesied conquest, holds no faith and that India will steadfastly remain India until the end of time.Regarding the notion of "vote jihad" advocated by Congress leader Salman Khurshid's niece, Yogi Adityanath admonished such attempts at exploiting religion for electoral gains.He condemned the practice, asserting that those who engage in such tactics will find no solace.

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that he will declare Uttar Pradesh as a 'mafia-free' state after June 4.In a statement released by the official spokesman here, the Chief Minister has reiterated his government's firm stance on criminal syndicates."The properties amassed by notorious mafia figures will face confiscation, with the seized assets slated for redistribution to underprivileged segments of society, including the impoverished, orphaned, women's shelters, and facilities catering to the needs of the differently-abled," the Chief Minister said.

The Chief Minister's proclamation comes amid heightened scrutiny on the government's anti-mafia initiatives, as he addressed inquiries regarding the administration's strategies in combating both criminal elements and political opposition."Hospitals and schools will be built on the illegal lands of the mafia. In the first phase, the crackdown on the mafia will be launched, whereas in the second, their properties will be confiscated. Our action plan is also ready for this," the Chief Minister said.On the confiscation of properties of senior Samajwadi Party leader and former minister Azam Khan, the Chief Minister said: "He is another 'Kaka Shree' of that Mahabharata family. When Draupadi was being disrobed, everyone was silent in front of Duryodhana and Dushasan. As you sow, so you reap — whether it is Azam Khan or any mafia leader. They hindered the development of the state. Therefore, strict action is being taken against such people."He said that those found guilty of inciting unrest in the state would bear the burden of punitive measures extending seven generations.He also underscored the importance of ensuring the safety and security of the state's womenfolk, noting a palpable enhancement in their protection under the present

Decision on resignation of 3 Independent MLAs to be taken by early June: Himachal Speaker

GNS News Agency, May 15



of their resignations but the case could not be decided as the division bench consisting of Chief Justice M S Ramachandra Rao and Justice Jyotsna Rewal Dua expressed divergent views on whether the court can issue directions to the Speaker in this regard.

"When I am a political person, I can certainly work for a political party or persons," he said.He was reacting to a complaint filed by the BJP with the Election Commission over him sharing the stage and campaigning for a Congress candidate."I belong to a certain ideology and I campaign for Congress candidates outside (the House). Tell me if there is a constitutional embargo on me," he said and added, "The Election Commission is not above the Constitution."Pathania said he is unbiased towards all political parties and members as speaker of the House."Sitting in the speaker's chair, I am not connected with any organisation — be it political or social — and I discharge my duties without bias. All members are given adequate time to raise issues pertaining to the state," he added."Even Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has contested elections on the BJP's lotus symbol and "I have been elected on the hand symbol (of the Congress)", he said.

Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania on Saturday said that the final decision regarding the acceptance of resignations of three Independent MLAs and initiating action under the anti-defection law would be taken by the end of May or early June.The conduct of the Independent MLAs indicated that they were under "duress" and therefore, an inquiry was initiated and an explanation was sought from them, the Speaker told reporters.Later, they were also issued notices when Congress leaders filed a fresh petition for action against these MLAs under the anti-defection law, he added.Three Independent MLAs — Hoshiyar Singh, Ashish Sharma and K L Thakur — had voted in favour of BJP nominee Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha polls held on February 27.They resigned from the assembly on March 22 and joined the BJP the next day before their resignations were accepted and "our Constitution does not permit Independent MLAs to join a political party", the Speaker said.Both the parties (Independent and Congress legislators) were called on Saturday but they did not turn up, maybe due to electioneering and the final hearing would be held in May end or early June, he added.Congress leaders Jagat Singh Negi and Harish Janartha had on April 24 filed a fresh petition with the Speaker for action against the three Independent MLAs under the anti-defection law.They alleged that these Independent MLAs had resigned and joined the BJP even though their resignations were pending with the Speaker, which attracts action under the anti-defection law.

The Speaker had earlier issued a showcause notice to these legislators and sought an explanation from them till April 10 following a representation from the Congress legislative party that these MLAs allegedly resigned under duress, and not voluntarily.The Independent MLAs had also moved the high court on April 10 for acceptance

How this school dropout was chosen to narrate transformative journey of Pune's waste pickers to international audience



GNS News Agency, May 15

Sarika received an informal education growing up surrounded by street cleaners and waste pickers.Sarika received an informal education growing up surrounded by street cleaners and waste pickers.Sarika Karadkar reminisces about her childhood when she used to accompany her mother to collect household waste at the age of 8. Although she did not complete her studies beyond Class 9, she fully understands the importance of reducing plastic pollution and creating a safe future for children.During the inaugural Elective Congress of the International Alliance of Waste Pickers in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sarika, a 27-year-old waste picker from Kothrud, emerged as one of the leading voices. The event took place from May 1 to May 5 this year. As many as 89 waste pickers representatives from 33 countries, such as Brazil, Columbia, Ghana, Indonesia, the Philippines, and South Africa, participated in the conference."At a very early age, I saw my mother and many other women earn wages by collecting paper, glass, and metal. I would go along with my mother as often she was unwell due to diabetes and hypertension and would be able to attend school once a week; hence, due to lack of time to study, I could not clear Class 10," says Sarika, who was nominated by her fellow waste picker representatives of Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) and SWaCH for her ability to express the transformative life journey and collective action of Pune's waste pickers over the last three decades.

Sarika received an informal education growing up surrounded by street cleaners and waste pickers. Despite facing various adversities, such as police harassment and societal discrimination, she persevered. When allowed to represent her community of waste pickers at an international conference, the women unanimously chose her to share their incredible journey."I enrolled in basic English lessons and was able to give an hour-long

presentation at a conference, both in English and Marathi. The presentation was about the transition in the lives of waste pickers when two waste picker cooperatives, SWaCH and SwaCH Plus, were established in Pune," she explains.She shed light on the inspiring and unique waste management system pioneered by waste pickers in Pune. Once treated the same as garbage discarded by others, waste pickers today have reclaimed their dignity and self-respect and succeeded in legitimising waste picking as a respectable profession.

For Sarika, who has educated waste pickers at workshops across Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Nepal, and Indonesia, it was gratifying to see how countries celebrate International Workers' Day and collaborate to make policy recommendations that can defend waste pickers' rights with dignity.During the Covid-19 pandemic, waste management was critical to prevent improper disposal. While advisories were rolled out on wearing face masks, shields and gloves, unfortunately, Sarika was severely affected and had to be admitted to the Covid centre for treatment. "I would feel fragile and then my husband Vikas also picked up the infection," she recalls.Vikas remembers a difficult time when his wife Sarika had a miscarriage. He quit his job as a cook to be there for her. Later on, they had a daughter named Yadnya. Vikas decided to support Sarika, who was passionate about her work. By that time, Sarika was also involved in training other women.Sarika, who attended workshops in Nepal and Indonesia, credits her husband for encouraging her to travel and advocate for waste pickers.Aditya Vyas of KKPKP, who spoke with Sarika at the congress, said, "Thousands of stories like Sarika's underscore the need to recognise the voices of marginalised communities and the strength of informal workers while shaping a just and fair society."Back in Pune, Sarika has enrolled for admission to Class 10. Recognising the importance of lifelong learning, she wants to educate her daughter and has decided to complete her own schooling.

'Mango plog' organised in Bengaluru to encourage waste responsibility among kids

GNS News Agency, May 15



Over 30 volunteers and marshals of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike were joined by kids from a nearby slum. Around 30 kg of waste was picked up in eight sacks. (Express Photo)Over 30 volunteers and marshals of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike were joined by kids from a nearby slum. Around 30 kg of waste was picked up in eight sacks. The Indian Ploggers' Army along with the Helping Heroes Foundation organised a special "mango plog" at Jayanagar in Bengaluru on Saturday. The idea was to add a pinch of fun and taste to their weekly trash collection mission.Over 30 volunteers and marshals of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike were joined by kids from a nearby slum. Around 30 kg of waste was picked up in eight sacks.

Dressed in different shades of yellow, each participant was asked to bring or sponsor one or two mangoes with them.As they wrapped up the 90-minute-long cleaning session, all the participants were offered mangoes.

"The primary motive was to engage kids from a slum for a plog and make them waste-responsible," explained

G Nagaraj, founder of The Indian Ploggers' Army.He added, "A clear instruction was also given to all of them (kids and the ploggers) to dry the mango seeds and plant them or compost but not litter."As the volunteers described it, the whole idea was to "paint the city yellow with a green touch". Similar plogs were also organised in the past years and received a positive response from the residents every time.

Health ministry to PGI: Civil work projects getting delayed, ensure timely completion

GNS News Agency, May 15



The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has written to the PGIMER director, noting that various civil work projects of the institute are being delayed and asked him to regularly inspect and monitor to ensure timely completion of various works.The 129th Standing Finance Committee (SFC) meeting of PGIMER took place on March 12, with the institute presenting several agendas for approval. The minutes of the meeting were released recently.

The major ongoing projects include a 300-bedded Satellite Centre at Sangrur, a 300-bedded Advanced Neurosciences Centre and Advanced Mother and Child Centre at PGI, a 300-bedded Satellite Centre at Una, a 100-bedded Satellite Centre at Ferozepur and establishment of 150-bedded Critical Care Block at PGI Chandigarh under PM-ABHIM.It was during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the country faced a severe shortage of ICU beds, that the proposal for the setting up of critical care blocks in 12 central institute hospitals was given by the Centre, and the budget for the same was about Rs 200 crore, which included an ICU, emergency, isolation wards, operation theatres at these blocks. PGIMER has yet to start work on this project and was advised to ensure timely execution of the critical care block.The SFC instructed the institute to ensure that tenders of civil works and medical services are done together for effective coordination and implementation of projects, rather than the present practice of inviting separate tenders for each work/ service.

The ministry further noted that the overall adminis-

tration and monitoring of the institute must be strengthened and all pending works related to the operationalisation of the satellite centres must be completed in a time-bound manner. Also, the governing body directed that the appointment of senior professors to the governing body be expedited, and this included the appointment of the dean academic.As for the agenda of setting up of National Institute of Health Care Engineering and Architecture at PGIMER, the SFC observed that this is not the core mandate of the institute and such centres can be considered for establishment by other institutes like IIT Ropar, Chandigarh College of Architecture etc.Regarding the creation of faculty post of assistant professor (non-medical) in the Department of Telemedicine, the SFC did not give its nod, observing that telemedicine is a platform for consultation used by faculty from across various broad specialties and super specialty departments, so it should not be treated as a separate department.

TMC accuses NCW's Rekha Sharma of forgery and intimidation of Sandeshkhali women, urges EC for criminal proceedings



GNS News Agency, May 15

The Trinamool Congress on Sunday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission against Rekha Sharma, chairperson of the National Commission for Women, accusing her of committing "forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy by exploiting innocent women of Sandeshkhali for political gains". The move came after a Sandeshkhali woman allegedly stated that she had been made to sign on a blank sheet of paper which later was claimed to be a rape complaint. This was after Rekha Sharma complained to the poll panel that women in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali area were being coerced to withdraw their complaints of sexual harassment.

"NCW Chairperson has sent a letter to the Election Commission of India regarding the Sandeshkhali case. It has come to the notice of the Commission that the women in Sandeshkhali are being influenced, threatened and pressurised to withdraw the complaint in the middle of general elections 2024. @sharmarekha formally requests @ECISVEEP to look into the matter..." Sharma wrote on her X handle on May 10.

In the letter, a copy of which is with The Indian Express, the TMC wrote "...An interview of a woman from Sandeshkhali was shared on 'X' platform on 10.05.24, which reveals that Smt. Rekha Sharma, Chairperson of the NCW, along with members/leaders of the BJP... have

committed serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy by exploiting innocent women of Sandeshkhali, for political gains..." During the interview, a lady from Sandeshkhali...stated that she was coerced through threats of violence by Smt. Rekha Sharma and...others to sign a blank paper without knowing its purpose. Later, when the police issued her a notice, she learnt that she had been made a de-facto complainant in a rape case. She realized that her signature was used to file a false rape complaint without her consent..." the letter read. "The exploitation of institutions like the NCW by BJP for partisan purposes is a flagrant abuse of power and a betrayal of the principles of democracy..." the letter added. Further, the letter urged the poll panel to issue:

"1. Strict direction(s) to respective Station House Officers' of competent police stations to initiate criminal proceedings against Smt. Rekha Sharma...other unknown BJP leaders for their role in the commission of the aforesaid offences...;

2. Direction(s) restraining the BJP and its leaders/members/candidates/workers from threatening the women of Sandeshkhali who wish to withdraw false complaint lodged at their instance;

3. Direction(s) restraining the BJP and its leaders from making any further false allegations concerning the Sandeshkhali incident, as the evidence shows that they were spreading orchestrated/manufactured and unverified allegations against AITC and its leaders;" On January 5, officials of the Enforcement Directorate were assaulted while they raided the home of TMC strongman and North 24 Parganas zilla parishad member Sheikh Shahjahan in Sandeshkhali. While Shahjahan was absconding, women in Sandeshkhali started protesting and came out with allegations of sexual assault and land grabbing against a section of TMC leaders. While the other accused TMC leaders were arrested first, Shahjahan was arrested by police on February 29. The cases are being probed by the CBI after a direction from the Calcutta High Court.

Punjab chief electoral officer seeks report from state govt after Ravneet Bittu's complaint on no-due certificate

GNS News Agency, May 15

Ravneet Bittu residence Hours before Bittu was to file his nomination papers from Ludhiana for the Lok Sabha polls, the Ludhiana Municipal Corporation served him with a notice asking him to pay Rs 1.82 crore in rent pending against the government accommodation that he had been occupying in the district since 2016. The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Punjab, Sibin C, has sought a report from the state government regarding a complaint submitted by Ravneet Singh Bittu. The BJP's Ludhiana candidate had alleged that the municipal commissioner (MC) had not issued him a no-due certificate (NDC) as per the Election Commission of India (EC) guidelines and that the MC had misused his authority.

Bittu had submitted a complaint to the CEO regarding Ludhiana's non-issuance of the NDC within 48 hours of submission of an application. He said the MC was impeding his ability to participate in Lok Sabha elections 2024. A statement issued by the CEO's office said that to address the matter promptly, it had written to the principal secretary of the Department of Local Government and sought to conduct a swift inquiry and submit the findings so that the ECI would be informed. Hours before Bittu was to file his nomination papers from Ludhiana for the Lok Sabha polls, the Ludhiana Municipal Corporation served him with a notice asking him to pay Rs 1.82 crore in rent



pending against the government accommodation that he had been occupying in the district since 2016. Bittu, who obtained NDC on Friday after clearing Rs 1.82 crore dues and filed his nomination the same day, said that he had to pledge a chunk of his ancestral land at Kotla Afghana village, to arrange the money. Bittu, the grandson of veteran Congressman and slain Punjab chief minister Beant Singh, is looking for a third consecutive win from Ludhiana. In 2014 and 2019, he was elected from Ludhiana on a Congress ticket but switched to the BJP recently. A three-time MP, he had won his first Lok Sabha election from Anandpur Sahib in 2009 on a Congress ticket.

Foreign workers in Canada's Prince Edward Island hold day-long protest against immigration policy changes

GNS News Agency, May 15

Foreign workers in Canada's Prince Edward Island will hold a day-long protest on May 13 against changes in the province's immigration policy that would reduce the intake of permanent residents by 25 per cent. A demonstration was held in Charlottetown on Friday over the issue. A large number of students from Punjab living in the province are likely to be affected by the policy changes, announced by the province in February, as many of them work either on work permits or as international students. The burden on the healthcare and housing sectors were cited as the reason to reduce the intake. The focus would now be on nominating workers in the healthcare, childcare and construction trades. "This has left the hundreds of foreign workers working in the retail and services sector hopeless as they are unlikely to get their work permit renewed once it expires. Even if they shift to the healthcare, childcare and construction trades now, they won't get any benefit as work permits in these sectors will be extended only to those who have prior experience," said Manpreet Kaur Longowal, a volunteer of the Montreal Youth Students Organisation (MYSO)

MYSO has extended support to protesting foreign workers in the retail and services sector. Longowal addressed a rally held in the connection in Charlottetown on Saturday. Longowal said, "The postgraduate work permit of workers in the retail and services sector is unlikely to be extended and hence they will have no choice but to leave the country. This is the reason that we are raising our voice that sudden changes in immigration policies should not be applicable for the foreign workers already working in those sectors in P.E."

"P.E.I has temporarily closed the provincial nominee program and the Atlantic immigration program in the retail and services sector. This has caused panic amongst foreign workers working in this sector," Longowal added.

Prince Edward Island is a thinly populated province of Canada and international students and foreign workers often meet the requirement for workers. This also helps them get permanent residence (PR) after working



Foreign workers in Canada's Prince Edward Island will hold a day-long protest against changes in the province's immigration policy that would reduce the intake of permanent residents by 25 per cent. A demonstration was held in Charlottetown on Friday over the issue.

and staying in the region for a particular time period. However, the changes in the provincial nominee program have shocked the foreign workers who were hoping to apply for permanent residence in the coming months. Now the points for applying for PR have been raised to 65. The protesters feel that for the majority, this score is impossible to meet. Varun Khanna, another MYSO volunteer, said, "In case of a shortage of workforce, provinces relax the norms and whenever they are filled they start acting strict, which is not justified. The changes shouldn't be applicable for existing foreign workers working in the retail and services sector who came to this island years ago and have contributed to the economy of the country." The other demands are that the provincial nominee program should be applicable in the retail and services sector as well in an impartial manner and that the postgraduate work permit of all workers should be extended. "We appeal to maximum foreign workers to get united to raise these issues," said Khushpal Grewal, another MYSO volunteer.

2 aides of former BJP MLA Preetham Gowda arrested for leaking explicit videos



GNS News Agency, May 15

The accused are Likith Gowda and Yalagunda Chetan and are said to be aides of Karnataka BJP general secretary Preetham Gowda. The accused are Yalagunda Chetan and Likith Gowda are said to be aides of Karnataka BJP general secretary Preetham Gowda. Two people allegedly involved in leaking the obscene videos of Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna were arrested by the Special Investigation Team. The accused are Likith Gowda and Yalagunda Chetan are said to be aides of Karnataka BJP general secretary Preetham Gowda. The arrests were based on a complaint filed by Janata Dal (Secular) worker Poornachandra Tejaswi MG on April 22 against five people for leaking the videos. The complainant had accused Congress worker Naveen Gowda and others of sharing the videos which triggered a political

row in Karnataka.

Among the two arrested, Chetan was employed at the office of Preetham Gowda, the former MLA from Hassan, while Likith Gowda was a close aide, according to sources. The two were questioned at the Cyber, Economic, and Narcotics Crime police station at Hassan before their arrest. The police are also on the lookout for Naveen Gowda, who is the prime accused in the video leak case. With the two arrests, the total number of people arrested in connection with various cases linked to the Prajwal Revanna sexual assault case reached eight. Previously, the SIT had arrested six people including JD(S) MLA H D Revanna - Prajwal Revanna's father - for allegedly kidnapping a victim to stop her from approaching investigating officials. H D Revanna is currently remanded in judicial custody till May 14, while the Hassan MP, who fled the country after the videos were distributed via pen drives and shared on online platforms, is still on the lam. JD(S) Karnataka president H D Kumaraswamy had pulled up the SIT last week for failing to investigate the individuals who leaked the videos. He had alleged that despite a complaint by the JD(S), the SIT had not acted against the individuals named in the case. Preetham Gowda, who lost the 2023 Assembly polls from Hassan, was involved in several public spats with H D Revanna, his wife Bhavani Revanna, and Prajwal Revanna. He was among those who expressed his reservation over fielding Prajwal Revanna from Hassan and had reportedly refused to campaign for him during the Lok Sabha polls.

SIT not going abroad to bring Prajwal Revanna back: Karnataka Home Minister

GNS News Agency, May 15

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Sunday said that the Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing into sexual abuse charges against Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, will not be going abroad to bring him back, and the Interpol will share information about him. He also cautioned political leaders about making public statements or sharing information in connection with the case, which is sensitive. The 33-year-old Prajwal Revanna, who is grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, is facing charges of sexually abusing several women. The scandal has raised a political storm with the ruling Congress and BJP-JD(S) engaged in a slugfest.

Prajwal Revanna is said to have flown abroad on April 27, a day after the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka was held. He was BJP-JD(S) alliance's joint candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment, which went to polls in the first phase. "No, there is no such option. Blue Corner Notice has been issued and the Interpol will share the information. The respective country in which he is found or identified- they will inform them (Interpol) and then our agencies, the CBI will get to know, and through them we will get to know. He was responding to a question on reports about the SIT team travelling abroad in connection with the case. Speaking to reporters, he said, "investigation is going on, not to affect the investigation we don't want to share any information." Responding to a question on Union Minister Pralhad Joshi's statement alleging conspiracy behind the arrest of BJP leader



Devaraje Gowda, for making allegations against Congress leaders in connection with the case, Parameshwara said, "if any one says anything I cannot react to it. We cannot respond to every public statement. As this is a serious case, we cannot share information until the investigation is completed." "My request to the public and to our leaders is to be cautious while making statements. If not, based on the statements given by them, we may have to call them for investigation and record their statement under 41 A of CrPC," he added. Asked whether JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy will also be served notice, the Minister said he is a former CM and that he believes that the former has taken this case seriously. Before giving any statements on this case or before sharing any information in the public domain, one has to be cautious, and this applies to all," he added.

OBC leader and former Kurukshetra MP Kailasho Saini quits BJP, joins Congress

GNS News Agency, May 15

Former MP Kailasho Saini joins Congress in the presence of Bhupinder Singh Hooda in Rohtak Sunday. (Express Photo) Kailasho Saini, a two-time former MP from Kurukshetra, quit the saffron party and joined the Opposition party in the presence of former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda in Rohtak on Sunday. Days after three independent MLAs withdrew support to the ruling BJP in Haryana and joined the Congress, Kailasho Saini, a two-time former MP from Kurukshetra, quit the saffron party and joined the Opposition party in the presence of former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda in Rohtak

Kailasho is considered a prominent OBC leader in Kurukshetra district. She also announced that she would campaign for the INDIA bloc-supported Aam Aadmi Party candidate in Kurukshetra, Sushil Gupta, in the May 25 Lok Sabha election. She was elected from the Kurukshetra Lok Sabha seat in 1998 and 1999 on the tickets of the Haryana Lok Dal (Rashtriya) and the Indian National Lok Dal, respectively. The INLD was earlier known as the Haryana Lok Dal (Rashtriya). She has also been the chairperson of the zila parishad in Kurukshetra.

After joining the Congress, Kailasho said, "I joined the Congress under the leadership of Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who respected every section of society during his 10-year rule in the state. I had thought (of switching sides) for a long time. A democratic party like the Congress exists nowhere else in the world." Asked for her reasons for leaving the BJP, the former parliamentarian said, "In the BJP, there are no concern for the public. There is a conspiracy to change the Constitution. The farmers were beaten up with the sticks (during the peasants' stir)." Welcoming her, Hooda said nearly 40 former MLAs and MPs had already joined the Congress in



Haryana, apart from recent support the three independent MLAs offered to the party. "The BJP government is in a minority in Haryana and it should resign on moral grounds. We have given a memorandum to the governor urging him to dissolve the Assembly and hold Assembly polls," he added. Kailasho has been active in Kurukshetra's politics for nearly three decades. She contested the 1996 Lok Sabha election in Kurukshetra on the ticket of the Social Action Party, but Haryana Vikas Party candidate O P Jindal won the poll battle. In 1998, she contested the election on the ticket of the Haryana Lok Dal (Rashtriya) and defeated the Congress's Kuldeep Sharma. As the INLD candidate, Kailasho defeated O P Jindal of the Congress in the 1999 Lok Sabha election from the constituency. Jindal's son Naveen Jindal is the BJP candidate for the upcoming Lok Sabha election. Kailasho joined the Congress in 2009, when Hooda was the chief minister. However, she lost two Assembly elections (2009 and 2014) from the Ladwa constituency. Ahead of the 2019 Assembly polls, she quit the Congress and joined the BJP.

BJP a government for corporates, not poor, says Priyanka Gandhi

Hyderabad: Slamming the BJP for neglecting the welfare of the poor and downtrodden, AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi said the BJP government worked for the corporates and was protecting their interests. The BJP government had waived corporate loans worth Rs. 16 lakh crore even when farmers were dying by suicide unable to pay loans of Rs. 50,000 or Rs. 1 lakh since they got no support from the government, she said. Addressing a public meeting at Tandur here on Saturday, Gandhi said the poor and middle class were forced to pay Adani and Ambani taxes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his cabi-

net colleagues do not seek votes in the name of development or list out their achievements, instead they instigate people and divide them on communal lines, she said. "BJP's politics starts and ends with religion. There is nothing left in their politics," she said, adding that the BJP was misleading the people that the Congress was against religion and even alleging that Congress would loot properties from one community and distribute to the other. "It is a sin to mislead people to secure power and change the Constitution in the name of democracy," Gandhi said, stating that the people were vexed with the BJP and would not fall prey to their deceitful politics.

Gloves are off as Trump bashes Biden at New Jersey rally: 'A total moron, fool'



GNS News Agency, May 15

Donald Trump headed on Saturday to the Jersey Shore, where he repeatedly blamed President Joe Biden for the criminal charges he's facing as the presumptive nominee prepare to face off in the November election and called his New York hush money case "a Biden show trial". Sandwiched between his appearances in court, Donald Trump headed on Saturday to the Jersey Shore, where he repeatedly blamed President Joe Biden for the criminal charges he's facing as the presumptive nominee prepare to face off in the November election and called his New York hush money case "a Biden show trial."

Blasting the Democratic president as "a total moron," Trump before a crowd of tens of thousands repeatedly characterised the cases against him as politically motivated and timed to harm his ability to campaign. "He's a fool. He's not a smart man," Trump said of Biden. "I talk about him differently now because now the gloves are off." Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, drew what his team called a "mega crowd" to a Saturday evening rally in the southern New Jersey resort town of Wildwood, 150 miles (241 kilometers) south of the New York City courthouse where he has been forced to spend most weekdays sitting silently through his felony hush money trial.

Lisa Fagan, spokesperson for the city of Wildwood, told The Associated Press that she estimated a crowd of between 80,000 and 100,000 attendees, based off her own observations on the scene Saturday, having seen "dozens" of other events in the same space. Trump was joined on stage by several high-level endorsers, including North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and NFL Hall of Fame linebacker Lawrence Taylor, who is still listed as a registered sex offender after pleading guilty in New York in 2011 to misdemeanor criminal charges of sexual misconduct and patronising an underage prostitute.

The beachfront gathering, described by Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-N.J., as the largest political gathering in state history, was designed to serve as a show of force at a critical moment for Trump, who is facing dozens of felony charges in four separate criminal cases with the election less than six months away. Hours before he was scheduled to take the stage, thousands of Trump loyalists donning "Never Surrender" T-shirts and red "Make America Great Again" hats crowded onto the sand between the boardwalk and carnival rides to greet the former Republican president. "The everyday American people are 100% behind him," said Doreen O'Neill, a 62-year-old nurse from Philadelphia. "They have to cheat and smear him and humiliate him in that courtroom every single day," O'Neill said. "This country is going to go insane if they steal the election again."

Trump's extraordinary legal woes, which include three other unrelated criminal cases, have emerged as a central issue in the campaign. Trump has repeatedly accused the Biden administration and Democratic officials in New York of using the legal system to block his return to the White House. Prosecutors allege the former presi-

dent broke the law to conceal an affair with a porn actor that would have hurt his first presidential bid. On Saturday, Trump posited that even those whom he accuses of politically motivated prosecutions didn't bring every case they could have, pointing to the boosts his campaign has sustained with each wave of charges. "I heard they were going to do a couple of other things, and they said from Washington ... 'we're indicting him into the White House,'" Trump said. "They said, 'Don't do it.'"

While Trump seized on his legal woes Saturday, a judge's gag order — and the threat of jail — limit Trump's ability to comment publicly on witnesses, jurors and some others connected to the New York trial, which is expected to consume much of the month. The judge in the case has already fined Trump \$9,000 for violating the order and warned that jail could follow if he doesn't comply. The order doesn't include references to Judge Juan M. Merchan, whom Trump called "highly conflicted" or District Attorney Alvin Bragg, both of whom Trump said are "doing the bidding for crooked Joe Biden." Trump's responsibilities as a defendant have limited his ability to win over voters on the campaign trail. He spent last week's off-day from court in the general election battlegrounds of Wisconsin and Michigan. And he was campaigning with tens of thousands of voters Saturday in New Jersey, a reliably Democratic state. Parts of New Jersey have deep-red enclaves and the southern shoreline in particular draws tourists and summer homeowners from neighbouring Pennsylvania, a key swing state. Biden, meanwhile, opened his weekend with a series of fundraising events on the West Coast.

He avoided Trump's legal challenges — as he has done consistently — while addressing donors in Seattle. Instead, the Democratic president focused on Trump's recent interview with Time magazine in which the Republican former president said states should be left to determine whether to prosecute women for abortions or to monitor their pregnancies. Saturday's visit to the New Jersey Shore resort wasn't Trump's first.

While president, Trump held a rally there in January 2020 to thank Van Drew, the New Jersey congressman who had just left the Democratic Party for the GOP as a rebuke to the former president's first impeachment. Trump drew a crowd at the time that lined the streets, filled bars and supported numerous vendors in what is usually a sleepy city in the winter. This time, summer is around the corner for the resort, known for its wide beaches and boardwalk, games and shops. Wildwood is in New Jersey's 2nd District, which Van Drew has represented for three terms and covers all or part of six counties in southern New Jersey. It went for Trump in 2016 and again in 2020 after earlier backing Barack Obama. Trump is set to return to the courtroom next week, when key prosecution witness Michael Cohen, Trump's fixer-turned-foe, is expected to take the witness stand. Last week, he was visibly angry at times as he was forced to sit through testimony from former porn actor Stormy Daniels, who described a sexual encounter with the former president in shocking detail.

Trump is charged with 34 counts of falsifying internal Trump Organization business records. The charges stem from paperwork such as invoices and checks that were deemed legal expenses in company records. Prosecutors say those payments largely were reimbursements to Cohen, Trump's attorney, who paid Daniels \$130,000 to keep quiet. The prosecution could rest its case by the end of the week. It's unclear if Trump himself will take the stand when the defense presents its case. Back on the Jersey Shore, 65-year-old Pat Day said she felt some urgency to see Trump in person on Saturday. "We want to see Trump before they take him out," said Day, who was visiting from the Florida Keys. "I'm worried. They're going to do everything they can so he doesn't get elected again."

US trans woman runs over man, 64, kisses his body, then stabs him 9 times

GNS News Agency, May 15

A trans woman killed a 64-year-old man in Houston when she ran over him with a car before she backed the vehicle on him. She kissed his body and stabbed him nine times before fleeing the spot. She was arrested and charged with murder. The suspect, Karon Fisher, 20, a trans woman, was arrested and charged with murder of a 64-year-old man in Houston, US.

A 64-year-old man in Houston, US, died when he was run over by a car by a trans woman, who then reversed the vehicle on him. The trans woman shockingly kissed his body repeatedly before stabbing him nine times. The incident was caught on camera and went viral online. Steven Anderson, the victim, was on his way to pick up mail in his neighbourhood when a speeding white vehicle struck him on the road, the footage showed. The car then reversed and hit Anderson for a second time, killing him on the spot, and the suspect fled the spot. The suspect, Karon Fisher, who was subsequently arrested, later returned to the scene, flipped Anderson's body over, straddled him, and kissed him before stabbing him nine times, The New York Post reported.

Fisher, who wore a black bra and high-waisted black shorts, tried to get into another car while passers-by witnessed the horror scenes unfolding, police said. However, the suspect was not able to get into the vehicle and walked over Anderson's body and left the spot on foot, according



to authorities. Fisher was arrested and charged with murder, evading arrest with a vehicle and assaulting hospital personnel, Harris County records stated. The suspect was referred to as a male on court records, but was identified by the police as a woman. Before her arrest, Fisher was on community supervision for evading arrest in a case in 2023. The New York Post report said Fisher was earlier charged with prostitution in 2021, but that case was dismissed. She is expected to be produced before a court on May 24. Eyewitnesses described the daytime murder as "disturbing". "It's very disturbing. I have kids here. They could have been out here playing, and imagine them," one neighbour told Eyewitness News. Broad daylight. People around every time and it happened right under our noses," another said.

Fourth Indian arrested in Canada for Hardeep Singh Nijjar's murder

GNS News Agency, May 15

The fourth person arrested in the case, Amandeep Singh, has been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy of Nijjar's killing. Amandeep Singh, the fourth person arrested as accused in the murder case of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Canada has arrested a fourth person and charged him with the murder of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Canadian police said on Saturday. The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team informed that they have arrested one Amandeep Singh and charged him with first-degree murder and conspiracy of Nijjar's killing. 22-year-old Amandeep Singh, an Indian national residing in Brampton, Surrey and Abbotsford, was already in cus-

tody in Ontario for unrelated firearms charges, said "This arrest shows the nature of our ongoing investigation to hold responsible those that played a role in the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar," said Amandeep Mooker, officer in-charge. Amandeep Singh is now the fourth person arrested in the case alongside Karan Brar (22), Kamalpreet Singh (22), Karanpreet Singh (28). The trio have been arrested under the same charges in connection to Nijjar's killing. Nijjar was killed in a targeted shooting in Canada's Surrey outside a gurdwara. His name had been included in a list released by the Indian government with 40 other "designated terrorists." Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing, in which Canada sees an Indian role, has been a thorn in bilateral ties.

Biden's ceasefire offer to Hamas as Israel orders more evacuations from Rafah



GNS News Agency, May 15

Israel ordered a fresh round of evacuations in Rafah, where it was carrying out its military offensive against Hamas, while US President Joe Biden amped up pressure on Hamas and said a ceasefire was possible "tomorrow" if it released the remaining hostages. US President Joe Biden on Saturday (local time) said a ceasefire in war-torn Gaza was possible "tomorrow" if Hamas, the Palestinian group ruling the enclave, released the remaining hostages in its captivity. The fresh truce offer from Biden coincided with Israel ordering more evacuations in the southern Gaza city of Rafah as it pushed forward with its military offensive there, in defiance of pressure from other countries, including the US.

Around 130 hostages remain unaccounted for after they were captured by Hamas during the cross-border attack into Israel on October 7 last year that triggered the war in Gaza. Earlier, 104 hostages and 240 Palestinian prisoners were released in a ceasefire deal that was

achieved in November last year. But that truce was short-lived as Israel resumed its ground operations in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military evacuated thousands of people from eastern Rafah. Its top spokesperson, Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, said that "dozens of terrorists" had been killed as "targeted operations" continued. After Israel captured the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing on May 6, Egypt refused to coordinate with the Jewish state on the delivery of humanitarian aid to refugees through the border crossing to protest against "unacceptable Israeli aggression", Egypt's Al Qahera News reported, citing an official. Speaking at a fundraiser event in Seattle, Biden upped the pressure on Hamas to release hostages and said a ceasefire would begin "tomorrow" if the group released them. "Before I begin, let me answer a question related to the hostages. You know, there would be a ceasefire tomorrow if Hamas released the hostages, women, the elderly and the wounded. Israel said it's up to Hamas if they wanted to do it, we could end it tomorrow. And the ceasefire would begin tomorrow," he said. Thousands of Israelis staged a protest against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv and urged him to make more efforts to ensure the release of hostages. They also carried pictures of those who were still in captivity. Georgios Petropoulos, an official of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Rafah, warned that aid workers had no tents, blankets and other essentials to assist people. This came after the World Food Programme said it would run out of food supplies in southern Gaza, with the agency warning that parts of Gaza were facing a "full-blown famine".

Donald Trump rules out former rival Nikki Haley as running mate

GNS News Agency, May 15

Donald Trump said on Saturday that former Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley was not being considered to be his running mate in the November election, dismissing a report by news site Axios. "Nikki Haley is not under consideration for the VP slot, but I wish her well!" Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social. Citing people familiar with the situation, Axios had reported that Trump could pick Haley if he were convinced she could help him win the presidency, avoid a potential prison sentence and cover tens of millions in legal bills if he loses.

Haley, the former South Carolina governor and a former US ambassador to the United Nations, ended her long-shot challenge to Republican presidential frontrunner Trump in March. Comment was not immediately available from Haley. While she has acknowledged that Trump, who repeatedly belittled her candidacy, would be the Republican nominee, Haley has not endorsed him. There was already a long list of potential candidates for the vice president position that includes North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, US Senators Marco Rubio, Tim Scott and JD



Vance, and US Representative Elise Stefanik. Burgum and Scott competed against Trump for the 2024 Republican nomination before dropping out. Noem has been embroiled in controversy after revealing in a memoir that she once shot a 14-month-old dog for being disobedient. Trump is in no hurry to pick a running mate, according to advisers. He will not be formally nominated until the Republican convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in July. He will face President Joe Biden, a Democrat, in the November 5 general election.

Hamas says another Israeli hostage held in Gaza is dead

GNS News Agency, May 15

Palestinian Islamist group Hamas said on Saturday that another one of the hostages abducted during its October 7 attack on Israel has died. Hamas released a video saying that Nadav Popplewell, who was taken hostage from the southern Israeli community of Kibbutz Nirim, died after being wounded in an Israeli strike in Gaza. The Israeli military did not offer immediate comment on the latest video. It has referred to previous videos of hostages released by Hamas as psychological terror. It has also denied some of the previous accusations by Hamas that hostages were killed by Israeli fire.

Earlier on Saturday, Hamas released an undated video of the 51-year-old captive in front of a white wall, with a bruise on his right eye, and speaking his name. Hours later, in the second video, it said Popplewell died of wounds sustained a month ago in an Israeli air strike. Hamas said Popplewell, whom it said was also a British citizen, was being detained with a woman hostage when the place they were being held was targeted by an Israeli missile. "He died because he didn't receive intensive medical care at medical facilities because of the enemy's destruction of hospitals in Gaza," the Hamas armed wing spokesman, Abu Ubaida, said in a



statement. Of 252 people abducted on October 7, 128 remain in Gaza, according to Israeli tallies.

At least 36 of them have been declared dead by an Israeli forensic committee. Israel says securing the release of the hostages is the aim of its offensive in Gaza, along with eliminating Hamas, which has ruled the enclave since 2007. Popplewell, according to the hostages support group, was captured with his mother from her home in Kibbutz Nirim. His brother was killed during the attack. His mother was freed during a brief truce in November.

Man likely to get 40 years prison for attacking Nancy Pelosi's husband



GNS News Agency, May 15

Federal prosecutors are asking a judge to impose a 40-year prison sentence for the man who broke into former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's San Francisco home seeking to hold her hostage and attacked her husband with a hammer. The San Francisco Chronicle reported late Friday that prosecutors made the request ahead of a sentencing hearing for David DePape, saying he has not shown remorse for the October 2022 attack. "There is nothing about the history and characteristics of the de-

fendant that warrants leniency," federal prosecutors wrote in court documents. "The defendant has admitted — indeed bragged — that he knew what he was doing."

DePape was convicted last year of attempted kidnapping of a federal official and assault on the immediate family member of a federal official. He is scheduled to be sentenced Friday. The attack on then-82-year-old Paul Pelosi, which was captured on police body camera video just days before the midterm elections, sent shockwaves through the political world.

DePape admitted during trial testimony that he broke into the Pelosis' home intending to hold the speaker hostage and "break her kneecaps" if she lied to him. He also admitted to bludgeoning Paul Pelosi with a hammer after police showed up at the home, saying his plan to end what he viewed as government corruption was unravelling. Defense attorneys said DePape was motivated by his political beliefs and caught up in conspiracy theories. Nancy Pelosi was not at home at the time of the attack. Paul Pelosi suffered two wounds on his head, including a skull fracture that was mended with plates and screws he would have for the rest of his life. His right arm and hand were also injured.

Trade unions write to ministry, object to exclusion from labour code consultations



by the backdoor”.

“The government has failed and neglected to involve all the central trade unions, at least those who have beedi and cigar workers unions affiliated to them and has involved only BMS union. This exercise, while the elections are underway, is against the model code of conduct,” the letter stated. The unions pointed out that the welfare board, which was functioning earlier, has been made defunct as beedi cess has been stopped. “We urge you to put on hold the process initiated and ask the concerned officials to consult all the central trade unions who are working in the beedi sector,” the letter stated

The central trade unions were not informed about the meeting, one of the union members said. On April 24, Directorate General Labour Welfare under the Ministry of Labour and Employment issued a notice for the constitution of a committee for preparing a draft standard on OSH for workplaces relating to beedi and cigar under section 18(1) of Occupational Safety, Health and Working Condition Code, 2020. Deputy Director General of Labour Welfare was listed as the chairman of the committee with labour department officials from Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Uttar Pradesh as other members. The notice also stated that the chairman of the committee co-opted four other members including the organising secretary, BMS. The first meeting of the committee was held on April 30. Section 18(1) of the OSH Code relates to standards on occupational safety and health for workplaces related to factories, mines, dock work, beedi and cigar, building and other construction work and other establishments. The Centre had notified four labour codes to replace 29 sets of labour laws: The Code on Wages, 2019; The Industrial Relations Code, 2020; The Code on Social Security, 2020; and The OSH Code, 2020. However, the codes notified and passed by the Parliament are yet to be implemented.

After coal and gas, govt bolsters hydro capacity to meet rising peak demand



The Ministry of Power said it has “optimised” hydro-power generation to make available an additional 4GW capacity, weeks after it instructed fifteen imported coal-based and all gas-based thermal plants to be operational during the summer months. With peak power demand set to touch 240 GW in June, the ministry’s latest effort to avoid supply shortfall reflects growing concern over risk of outages, particularly amid poll season demand surge and a hotter-than-usual summer. Even though India added a record renewable capacity of over 18 GW in FY24, the variability in renewable energy generation is putting pressure on base load capacity, including thermal, especially during evening hours of low sunlight and high demand. The reliance on coal and gas to meet peak demand is more pronounced given the absence of adequate energy storage infrastructure in the country, which can help store excess energy generated by solar and wind plants during non-peak hours and release it during peak hours.

While India’s peak demand deficit has fallen considerably in recent years, insufficient energy storage infrastructure and rising temperatures could widen the gap moving forward, especially in the summer months. The country is starting at a 14 GW peak shortfall in June, its largest in 14 years, due to delays in commissioning new coal-based plants, according to a Reuters report. The latest move comes in light of hydro generation missing the cumulative target of 12,487 MU (million units) by 1,770 MU in the ongoing FY25 till May 9, a shortfall of 14 per cent, data on the National Power Portal showed. Moreover, state sector hydro capacity, which accounts for 58 per cent of total hydro capacity, generated 19 per cent less power last month compared to April, 2023, as per data. Significant year-on-year fall was recorded for hydro plants operated by state-owned utilities of Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh. With these measures and forecasts of above-normal monsoon in the coming months, “it is expected that the power demand would be adequately met both during the day and during night hours in the summer months of May and June,” the ministry noted in a press release. “Nowadays, all the plants are running at their peak, so there’s a possibility that there will be no margin available. Hydro is also expected to be a little less compared to last year because of lower snowfall,” said an industry source.

“In June, demand from agriculture will suddenly come up and the majority of this will come from the northern states as they’ll start to take power to run pump sets. There will be a surge in demand and historically, the impact of high wind and high hydro is more than the impact of demand increase. By the third week of May, a lot of wind generation comes into play and gradually, with the snow melting, hydro generation will also start to increase in another three-four weeks,” they added. In India, which is the world’s third largest producer of renewable energy, around 40 per cent of installed electricity capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources. This green push has resulted in a sharp 24 per cent reduction in emission intensity of GDP between 2005 and 2016, but it has also thrown up challenges in meeting peak demand with a grid being increasingly powered by renewables.

Even as the share of installed capacity of renewables like solar and wind has increased to nearly 29 per cent of total capacity in FY24, compared to 20 per cent in FY20, these sources of power do not have high capacity utilisation as they are variable in nature. Energy storage is needed alongside green energy sources to primarily balance out the variability in renewable generation – electricity is generated only when the sun shines or when the wind blows. This is not always in sync with the demand cycle. Storage can help tide over this shortcoming associated with renewables. For procurers such as state-owned discoms, renewables are not always a viable option precisely due to these vagaries in the generation trends, which means they still have to depend on thermal or nuclear generation for meeting base load demand. Renewables bundled with a viable storage option help overcome this problem.

With lithium-ion battery storage being ruled out as unviable for grid application, at least for now, an emerging policy resolve is that solar and wind-based generation cannot continue to be pushed down to struggling electricity distribution companies or discoms. The renewables challenge is compounded by the fact that SECI (Solar Energy Corporation of India Ltd) — the state-owned company conducting solar auctions — has locked-

UPI payments see surge in India, leading people to overspending too: Experts

New Delhi: As India’s digital and less-cash journey gains steam, more and more people are not only purchasing their daily essentials via unified payments interface (UPI) mode of digital transactions but also costly home appliances, high-end gadgets and designer apparels, among other things. The seamless digital journey via the UPI mode has also resulted in people overspending on stuff they actually may not need at times, experts said on Saturday. The purchasing trend via UPI/QR code is due to the fact that digital transactions now take a jiffy to complete the purchase journey via smartphones. According to a recent survey by IIT Delhi, nearly 74 per cent of people in the country are ‘overspending’ as a result of using UPI and other digital payment methods. “The convenience and ease of digital transactions through UPI, in comparison to cash, may indeed lead to lower awareness of spending, as transactions are seamless and reduce the tangible feel of money leaving one’s possession,” Prabhu Ram, Head, Industry Intelligence Group at market intelligence firm CMR, told IANS. Latest data from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) revealed that the number of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions reached 1,330 crore in April. On a year-on-year basis, the UPI transaction count has increased by 50 per cent.

From a career woman to mother of 60: How ‘Madam Maa’ gave a home to vulnerable children



herself. Fondly referred to as ‘Madam Maa’, she says that her journey with children was truly unplanned. “It just happened,” she reveals. Mother Trivedi interacting with her children.

Trivedi has been working in Naxal affected areas of Andhra Pradesh since 2001. Her extensive work includes rain water harvesting, collaborating with hospitals to deliver medical assistance to those affected by fluoride contamination, offering skill training to HIV infected sex workers, and rehabilitating them with mainstream jobs. “But once I saw these children, I felt this connection. I realised what I wanted to do in life, what was the correct thing for me to do in life.” “Most of these kids lack education, they are extremely shy and do not like to speak much. When sick or hungry, they shut down completely. But when I held them, there was peace in their eyes.” Over the course of two decades, Trivedi has changed the lives of several children — some of whom have excelled in life and made her proud. “Raj Rajashree is one such kid,” she says. “She did her B. Tech from Hyderabad and is now an engineer.” Mother Kanan Trivedi with her children at the beach.

This Mother’s Day, indianexpress.com speaks to a remarkable woman, who has legally adopted 60 children, offering them a loving home and a chance to rewrite their stories. Breaking traditions and stereotypes, she has given these children a brighter future. Kanan Trivedi is an answering teacher and volunteer at The Art of Living, a humanitarian and educational non governmental organisation, which opened The Sri Sri Seva Mandir, the first free school in Andhra Pradesh in 2004.

This school situated in Guntur provides a lifeline for vulnerable children. They accept kids from difficult backgrounds — those affected by social and economic disasters, trauma, abuse, child marriage, or Naxal violence. As a residential school for orphaned and abandoned children, they offer free education and meals to all in need, including children of Naxals and underprivileged families. What’s worth noting is that these children are the first generation in their family to be educated and employed.

Gujarat-based Trivedi started out as an independent, career-oriented woman struggling with anxiety, anger and bitterness owing to her job in the city. In a quest to find respite from the frustrations of life, she found herself leaning into the teachings of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and eventually began teaching meditation, yoga and breathwork, popularly known as ‘Sudarshan Kriya’

Eating calcium at this time can lower heart attack risk, study finds

According to Dr RR Dutta, HOD, Internal Medicine, Paras Hospital, Gurugram, “Distributing dietary calcium intake across breakfast and dinner is emphasised because timing plays a crucial role in its absorption and utilisation by the body. Calcium absorption is influenced by other dietary components and the body’s circadian rhythm. Consuming calcium-rich foods at breakfast and dinner ensures optimal absorption and utilisation throughout the day and night, supporting bone health and potentially reducing cardiovascular risk.”

Calcium intake timing, cardiovascular health, calcium absorption, breakfast vs dinner, dietary calcium, heart disease prevention, balanced diet The relationship between dietary calcium intake and cardiovascular risk is multifaceted. The relationship between dietary calcium intake and cardiovascular risk is multifaceted, according to Dr Dutta. Adequate calcium intake is essential for maintaining healthy blood pressure levels, as calcium plays a role in vascular function and smooth muscle contraction. “Additionally, calcium may help regulate cholesterol metabolism and reduce the formation of arterial plaques, thus lowering the risk of cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes,” Dr Dutta said.

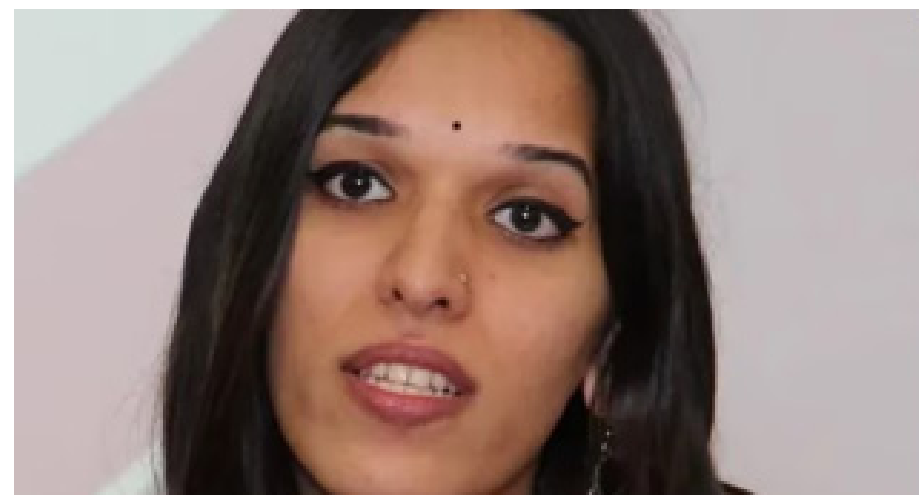
Should you adjust your dietary habits based on these findings? Dr Dutta recommended incorporating calcium-rich foods such as dairy products, leafy greens, and fortified foods into both breakfast and dinner. However, he advised that it’s important to ensure overall dietary balance and avoid excessive calcium intake, which may lead to adverse effects such as kidney stones or cardiovascular calcification.

Important considerations when adjusting calcium intake Dr Dutta suggests, “Potential drawbacks or considerations include the need for individualised dietary



plans based on factors such as age, gender, health status, and medication use. Moreover, calcium absorption can be influenced by factors such as vitamin D levels, medication interactions, and gastrointestinal health. “He further added that consulting with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian is recommended before making significant changes to dietary calcium intake. Additionally, focusing solely on calcium intake may overshadow the importance of overall dietary patterns and lifestyle factors in cardiovascular health. While incorporating calcium-rich foods into daily meals is crucial, it’s equally essential to maintain a balanced diet and consider individual factors such as age, health status, and medication use. By consulting healthcare professionals and adopting holistic lifestyle changes, individuals can take proactive steps toward enhancing cardiovascular wellness and enjoying a vibrant, heart-healthy life.

My transition is complete, says Trinetra embracing gender affirmation and confidence



Made in Heaven actor Trinetra Haldar took to Instagram to share her story of undergoing facial feminisation surgery, throwing light on her thoughts and feelings behind taking this transitioning step. “My transition is complete. I didn’t think this final step would happen anytime soon, but it has. I did this by myself, for myself, and still can’t believe it. Transition to me is deeply spiritual, and not the stuff of tabloids and speculative nonsense,” the doctor shared about her fear of public judgment and fear of scrutiny while choosing what to do with her body.

The Instagram post featured a collage of psychological floral prints covering the expanse of the background along with a cut out of her post-operative face and the text “recovery sucks balls” written on top.

What’s Facial Feminisation Surgery?

Facial Feminisation Surgery (FFS) includes softening male features to give an outwardly feminine appearance to the

face. “Males generally tend to have a squarish jaw while the female face is oval or heart-shaped, said Dr Debraj Shome, senior cosmetic surgeon and director, The Esthetic Clinics.

He described a typical manly face as having a well-defined thyroid cartilage, popularly known as the Adam’s apple. Besides prominent facial hair, they also have small intense eyes and low-slung brows. Certain gender characteristics are specific to a male face owing to the hormone testosterone, which may be completely different from how a female face looks, because of softer

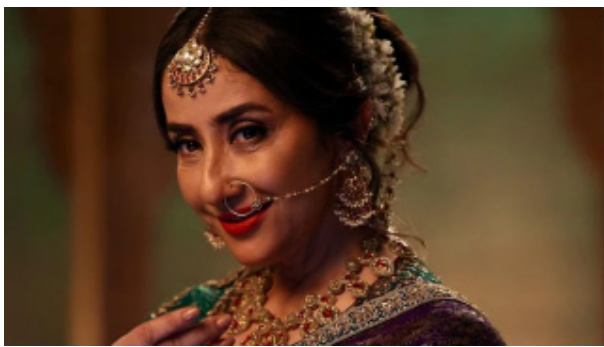
hormones like estrogen and progesterone, he added.

Are there health risks involved?

The FFS can include multiple surgeries such as rhinoplasty or blepharoplasty (eyelid reconstruction), that can be done even for normal people, said Dr Shome. “No cosmetic surgery is without risk. But it’s not like it’s a specific surgery only for those who are looking to transition from one gender to another. It could be done even on people who want to look younger and more rejuvenated. This surgery isn’t any more risky for a cis-

person person than a trans person.” The Rainbow Rishta star further added, “I’ve lost count of how many people in the industry I’ve met who’ve had work done and will deny intervention. To each their own, but I do not wish to contribute to a culture of opacity that thrives on making masses of young people insecure.” She refused any interest in promoting bodily intervention, claiming transparency, especially as a doctor. “My reasons were gender affirmation and confidence therefrom, as extensively deliberated on over years of therapy,” she concluded in her post.

Manisha Koirala was immersed in fountain for 12 hours for Heeramandi scene, says water turned muddy after a few hours: 'I was beyond exhaustion by the end...'



Bollywood actor Manisha Koirala, who is currently seen in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Heeramandi, has opened up about her experience shooting the show after recovering from cancer. Manisha said that doubts plagued her when she was about to start shooting because of the hectic schedules. She remembered being soaked in muddy water for 12 hours and not giving up till the end.

Manisha said that Heeramandi has been a significant milestone for her. The actor said that she is overjoyed because she is not stuck to playing insignificant roles. Taking to her social media handle, Manisha Koirala wrote, "I could never have imagined that after cancer and turning 50, my life would flower into this other phase. Today, when I am receiving so many accolades, I can't help but remember the doubts and anxiety that plagued me when I was about to start shooting." The actor revealed that she was unsure if her body would endure the intense shooting schedules, heavy costumes, and jewellery. She gave an example and wrote, "The fountain sequence proved the most physically challenging. It required me to be immersed in a water fountain for over 12 hours. Even though Sanjay had thoughtfully ensured that the water was warm and clean, over the hours, the water turned muddy. Every single pore in my body was soaked in that muddy water. Even though I was beyond exhaustion by the end of the shoot, I felt a deep happiness within my heart." Manisha also said that despite taking stress, her body remained resilient. Don't Miss | Heeramandi: Sanjay Leela Bhansali directs the most offensive scene of his career; controversial Padmaavat climax has nothing on it. The actor plays Mallikajaan in Heeramandi. The show is currently streaming on Netflix.

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Anup Soni warns against deepfake video using clips from Crime Patrol to promote IPL betting: 'Please be alert people'

As the world becomes increasingly reliant on technology, the dark side of innovation rears its head in the form of deepfakes. Recently, actor Anup Soni fell victim to this alarming trend when a doctored video endorsing IPL betting went viral, wrongly featuring his voice and clips from his popular show Crime Patrol. The video appears to have utilised artificial intelligence (AI) technology to create a convincing replica of Soni's voice, misleading viewers into believing that he endorses betting activities.

Following the video's viral spread, Soni personally stepped forward to condemn the act and released a statement clarifying that he has absolutely no association with it. The incident has also shed light on the potential dangers and widespread impact of deepfake technology on celebrities and the public alike. Deepfakes, a portmanteau of "deep learning" and "fake," involve the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to manipulate video or audio content, often creating convincing yet deceptive imitations of real people. In the case of Anup Soni, his likeness was exploited to promote illegal activities, causing distress and raising concerns about the implications for celebrities and their reputations. The video in question, urging online users to join Telegram groups, garnered millions of views, showcasing how rapidly such content can spread online. After the video went viral, Soni himself issued a warning stating, "This is a completely fake video and we all have to be alert as to how and to what



extent things are getting manipulated these days. The voice totally seems like I'm only saying. Even video clips are from Crime Patrol. Please be alert people!"

Unfortunately, Soni is not the only celebrity to have been targeted by deepfake creators. Recently, several high-profile actors, sportspersons and politicians, including Ranveer Singh, Rashmika Mandana, Sachin Tendulkar, Aamir Khan, Amit Shah and others, have also had their likenesses exploited in similar ways, often for deceptive or malicious purposes. People, especially victims and experts, have been calling for the urgent need for increased awareness and the development of countermeasures to combat the rise of deepfakes.

Aditi Rao Hydari was about to fall in fountain while filming Heeramandi song, Sanjay Leela Bhansali said 'Isko peeche karo'



Manisha Koirala said, "Definitely it was very heavy but we enjoyed it. Everything is picked by Sanjay and approved by him and then we carried it all. Some days, the hair pieces were quite heavy too." Aditi Rao Hydari shared, "For each of us, it is specifically picked. Depending on our character." Sonakshi Sinha agreed and added, "Once you wear it, you feel good. You forget all the difficulties. You forget all the discomfort."

Kapil Sharma then pointed out a scene where four people are holding Manisha Koirala's lehenga and carrying it as she walks. Sonakshi revealed, "Hum waise set par jaate the. Ready hoke, chaar log humara lehenga uthate the (We went to sets like that. We got ready and four people helped us with our lehengas)." Aditi Rao Hydari then recalled a hilarious incident and said, "When I was doing the mujra scene, there was a fountain filled with water. When I twirled while dancing, I nearly lost my balance. So Sanjay air said, 'Choti hai isko peeche karo. She will fall.'" When asked about the weight of her lehenga, Aditi said, "I think it weighed more than me." Heeramandi also stars Fardeen Khan, Shekhar Suman, Taha Shah and Adhyayan Suman among others. Helmed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, the show is currently streaming on Netflix.

Gurucharan Singh missing case: Delhi Police visit the Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah set in Mumbai, question actor's co-stars

It has been a few weeks since Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah actor Gurucharan Singh went missing. And while there have been no major updates in the case, it only seems to get deeper as the probe continues. Now, a News18 report suggests that the Delhi Police visited the Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah set in Mumbai. As per the report, Gurucharan's co-stars who were in touch with him were questioned.

The report quoted a source from the production team saying, "This week, Delhi police visited our sets and spoke with the actors who were in touch with Gurucharan Singh. Everyone has co-operated well with the police. Also, there were some rumors related to Gurucharan Singh's payments being due from the production house. But, the police found that the payment of the actor was cleared long ago."

Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashma's Head of Production Sohail Ramani also told the publication, "As a part of their investigation, Delhi police had visited our set. They went back assured that there were no dues from our end towards Gurucharan Singh. We continue to pray for his well-being and hope he is found soon." A few days back, the Delhi Police suspected that Gurucharan Singh had planned his disappearance. During the investigations, they realised that the actor left his phone back in Delhi's Palam area, and was also seen switching E-rickshaws. A report also suggested that Gurucharan had multiple bank accounts and emails that he operated from. Some time back, Gurucharan's TMKOC co-star Samay Shah had exclusively spoken to Indianexpress.com and shared that the missing actor was working on his Punjabi film, and he was also making an app. Samay said they had spoken a few months ago and Gurucharan had motivated Samay in their last conversation.

The Great Indian Kapil Show 7th episode first impression: Kapil Sharma strikes a fine balance between interview and sketch comedy



Kapil Sharma loves to make his guests laugh, but the comedian commenced the seventh episode of The Great Indian Kapil Show on a sumptuous note as he treated his guests, the star cast of Heeramandi, to some delectable pani puri, instantly earning himself some brownie points.

Kapil took on the role of a snazzy panipuri vendor in the latest episode. The show kicked off with an average skit featuring Kapil, Sunil Grover, and Krushna Abhishek, with the latter two eagerly eyeing the panipuri stall. This prompted the star cast of Heeramandi to enter the show and surround Kapil for a quick bite, setting the tone for an episode centred around delicious food and average comedy fare. As Kapil Sharma chatted with Sonakshi Sinha, Richa Chadha, Manisha Koirala, Sharmin Segal, Aditi Rao Hydari and Sanjeeda Sheikh, his teammates stepped in to keep the laughs rolling. It had been a while, but finally, the show treated us to a genuinely funny sketch, complete with some top-notch acting.

Krushna Abhishek took on the role of Jackie Shroff's Chinni Lal from Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film Devdas, while Kiku Sharda, decked out in an elaborate Anarkali costume, portrayed Madhuri Dixit's Chandramukhi. The sketch revolved around Chinni Lal and Chandramukhi entering into a long-distance relationship following Devdas' demise. But things got hilariously awkward when Chinni Lal couldn't resist teasing Chandramukhi about her newfound curves. Despite Kapil's show not being famous for its politically correct jokes, the highlight was

when Kiku, playing Chandramukhi, brilliantly shut down Krushna's Chinni Lal, leaving Sonakshi Sinha and the audience in fits of laughter.

While Krushna and Kiku's skit stole the spotlight, Sunil Grover's appearance as Engineer Chumbaak fell flat, leaving the stage without making much of an impact. It's not uncommon to encounter average or even subpar skits on Kapil Sharma's show, but what really matters is the reaction from the guests and the audience. Throughout the 50-minute episode, Sonakshi Sinha and Sanjeeda Sheikh brought their A-game and participated in the show with full gusto, but some of the other actors appeared less than impressed by Kapil's lacklustre jokes, struggling to muster up genuine laughter. Sharmin Segal, in particular, maintained a poker face throughout the show. While her deadpan expressions might have seemed out of place in Heeramandi, they made perfect sense on The Great Indian Kapil Show, where she visibly struggled to find humour in Kapil Sharma's flat jokes. But it wasn't all doom and gloom in the seventh episode. In fact, it managed to strike a fine balance between interview and sketch comedy, offering viewers a decent entertainment experience. Looking ahead, the anticipation for the next episode is sky-high, as it will feature none other than Ed Sheeran, who recently made his third visit to India. In a teaser clip, the singer dubbed Kapil Sharma's show as the "craziest and the most fun show" in the world. We'll have to wait until next Saturday on Netflix to see if it lives up to the hype!

Sonakshi Sinha says Heeramandi co-stars tied the knot, got pregnant while filming: 'I am still not married'

Manisha Koirala, Aditi Rao Hydari, Richa Chadha, Sonakshi Sinha, Sanjeeda Sheikh and Sharmin Segal, who are currently seen in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Heeramandi, recently made an appearance on The Great Indian Kapil Show. The actors took a trip down memory lane and took turns to explain their experience working with Bhansali. Host Kapil Sharma's one-liners also left everyone in splits, especially Sonakshi, who reverted back with funnier answers. When Kapil mentioned Alia Bhatt and Kiara Advani's wedding to question Sonakshi about her impending wedding, Sonakshi gave an honest reply. She said, "Jale par namak chidak rahe ho," and said that she 'desperately' wants to get married. She added, "We are done shooting for Heeramandi and I am still not married. Sharmin also got married." Manisha quickly pointed out and said, "And Richa, she got married and she got pregnant."

Richa Chadha then hilariously added, "It was a good practice for me. My outfits weighed 30 kilos. And later when I wore my wedding outfits, I felt like they weighed nothing. I could easily jump around and play. It felt so light."

Sharmin Segal tied the knot with Aman Mehta in November 2023. Sharmin is Bhansali's niece and she

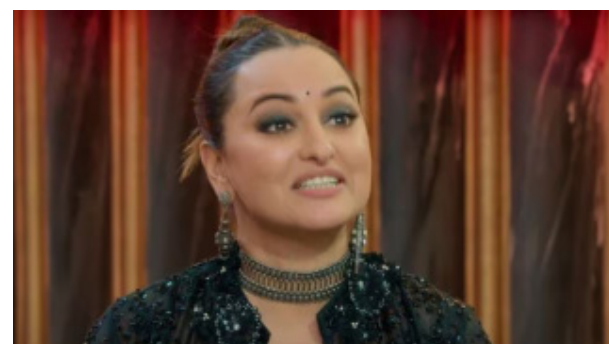


played the role of Mallikajaan's daughter Alamzeb in Heeramandi. Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal legally tied the knot in 2020 but celebrated their nuptials in 2022. In February 2024, the couple announced that they are pregnant with their first child. Don't Miss | Sonakshi Sinha reveals Sanjay Leela Bhansali scrapped the original version of Tilasmi Bahein from Heeramandi after it was shot for 3 hours: 'History was created on set that day'

Sonakshi Sinha reveals Sanjay Leela Bhansali scrapped the original version of Tilasmi Bahein from Heeramandi after it was shot for 3 hours: 'History was created on set that day'

Actor Sonakshi Sinha recently appeared on The Great Indian Kapil Show with her other Heeramandi co-stars Manisha Koirala, Richa Chadha, Aditi Rao Hydari, Sharmin Segal, and Sanjeeda Shaikh. While they had some fun moments, the team also got candid about working with a maverick like Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Kapil Sharma was seen teasing Manisha about how Bhansali considers her a lucky charm, and he went on to ask if he could invite the actor when he buys land. Later, Kapil also joked about how Sonakshi's role in Heeramandi is very similar to Archana Puran Singh's role on his show.

He quipped that in Heeramandi, Sonakshi's character Faredan aspires to snatch the Heeramandi throne and points out how Archana also loves to snatch people's chairs (hinting at how Archana Puran Singh replaced Navjot Singh Sidhu on the show many years ago). Following this, Archana asked the guests how it is to work on a Bhansali set, especially with rehearsals. Replying to this, Aditi shared that she shot for a dance number on the very first day of the shoot. After this, they all say together, "Sanjay sir didn't make us rehearse our dance numbers."



Richa added, "Everything we rehearse is on set, and he changes everything." Talking about rehearsals, Sonakshi shared, "My song that we shot, we rehearsed for it and that was added later. I had learned every step and went on set. We shot what we had rehearsed for 3 hours. But at 3 pm, he said it was not working for him, let us change it, and then he made a piece and decided on set that he would shoot the song in just one take."

Ashutosh Sharma interview: 'Umpired in local matches as 11-year-old to help buy lunch'



GNS News Agency, May 15

Uncapped Indian batters Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma have been IPL 2024's sleeper hits, playing entertaining innings despite their team Punjab Kings not making it past the league stage. In an interaction with The Indian Express, moderated by Pratyush Raj, Ashutosh recalls his life as an 11-year-old moving to Indore to pursue cricket, and hitting Jasprit Bumrah for a six while Shashank talks about learning from Mumbai mates, having a hard taskmaster as a father and his sister's geeky loyalty to his career.

What was more satisfying, hitting Jasprit Bumrah for a six or the win against Chandrakant Pandit's KKR?

Shashank Bhai has played a brilliant knock against KKR. It was a good win.

That six you hit off Bumrah's bowling, sweeping him. Is that the best shot you have played in your career so far?

No no, it was a cricket shot, it was nothing special, anyone can get hit and anyone can get you out. If you hit someone for a six it is a normal thing. It is not a big thing.

IPL 2024 Ashutosh Punjab Kings batter Ashutosh Sharma plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 cricket match between Punjab Kings (PBKS) and Mumbai Indians (MI) at Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium, Mullanpur, in Mohali, Thursday, April 18, 2024. (PTI Photo)

Were you not khadoos enough for Chandrakant Pandit's standards and why did you leave Madhya Pradesh?

There was no conversation between me and the coach. I scored 80 in the last match I played for Madhya Pradesh. Then Covid came and everything changed. Then I had to go to the Railways.

Who gives you the reality check?

My coach Amey Khurasiya. I talk to him frequently. He is my problem solver as well. I talk to him before every match. Your coach Amey Khurasiya believes that you can be more destructive in the powerplay. I was an opener when I was playing for Madhya Pradesh. I started playing as a finisher for Railways. There was no spot in the top order, I was new and the only spot available was at No 6 and 7. So I started being a finisher at Railways.

Were you given the role of finisher before the start of the season?

At the pre-season camp, we were told exactly what our role was and what the expectations were from us. When we played in the nets or in match simulations, I used to bat in the same role that I've been doing this season. That gave me a lot of confidence. We paid attention to the process and it helped.

How was it growing up in Ratlam and what role of your family in your cricket?

They were not many fans of cricket in my family, they

began to take an interest when I started doing well. I came to Indore from Ratlam at 11 years old, I used to play in one club in the morning and then later do umpiring. It was a lot of struggle, I stayed alone in Indore in a room with a friend. It has been 13 years I have been staying alone in Indore. I left home at 11 and then I was part of the MPCA academy. Amey Khurasiya was my coach for five years and then I stayed alone again. I represented MPCA last in 2019 and then I joined Railways. Md Kaif was 11 when he went to Lucknow but it was a sports hostel. Just want to understand how an 11-year-old managed everything in Indore. There was not much scope in Ratlam. When I was 10, I got selected for MP's U-14 camp. Me and my friend, we went to Indore together. We used to live in a room. There was a club CCI, we played there initially and then I was selected in a residential academy run by Amey sir. I started living and training there.

What was the daily routine like?

In the morning, there would be a training camp. In summer camps, we used to stand as umpires and from that money we bought lunch. In the evening, there used to be a small restaurant near our rented accommodation and we used to have dinner there. It continued for three years and then I was selected for the Academy.

Did the idea of giving up cricket ever cross your mind?

I was very young. I left home for the passion of playing cricket. I never thought that I would be playing the IPL or playing for the state. I just loved playing cricket and I left home. IPL 2024 points table: Punjab Kings batter Ashutosh Sharma plays a shot during an IPL 2024 match. (PTI Photo) IPL 2024 points table: Punjab Kings batter Ashutosh Sharma plays a shot during an IPL 2024 match. (PTI Photo)

You ever felt homesick, or missed your mother?

In the beginning, I used to miss my mother a lot. I used to cry a lot as well. But after some time it became normal.

How did two 11-year-olds manage to get a room in Indore?

My elder brother helped us get the room. It was an office. The owner was our local guardian.

You have received top-cricket training in Indore, but this giving interviews over a Zoom call, the ad shoots, be active on social media. Do you feel annoyed by off-field activities?

This is very new to me. Tough as well. I have a friend, who is helping me for now. He is taking care of everything so I am not feeling any pressure of any sort. I have told my friend to deal with off-the-field activities and I am only focusing on cricket. It is tough indeed.

When you compare yourself to foreign big hitters/finishers of other teams, do you think you can match them?

It is my first season I won't compare myself to anyone. It is also not good to compare yourself to someone else as well. But I feel good that I have to come to this stage and do well. I am enjoying it here I want to keep performing like this. This is a big stage you play all the good bowlers when you score runs you are happy yourself. I have not compared myself to anyone else.

And that six you hit off Bumrah's bowling, sweeping him. Is that the best shot you have played in your career so far? Did Bumrah tell you anything about that?

No no, it was a cricket shot it was nothing special anyone can get hit and anyone can get you out. If you get hit someone for a six it is a normal thing. It is not a big thing.

IPL playoffs: Sunil Gavaskar demands that foreigners who leave early be hit with 'salary cuts'



GNS News Agency, May 15

Sunil Gavaskar has made a scathing attack on the English Cricket Board (ECB) for asking their T20 World Cup-bound players to return home early. Gavaskar has suggested that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) must "penalise players" and the "boards." "I am all for players choosing country before anything else but having assured various franchises about their availability for the full season, if they pull out now, it will be letting down the franchises which probably pay them more money in one IPL season which they don't earn in a few seasons with their country," Gavaskar wrote in his column for Mid-day.

"The franchises should not only be allowed to deduct a substantial amount from the fee that the player was bought for, but also not give the Board, to which the player belongs, the stated 10 per cent commission of the fee that each player gets. IPL 2024 Highlights: Get Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) vs Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) Highlights from Eden Gardens, Kolkata. Phil Salt of Kolkata Knight Riders and Shreyas Iyer (c) of Kolkata Knight Rider during match 28 of the Indian Premier League season 17 (IPL 2024) between Kolkata Knight Riders and Lucknow Super Giants held at the Eden Gardens Stadium, Kolkata on the 14th April 2024. (Sportpics)" If the Board has gone back on its assurance they need to be penalised too. By the way, this 10 per cent commission to the Boards happens only in the IPL

and nowhere else. Does the BCCI get any thanks for its generosity? Ha ha ha. No way."

What does the ECB say?

A couple of weeks ago, the ECB in a statement asked selected players to return to national duty for the home series against Pakistan, starting on May 22. "Selected players, currently playing in the Indian Premier League, will return in time for the series against Pakistan, which gets underway at Headingley on Wednesday 22 May 2024," the ECB said in a statement. IPL 2024: Virat Kohli inspires Will Jucks 100 Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli and Will Jucks celebrate after winning the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 T20 cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, at the Narendra Modi Stadium, in Ahmedabad, Sunday, April 28, 2024. (PTI Photo/Kunal Patil)

England's team managing director, Rob Key, stated that captain Jos Buttler advocated for the English players to withdraw from the IPL playoffs. Apart from Buttler, Phil Salt, Liam Livingstone, Sam Curran, Jonny Bairstow, Moeen Ali, Will Jucks and Reece Topley are the England players part of the ICC event squad. Royals fine with Jos leaving Last week ahead of their game against Delhi Capitals, Royals bowling coach Shane Bond had said that Jos Buttler's absence would be a big loss for the side. Jos Buttler's hundred powered RR to a last-ball win in IPL 2024 on Tuesday. (BCCI) Jos Buttler's hundred powered RR to a last-ball win in IPL 2024 on Tuesday. (BCCI) Jos Buttler's absence in the playoffs will be a big loss. He is a terrific player. When I was with Mumbai Indians, he went in the middle of the tournament but we still won the tournament. But that's part and parcel of the game. We miss some players due to injury and some due to play-offs. KKR will lose Phil Salt and other teams will also lose players." Bond had said. After their match when asked a similar question, Kumar Sangakkara, Rajasthan Royals Director of Cricket has played down the question of the impact their team will face with Jos Buttler returning home before the playoffs. "We are not the only team, who will suffer. We have got the backup ready when Jos will go," Kumar Sangakkara had told reporters.

World Chess Championship: India seriously exploring possibility of hosting Gukesh vs Ding Liren, says AICF chief

GNS News Agency, May 15

The newly-elected office bearers of the AICF have lost no time in unveiling a host of measures to popularise the sport, which is currently in a state of boom in India. At last month's Candidates Chess Tournament, India was represented by five grandmasters — with Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi competing in the Open section while Humpy Koneru and Vaishali Rameshbabu competed in the women's event. India's progress in the last couple of years in the sport of 64 squares was highlighted by 17-year-old Gukesh winning the title and becoming the youngest-ever World Chess Championship contender in history. The question that everyone is now asking is whether India will be bidding to host the World Chess Championship, which was last held in India in 2013 when Chennai witnessed Magnus Carlsen defeating Viswanathan Anand to become the world champion for the first time. "We do have an intent (to host the World Championship in India) and that's why we have been exploring the possibility of bidding for it. We understand what it means for our nation and what it means for Gukesh. We're very seriously exploring the possibility," Narang, newly-elected president of AICF told The Indian Express earlier this week. "After having access to all the documents, we've started assessing the bid now that we have a form in front of us. There are a lot of components that go into it, be it the commercial angle, the logistics and managing the entire thing. We're very, very seriously having a detailed deliberation on each and every component. We'll have clarity on this (the possibility of submitting a bid) soon. Once we have that, we can announce officially if we're going ahead with the bid or are there any challenges. Once we have a detailed understanding of every aspect then we'll be able to take a call on this."

Besides India, Singapore also has thrown its hat into the ring to host the World Championship, which was hosted by Astana in Kazakhstan last year when Liren beat Ian Nepomniachtchi. FIDE, the global governing body of chess, has stated that it will cost about \$8.5 million (approximately Rs 70 crore) to host the World Championship. Talking about the costs that a hosting nation will incur for hosting the World Chess Championship, Narang said: "FIDE has given a figure of about \$8.5 million. But it also depends on a federation's ability to negotiate. A lot of costs will centre on what we can do. Maybe I can get a partner to take care of accommodations, that takes care of one aspect. So it would not be right to say that \$8.5 million is the exact cost of hosting a World Chess Championship. What FIDE has said is that \$8.5 million is the cost that sponsors, and the organisers would incur as an expenditure." Candidates chess stand-



ings: India's 17-year-old D Gukesh is the sole leader heading into the final round of the prestigious Candidates tournament. (PHOTO: Michal Waluszka via FIDE) Candidates chess standings: India's 17-year-old D Gukesh is the sole leader heading into the final round of the prestigious Candidates tournament. (PHOTO: Michal Waluszka via FIDE) He also revealed that one of the plans that the AICF has is to host elite tournaments in India. Presently there is only the Tata Steel India Kolkata event, which is a regular feature. The Chennai Grand Masters, which boasted of being the strongest ever classical super tournament on Indian soil, was held for the first time last year, which helped Gukesh seal qualification to the Candidates.

The AICF also unveiled its plans for the coming years to popularise the sport. For about 400 players who are already in the system, there are two-year contracts and cash rewards on offer. "Players in seven age categories from the U7 to U19 age groups will be given two-year contracts with monthly payments (U7 players will get Rs 20,000 while U19 players will get Rs 50,000 per month). The top 20 FIDE-ranked players will also be given cash rewards up to Rs 25 lakh a year. And the condition we'll have for players to be eligible for that is for them to play at the Nationals," Narang said. Since getting quality coaching from grandmasters or elite trainers can come at a steep price, Narang also said that they wanted to support 20 online chess academies in various parts of India via grants. In this model, Narang said, grandmasters who have switched over to coaching or elite trainers will also be aided to become entrepreneurs. "The idea is not to employ these GMs or trainers, but to make entrepreneurs out of them. They will own their academies, but we will give them funding so that they can also coach players we pick as part of this initiative. We'll identify 20 players from each category right from U7 to the senior category, in men's and women's categories. So we'll have 320 such players getting training for free. These 320 players will be assigned to these 20 academies.

Magnus Carlsen after losing to Pragg: 'My nervous system just collapsed against Praggnanandhaa... after that I sucked'

GNS News Agency, May 15

Magnus Carlsen was within touching distance of top spot at the Grand Chess Tour Superbet Rapid and Blitz 2024 on Saturday when he ran into Indian phenom R Praggnanandhaa in Round 11 on Saturday at Warsaw. After a 69-move battle, that went into a queen endgame with Pragg a pawn up, Carlsen finally resigned after and later opened up about how deeply that game against Praggnanandhaa had affected him. Carlsen heads into Sunday's round of games 2.5 points behind tournament leader Wei Yi of China.

"Pretty much every game tomorrow is a must-win for sure," Carlsen admitted. Sunday is the final day of the Warsaw leg at the Grand Chess Tour Superbet Rapid and Blitz. He opened up about the bruising battle against Praggnanandhaa in Round 11. "I just didn't have it today. I felt good from the start, but then I think my nervous system just collapsed during or after the game against Pragg, and after that I just sucked, honestly. The score was still half-decent, but obviously if Wei Yi continues to win then it doesn't matter," Carlsen told grandmaster Cristian Chirila four hours later. Carlsen showed his frustration very evidently in another game, this time against Uzbek prodigy



GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov. Carlsen got into time trouble while in a winning position in the match against Abdusattorov and ended up blundering his queen and in the end he jumped back out of his seat and punched the air in frustration. "I have no sense of anything with a few seconds," Carlsen later admitted. It must be noted that Praggnanandhaa himself didn't recover after that win over Carlsen. The 18-year-old from India was within just one point of Carlsen in third place, but after beating the World No 1, he lost the next two games.

Men's hockey skipper Harmanpreet says team is in 'last stages of an intense training block'

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Bengaluru: As 75 days are left for the commencement of the Paris 2024 Olympics where the Indian men's Hockey team will take the field at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in quest to end 44-year gold medal drought, skipper Harmanpreet Singh has said the team entered "last stages of an intense training block" in their preparation for the marquee event. India have to overcome the reigning Olympic Champions Belgium (World No. 2), Australia (World No. 3), Argentina (World No. 7), New Zealand (World No. 10), and Ireland (World No. 11) in Pool B to secure a top-four finish in the pool to progress to the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, Pool A comprises the world's top-ranked

team, the Netherlands, alongside Germany, Great Britain, Spain, South Africa, and hosts France, setting the stage for an intense battle in the 12-team men's hockey tournament at the Paris 2024 Olympics. India will begin their campaign on July 27 against New Zealand, followed by a match against Argentina on July 29 before facing Ireland and Belgium on July 30 and August 1. They will play their last group stage game against Australia on August 2. "We are in the last stages of an intense training block right now. The team has worked on the areas we felt needed attention after the Tour of Australia. Soon, we will head to Europe to play some essential matches in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2023/24 to test ourselves against some tough opponents like Argentina, Belgium,

Germany." "The chemistry in the squad continues to grow and with only 75 days left for the Paris 2024 Olympics we are working to be in the best shape possible," said Harmanpreet.

Meanwhile, vice-captain Hardik Singh expressed his excitement for the Paris 2024 Olympics saying, "The team is leaving no stone unturned in our endeavour to change the colour of our previous medal and clinch Gold at the Olympics this time. We have players like PR Sreejesh and Manpreet Singh who could be playing their fourth Olympics along with quite a few players who could be playing their third Olympics, including our Captain. "Their experience has been instrumental in moul-

ding some of the younger players we have in the squad right now. Only 75 days remain for the Paris 2024 Olympics and we cannot wait to begin our Olympic journey." India has a rich history in hockey at the Olympics.

They won their first Gold Medal after beating the Netherlands 3-0 in the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam and went on to dominate, winning Gold Medals in the 1932, 1936, 1948, 1952, 1956, 1964, and 1980 Olympics. In addition to their 8 Gold Medals, India claimed a silver medal in 1960 and 3 bronze medals in 1968, 1972, and the previous Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020, making them the most successful men's hockey team in the Olympics with 12 Medals.